IMPLEMENTING SEMAI: ENHANCING STUDENT LEADERSHIP THROUGH ROTATIONAL CLASS PRESIDENCY IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

The "*Semua adalah pemimpin* (SEMAI)" program at UPT SPF SDN Percontohan PAM Makassar tackles the problem of inequitable leadership chances among elementary students, which may impede the cultivation of essential social, emotional, and leadership competencies. The approach guarantees that each student acquires leadership experience by rotating the class presidency on a weekly basis. This qualitative, descriptive-exploratory study assesses the SEMAI program's impact, problems, and efficacy in promoting inclusive leadership, while examining its potential for wider implementation. The data gathering comprised comprehensive interviews, observations, and document analysis involving instructors, students, and parents. The findings indicated substantial enhancements in students' self-assurance, social engagement, and emotional control. Furthermore, the program diminished students' dependence on devices and motivated other initiatives at other educational institutions. Notwithstanding these achievements, issues including disparate levels of student engagement and heightened teacher effort were recognized. The study presents an innovative contribution to educational leadership by proposing a scalable, cost-effective methodology for fostering inclusivity and leadership abilities in primary education, a domain seldom investigated, especially in Indonesia. This strategy corresponds with international objectives for fair education and illustrates how these initiatives can mitigate systemic obstacles while promoting individual development and community influence.

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Keywords: Education, Elementary, Inclusivity, Leadership, Rotation.

1. INTRODUCTION

This study is grounded in the significant significance of basic education in character formation and the development of students' potential, as articulated in Law No. 20/2003 regarding the National Education System. Nevertheless, the phenomenon observed in the field reveals a disparity in students' leadership experiences in elementary schools, wherein the majority of children are never afforded the opportunity to assume the role of class leaders or to direct specific activities. This may impede the development of essential social, communication, and emotional regulation abilities vital for their future. Data from the Makassar PAM Pilot Primary School SPF indicates a mix of student backgrounds, including several pupils who did not participate in early childhood education (PAUD). During the 2023-2024 academic year, out of 84 newly enrolled students, 9 lacked PAUD experience; in the subsequent 2024-2025 academic year, this figure rose by 7 students. This scenario presents obstacles for educators in enhancing students' confidence and guaranteeing

equitable opportunity for all pupils to assume leadership positions.

The "*Semua adalah pemimpin*" program was established to facilitate weekly elections for class leaders, allowing all students to get leadership experience on a rotational basis. This program has demonstrated a beneficial effect, including enhancing students' confidence in leading school activities, redirecting their focus from gadgets to productive endeavors, and attaining success in leadership competitions, exemplified by securing 2nd place in the Little Police at the South Sulawesi Regional Police level in 2024. Moreover, affirmative response from parents further underscored the program's significance, as they valued the opportunity afforded to their children to engage in leadership roles, an experience previously deemed uncommon. The SEMAI program aims to serve as a catalyst for enhancing the character development of students who demonstrate not just academic proficiency but also exceptional leadership abilities and emotional intelligence.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Inclusive leadership is critical in fostering environments where all students can thrive, especially in elementary education settings. Research highlights various practices, challenges, and frameworks for implementing inclusive leadership effectively in schools. Below is a synthesis of recent literature supporting the notion of inclusive education and leadership in elementary schools:

Leadership Practices for Inclusivity

Creating Collaborative Cultures, effective leadership in inclusive schools involves fostering collaboration among staff, students, and the community. Leaders must establish a culture of change-oriented teamwork and shared decision-making, which is pivotal for inclusion to succeed. DeMatthews (2020) identifies four critical leadership practices: planning, capacity building, evaluating, and revising processes to ensure inclusion takes root despite challenges (DeMatthews, 2020).

Inclusive Educational Leadership Frameworks, inclusive leadership frameworks emphasize the importance of creating a caring and supportive school culture. Leaders must integrate inclusion into everyday practices while addressing equity and diversity. Young and Arnold (2020) propose a reconceptualized leadership model emphasizing preparation, place, and practice to cultivate an inclusive environment (Young & Arnold, 2020).

Distributed Leadership, distributed leadership is another approach that significantly contributes to inclusivity. It emphasizes shared responsibilities, cooperative teamwork, and collective problem-solving, encouraging participation from students, families, and educators. Tejeiro (2022) highlights its role in promoting inclusive practices through collaborative decision-making (Tejeiro, 2022).

Challenges in Implementing Inclusive Leadership

Systemic Barriers, Systemic challenges, such as inadequate teacher training, insufficient resources, and rigid curricula, often hinder the implementation of inclusive practices. (Fitzgerald et al., (2021)underline the tension between formalizing inclusive leadership roles and existing systemic expectations, advocating for capacity-building efforts (Fitzgerald et al., 2021).

Teacher Preparedness, Teachers' readiness to manage inclusive classrooms is a recurring issue. Larios & Zetlin, (2023); Woodcock et al., (2022) found that many educators lack the knowledge and confidence to support students with diverse needs, which limits the effectiveness of inclusive initiatives (Larios & Zetlin, 2023; Woodcock et al., 2022).

Balancing Normative and Transformative Practices, Kamanzi & Irimoren, (2023)emphasize that while many leaders aim for transformative inclusion, their practices often align with normative, target-driven policies. This dissonance underscores the need for leaders to adopt innovative and localized approaches to inclusivity Evidence of Impact (Kamanzi & Irimoren, 2023).

Evidence of Impact

Student Achievement and Well-Being, inclusive leadership positively affects student engagement and achievement by addressing individual learning needs and promoting a sense of belonging. Lambrecht et al. (2020) demonstrated that transformational leadership practices effectively support individualized education planning and collaboration (Lambrecht et al., 2022).

