

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Research Context

Educational leadership has increasingly shifted towards approaches that emphasise not only organisational effectiveness but also relational, ethical, and human-centred practices. Contemporary scholarship highlights that leadership is not merely a managerial function but a social and cultural process that shapes trust, collaboration, and shared meaning within school communities (Biesta, 2017; Huber et al., 2017; Uljens & Ylimaki, 2017). Schools are therefore understood as dynamic social environments in which leadership influences both organisational outcomes and interpersonal relationships, requiring leaders to balance strategic responsibilities with inclusive and value-driven practices (Knapp & Hopmann, 2017; Ylimaki & Uljens, 2017).

Despite these developments, the realities of school leadership remain complex. Leaders are required to navigate competing pressures such as policy demands, accountability systems, teacher expectations, and contextual constraints, often simultaneously (De Beer, 2022; Myburgh & Van der Vyver, 2022; Wolhuter, 2022). These conditions are further intensified in contexts where hierarchical traditions intersect with increasing expectations for participatory and distributed leadership (Akcil et al., 2018; Khumalo & Van Jaarsveld, 2022). As a result, sustaining a positive and cohesive school culture becomes challenging, particularly when organisational demands limit opportunities for reflection, dialogue, and relational engagement (Frost et al., 2025; Riley, 2022).

In Indonesia, these challenges are further shaped by cultural and social expectations surrounding leadership. School leaders are commonly expected to uphold moral integrity, maintain harmony, and embody communal values, reflecting broader societal and cultural norms (Sumintono et al., 2019; Sumintono et al., 2023). At the same time, leaders must respond to institutional accountability and policy pressures, creating tension between hierarchical authority and the need for adaptive, relational, and collaborative practices. Empirical studies in Indonesian schools demonstrate that leadership models such as transformational, servant, and

altruistic leadership contribute positively to teacher motivation, organisational trust, and school culture (Bektiarso, 2024; Istanto et al., 2024; Suyanto et al., 2024). However, their implementation is often constrained by structural, cultural, and contextual factors that limit their effectiveness in practice (Kusumaningrum et al., 2025; Sumiati et al., 2024).

The implications of these challenges are significant. When leadership is predominantly oriented towards administrative or performance-driven demands, schools may struggle to foster trust, emotional safety, and meaningful collaboration among teachers (Riley, 2022; Frost et al., 2025). This can negatively affect organisational climate, teacher well-being, and professional engagement, ultimately influencing the quality of teaching and learning (Huber et al., 2017; De Toni & De Marchi, 2023). Conversely, leadership approaches that prioritise relational, ethical, and collaborative dimensions are more likely to cultivate supportive, inclusive, and resilient school cultures that enhance both staff and student outcomes (Akcil et al., 2018; Urrila & Mäkelä, 2024).

These conditions highlight the need for leadership approaches that can respond to complexity while maintaining attentiveness to human relationships and values. Recent scholarship has increasingly emphasised the importance of awareness, reflection, and emotional regulation in leadership practice, particularly in navigating uncertainty and organisational change (Arendt et al., 2019; Rooney et al., 2021; Urrila & Mäkelä, 2024). Such approaches offer potential pathways for strengthening relational trust, improving communication, and supporting more reflective and ethically grounded decision-making within school environments (Burmansah et al., 2020; Garba Konte, 2023).

However, while these perspectives are gaining recognition, their application within educational leadership—particularly in the Indonesian context—remains underexplored. Existing research has largely focused on established leadership models such as transformational, servant, and instructional leadership, with limited attention to how awareness-based or reflective approaches are enacted in real school settings (Akcil et al., 2018; Khumalo & Van Jaarsveld, 2022; Ylimaki & Brunderman, 2022). Furthermore, there is insufficient empirical understanding of how such approaches are interpreted, sustained, and embedded within school

culture, especially in institutions that intentionally integrate them into their organisational philosophy.

This gap becomes more evident in schools that formally adopt mindfulness-oriented practices. Although mindfulness has been widely studied in relation to teacher well-being, emotional regulation, and classroom practice (Brady, 2021; Ergas, 2019; Weare, 2023), there remains limited research examining its role at the leadership level, particularly in non-Western contexts (Hemming & Hailwood, 2024; Sheinman & Russo-Netzer, 2021). In Indonesia, where educational practices are deeply influenced by cultural, religious, and institutional dynamics, understanding how mindfulness-informed leadership operates in practice remains an important and underexplored area of inquiry (Alimah, 2020; Jovini et al., 2024).

Therefore, this study focuses on examining how mindfulness leadership is exercised within an Indonesian school context, specifically at Global Sevilla School. While the school has intentionally integrated mindfulness into its institutional practices, limited empirical research has investigated how leaders interpret and enact mindfulness in daily decision-making, interpersonal relationships, and culture-building processes. By analysing how leadership is practised, what factors influence it, what values underpin it, and what challenges emerge in its implementation, this study seeks to address the existing gap and contribute to a more contextually grounded understanding of leadership and school culture.

B. Research Rationale

The rationale for selecting Global Sevilla School as the research site lies in its explicit and institutionalised commitment to mindfulness-based education. As one of the pioneering schools in Indonesia to integrate mindfulness into leadership practices, teaching and learning processes, and overall school culture, it provides a particularly relevant context for examining how mindfulness leadership is practised within everyday educational settings. The school's emphasis on social-emotional learning, reflective practice, and holistic education aligns closely with the focus of this study on the relationship between mindfulness leadership and positive school culture.

The choice of mindfulness as the central focus of this research is based on the growing recognition that educational leadership today requires not only managerial competence but also emotional awareness, relational sensitivity, ethical reflection, and the capacity to foster psychologically safe and inclusive learning environments. Although mindfulness has received increasing scholarly attention internationally, research examining mindfulness leadership in school contexts—particularly in relation to school culture—remains limited. Existing studies have predominantly emerged from Western contexts, while empirical investigations within Southeast Asian and Indonesian educational settings are still relatively scarce. This study therefore seeks to contribute to the expanding discourse by exploring how mindfulness leadership is understood and enacted in practice within a school environment.

Indonesia was selected as the broader contextual setting because of the increasing challenges faced by educational institutions in fostering positive, inclusive, and emotionally supportive school cultures amid rapid social and educational change. Educational leadership in Indonesia is increasingly expected to balance academic achievement with student wellbeing, interpersonal harmony, character development, and collaborative organisational culture. However, limited empirical research has explored leadership approaches that emphasise mindfulness, reflective awareness, and relational wellbeing within Indonesian schools. Consequently, this study aims to provide contextual insights into how mindfulness leadership may contribute to cultivating a positive school culture in Indonesian educational settings.

Taken together, the alignment between the philosophy of Global Sevilla School and the objectives of this study offers a meaningful and contextually rich setting for research. The school's multicultural environment further strengthens the rationale for the study by enabling exploration of how mindfulness leadership is interpreted and practised across diverse cultural perspectives, positioning the school as a relevant contemporary example of mindfulness-informed education in Indonesia.

C. Problem Statement

Educational leadership in Indonesia is increasingly expected to foster not only academic achievement but also emotionally supportive, inclusive, and values-driven school environments. National educational reforms emphasising character education, holistic learning, and student well-being require school leaders to cultivate positive school cultures that support collaboration, empathy, and ethical behaviour. However, in practice, many school leaders continue to face tensions between administrative accountability, institutional performance demands, and the relational expectations necessary to sustain healthy school environments. Leadership practices in schools often remain strongly procedural and hierarchical, creating challenges in maintaining open communication, psychological safety, teacher well-being, and collaborative organisational culture. Studies on educational leadership in Indonesia suggest that leadership structures, organisational culture, and leadership approaches significantly influence teacher participation, collegial interaction, and school climate (Sumintono et al., 2019; Sumintono et al., 2023; Bektiarso, 2024; Sary et al., 2024).

These tensions have important implications for school culture and organisational sustainability. Research in educational leadership shows that emotionally unsupportive or highly hierarchical leadership environments may contribute to teacher stress, weakened interpersonal trust, reduced collaboration, and fragmented organisational relationships (Riley, 2022; Klap et al., 2021; Schein, 2010). Similar patterns have also been identified in Indonesian schools where administrative pressure and performance-oriented leadership may negatively affect teacher well-being and organisational climate (Sumintono et al., 2019; Bektiarso, 2024; Sary et al., 2024). Consequently, school leaders are increasingly required to demonstrate not only managerial competence but also emotional awareness, reflective judgment, and relational sensitivity in navigating complex educational environments.

Within this context, mindfulness has emerged as a potentially relevant approach for strengthening leadership practice and cultivating positive school culture. Mindfulness-based approaches in education have been associated with enhanced emotional regulation, reflective decision-making, compassionate

communication, and psychologically safe learning environments (Brady, 2021; Rooney et al., 2021; Urrila & Mäkelä, 2024). In Indonesia, mindfulness-related practices have also begun to appear within educational institutions that emphasise holistic and character-based learning. Existing studies indicate that mindfulness may support teacher well-being, interpersonal relationships, resilience, and organisational harmony (Nurshadrina et al., 2025; Yana et al., 2024). Global Sevilla School represents one of the few Indonesian schools that intentionally integrates mindfulness into both its educational philosophy and leadership orientation, making it a significant context for examining how mindfulness leadership is practised within daily school life.

Despite the growing interest in mindfulness within education, significant gaps remain in understanding how mindfulness leadership is enacted within Indonesian school contexts. Existing research has primarily focused on mindfulness at the classroom, student, or teacher level, while empirical investigations of mindfulness leadership remain limited. In particular, limited attention has been given to how mindfulness leadership is practised in ways that cultivate trust, collaboration, inclusivity, emotional safety, and other dimensions of positive school culture within everyday school life. Furthermore, most mindfulness leadership studies have been conducted in Western educational settings, leaving insufficient understanding of how mindfulness leadership operates within Indonesian cultural, institutional, and organisational environments. As a result, little is known about how school leaders in Indonesia interpret, practise, and sustain mindfulness leadership in shaping school culture, what factors influence its implementation, what values underpin its practice, and what barriers or tensions emerge during its enactment. Accordingly, there is a need for contextually grounded empirical research that examines how mindfulness leadership is interpreted, practised, and sustained within Indonesian school environments

This lack of context-specific understanding creates both theoretical and practical limitations. Despite growing interest in mindfulness within education, existing research has focused primarily on students, teachers, and classroom practices, with limited empirical attention to how mindfulness leadership is enacted by school leaders, particularly within Indonesian and other non-Western school

contexts. Consequently, educational institutions have limited guidance for integrating mindfulness into leadership practices in ways that are culturally responsive, organisationally sustainable, and educationally meaningful. To address this gap, the present study investigates how mindfulness leadership is practised within an Indonesian school context, specifically at Global Sevilla School, examining the factors that influence its implementation, the values that underpin its practice, and the barriers and challenges encountered in its enactment. By doing so, the study contributes contextually grounded insights to the literature on educational leadership, mindfulness leadership, and positive school culture, while also providing practical implications for leadership development and school improvement in Indonesia.

D. Scope and Delimitations

1. Scope of the Study

This study is limited to two campuses of Global Sevilla School in Jakarta (Pulo Mas and Puri Indah). It examines how mindfulness leadership is enacted in the daily practices of school leaders and how these practices contribute to cultivating and sustaining a positive school culture, particularly through relational dynamics, collaboration, emotional safety, and shared organisational values. The study focuses on top management, principals, and teachers to highlight leadership's influence on relational dynamics, organisational ethos, and cultural practices. Through this focus, the study centres leadership-level processes rather than classroom pedagogy or instructional activities.

The conceptual framing draws from Ergas (2019b), who distinguishes mindfulness in, as, and of education. This study aligns primarily with mindfulness of education, understood as a broader institutional and cultural orientation (p. 343). At the leadership level, mindfulness is viewed as a quality that supports presence, reflection, and wise decision-making. Rooney et al. (2021) argue that mindfulness enables leaders to “create time for embodying wisdom” (p. 182). This perspective reinforces the relevance of examining how mindfulness leadership contributes to school culture within the selected campuses.

2. Delimitations of the Study

Several deliberate boundaries define this research:

- The study is limited to two campuses within one Indonesian school institution and does not include schools in other regions or systems.
- The focus is on leadership practices and school culture rather than classroom pedagogy, student performance, or long-term developmental outcomes, even though these areas may relate to leadership.
- Participant selection emphasises top management, principals, and teachers rather than students in order to foreground leadership perspectives.

These delimitations ensure that the inquiry remains focused on leadership-level practices and the cultural dynamics that shape mindfulness within the institution. They further clarify the parameters within which interpretations and conclusions can be drawn, enabling a more analytically rigorous examination of the relationship between mindfulness leadership and school culture. At the same time, they acknowledge that broader dimensions, such as pedagogy or student outcomes, fall outside the scope of this study. Establishing these boundaries thus provides conceptual clarity and delineates the extent of the study's intended contributions.

3. Limitations of the Study

While delimitations are intentional boundaries, this research also faces inherent limitations. The findings are context-specific to Global Sevilla School and may not be fully generalisable to other schools with different cultural, structural, or policy contexts. Brady (2021) notes that “mindfulness is not just a set of techniques, but a way of being that is shaped through particular contexts and relationships” (p. 15), emphasising the role of environment in shaping mindful practice. Additionally, mindfulness in education is embedded within broader social, cultural, and institutional structures (Hemming & Hailwood, 2024). These wider influences may raise issues of diversity and equality that cannot be comprehensively addressed within the relatively homogenous setting of the two selected campuses.

Taken together, these delimitations and limitations frame the boundaries of this inquiry and justify the use of a mixed-methods design. The delimitations ensure a focused examination of leadership-level practices, while the limitations highlight

the unique contextual conditions of the research site. To balance these factors, the study integrates qualitative methods that provide rich, contextualised insights with quantitative measures that help identify broader patterns across participants. This mixed-methods approach enables the research to maintain analytic depth while generating findings that can contribute meaningfully to ongoing discussions of mindfulness leadership in education.

E. Research Questions

Addressing this research problem requires examining how mindfulness leadership is practised within an authentic school setting and identifying the factors, values, and challenges that shape its role in cultivating positive school culture. Accordingly, this study is guided by the following central research question:

[How is mindfulness leadership practised to cultivate a positive school culture at Global Sevilla School?]

This study particularly focuses on how mindfulness leadership is practised in cultivating positive school culture through relational trust, collaboration, inclusivity, emotional safety, reflective communication, and shared organisational values within the school community. To provide a more detailed focus, this overarching question is divided into three sub-questions:

- (1) What factors influence the practice of mindfulness leadership at Global Sevilla School in cultivating a positive school culture?
- (2) What values underpin mindfulness leadership and shape its role in cultivating a positive school culture?
- (3) What barriers and challenges are encountered in the practice of mindfulness leadership within the context of school culture?
- (4) In what ways is mindfulness leadership practised to cultivate a positive school culture at Global Sevilla School?

Through these questions, the study aims to generate both theoretical and practical insights into mindfulness leadership, with specific attention to the case of Global Sevilla School, while also contributing to the broader academic discourse on educational leadership and school culture.

F. Research Objectives

Building upon the challenges and gaps outlined above, this study aims to critically analyse how mindfulness leadership is exercised and practised at Global Sevilla School, with particular focus on its role in cultivating a positive school culture. The research seeks to understand how mindfulness is practised by school leaders, what factors influence its practice, what values underpin its role, and what barriers and challenges emerge in shaping and sustaining it as part of the school culture. As one of the earliest empirical investigations of mindfulness leadership in Indonesian schools, this study offers contextual originality and contributes to the theoretical development model of mindfulness-based educational leadership.

To achieve this aim, the study establishes three specific objectives:

- (1) To identify and analyse the factors that influence the practice of mindfulness leadership in cultivating a positive school culture at Global Sevilla.
- (2) To examine the values underpinning mindfulness leadership in order to understand the principles that guide leaders in integrating mindfulness into their daily practices and decision-making.
- (3) To explore the barriers and challenges encountered in the practice of mindfulness leadership, particularly within the dynamics of school culture, where structural pressures, institutional demands, and interpersonal complexities may affect its sustainability.
- (4) To examine how mindfulness leadership is practised in cultivating a positive school culture at Global Sevilla School.

G. Significance of the Study

This study aims to explore how mindfulness leadership is practised in cultivating a positive school culture at Global Sevilla School, including the factors that support or hinder its implementation, the values that underpin the practice, and the challenges encountered in sustaining it within everyday school life. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to both academic scholarship and educational practice. As one of the first empirical inquiries into mindfulness leadership within Indonesian schools, it offers contextual novelty and theoretical enrichment to the field. The findings are expected to inform leadership

development, strengthen school culture, and provide a framework for integrating mindfulness into educational leadership across varied institutional contexts.

1. Theoretical Perspective

From a theoretical perspective, this study deepens the growing body of scholarship on mindfulness in education by centring its focus on leadership and its influence on cultivating positive school culture. While existing research has explored mindfulness in relation to pedagogy, student well-being, and teacher resilience (Brady, 2021; Ergas & Hadar, 2019; Hemming, 2024), considerably fewer studies examine how school leaders embody and enact mindfulness in their daily professional practice. By addressing this gap, the study contributes new insights into the intersections of mindfulness, leadership, and organisational culture, particularly within the unique educational landscape of Indonesia.

Furthermore, the study contributes contextual insights into how mindfulness leadership is interpreted and practised within a school environment that intentionally integrates mindfulness into its institutional values and culture. In doing so, the research enriches discussions on educational leadership by highlighting the relational, emotional, and ethical dimensions of leadership practices that support positive school culture.

2. Practical Perspective

From a practical perspective, the study offers insights that may support educational leadership and school management practices. Understanding the factors that facilitate or hinder mindfulness leadership can assist school leaders, policymakers, and practitioners in developing more effective approaches for integrating mindfulness into institutional life. By examining the values that underpin mindfulness leadership, the study identifies leadership principles that may help foster compassionate, inclusive, collaborative, and resilient school communities.

In addition, identifying the barriers and challenges encountered in practice can provide useful considerations for leadership training programmes, professional development initiatives, and institutional policy development. These findings may also support schools seeking to strengthen school culture through leadership

approaches that emphasise awareness, relational authenticity, emotional safety, and human-centred values.

The selection of Global Sevilla School as a case study further strengthens the applied relevance of this research. As one of the few schools in Indonesia that formally integrates mindfulness into both its curriculum and leadership ethos, the school provides a meaningful context for examining how mindfulness leadership is understood, enacted, and sustained in practice. Insights drawn from this case may offer transferable lessons for other educational institutions in Indonesia and potentially for broader regional or international contexts.

In sum, this study contributes to the theoretical understanding of mindfulness leadership by examining its practice within a distinct Indonesian school setting. It also provides practical insights for strengthening positive school culture through leadership practices grounded in awareness, compassion, relational authenticity, and human values. Ultimately, the study aspires to support the development of educational environments that are not only academically effective but also emotionally, socially, and ethically nurturing.