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Parental and Community Involvement, engaging families and the community is vital for successful inclusive education. Crisol-Moya et al., (2022); Phogat, (2022)found that schools prioritizing family engagement created respectful and supportive environments, enhancing inclusivity Crisol-Moya et al., (2022); Phogat, (2022).

School Climate and Equity, inclusive practices contribute to a positive school climate, promoting equity and reducing disparities. Smith, (2022)advocate for transformative leadership to disrupt inequitable school cultures and support marginalized students (Smith, 2022).

Inclusive leadership in elementary schools is essential for fostering equity, diversity, and student success. While challenges persist, adopting collaborative, distributed, and transformative leadership approaches has shown significant promise. Future efforts should focus on enhancing teacher preparedness, building community partnerships, and aligning systemic policies with inclusive goals to create supportive environments where all students can flourish.

3. METHODS

This research employed a qualitative methodology with an exploratory descriptive framework to examine the execution of the "S*emua adalah pemimpin*" program in primary educational institutions. This methodology was selected since it is suitable for examining the experiences, challenges, and effects of the program on students, educators, and parents within the framework of inclusive education. The research participants comprised administrators, teachers, students, and parents from the PAM Makassar Pilot Primary School SPF Unit. Participants were intentionally chosen to guarantee representation of the diverse stakeholders involved in program implementation. The study was carried out in a school setting that has utilized the SEMAI curriculum for two years. Data was gathered using various methodologies: Comprehensive interviews were performed with administrators, educators, and parents to examine their perspectives on the process, obstacles, and advantages of the SEMAI program. Direct observation was used to assess student interactions during the execution of leadership responsibilities as class leaders, focusing on their leadership and collaboration with peers. The documentation encompassed data pertinent to

program execution, including leadership rotation timetables, weekly assessment reports, and visual records of student activities. The data were examined thematically utilizing the Miles and Huberman methodology, encompassing three phases: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion formulation. This analysis identified significant themes, including the program's effect on student leadership skill development and the problems encountered during implementation. Regarding Data Validity, Data source triangulation was performed to verify the veracity of the research findings. The utilization of interviews, observations, and documentation offered an extensive viewpoint on the issue being examined. This method is anticipated to yield a comprehensive understanding of the achievements and challenges in the execution of the SEMAI program.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research produced key findings related to the implementation of the SEMAI program at the Makassar PAM Pilot Primary School SPF Unit. The following are the main results identified:

1. Increased Student Self-Confidence
   Students showed increased confidence in various leadership activities. They began to be able to lead activities such as flag ceremonies, class discussions, joint prayers, and become imams for congregational prayers. The opportunity to take turns as class leaders encourages them to speak up and take responsibility in front of their peers.

2. Social and Emotional Skills Development
   The SEMAI program succeeded in improving students' ability to interact socially and manage emotions. Students who previously tended to be passive began to be actively involved in group work, giving directions to their friends, and completing class assignments. It also helps students with dominant traits to learn to share roles and respect the opinions of peers.

3. Shifting Focus from Gadgets to Productive Activities
   With rotating leadership tasks, students become more focused on productive activities at school. Their attention that was previously diverted to gadgets is

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significantly reduced, replaced with responsibilities such as maintaining classroom cleanliness, safety, and order during teaching-learning activities.

4. Positive Feedback from Parents
Parents responded positively to the program. Many of them were happy that their children were given the opportunity to experience leadership roles that they themselves never experienced in school. Some parents also documented the experience and shared it on social media, which served as additional motivation for the children.

5. Replication by Other Schools
The success of the SEMAI program at the PAM pilot school inspires other schools in the area to adopt similar concepts. The program even became an example of good practice in various PAUD-SD transition trainings at the local and national levels.

6. Challenges Faced
Despite the positive impact of the program, challenges remain, such as the need for extra time for teachers to assist students, conduct weekly evaluations, and modify classroom administration to support leadership rotation. In addition, there were students who were initially reluctant to get involved due to shyness or lack of confidence, although this gradually improved over time.

The SEMAI program had a significant positive impact on the development of students' leadership, communication, and emotion management skills. Despite the challenges, the program proved to be effective, inexpensive, and easy to implement, making it worthy of being an inspiration for other schools in creating a confident and responsible young generation.

DISCUSSION

The SEMAI program is one of the educational innovations relevant to the leadership development needs of students at the primary level. The following discussion outlines the impacts, challenges and relevance of the SEMAI program to the literature on inclusive education and leadership development in schools.

Positive Impact of the SEMAI Program

Improved Self-Confidence and Social Skills The program provides an opportunity for every student to experience being a leader, which is rare in conventional educational contexts. Through weekly rotations in the election of class leaders, students are trained to lead their peers, communicate effectively, and manage simple tasks. This result is in line with the findings of DeMatthews et al. (2021), who mentioned that inclusive leadership based on collaboration and student capacity building can create an inclusive school environment and support students' overall development (DeMatthews et al., 2021).

Gadget Addiction Reduction One of the major problems in modern education is students' dependence on digital devices. The SEMAI program successfully shifted students' attention from excessive gadget use to productive activities, such as carrying out leadership tasks and collaborating with peers. Crisol-Moya et al. (2022) state that establishing a learning environment that respects students' needs and shifts their focus away from digital distractions can improve their educational experience (Crisol-Moya et al., 2022).

Inspiration for Other Schools The success of the SEMAI program has inspired other schools to adopt similar approaches. This demonstrates SEMAI's potential as an adaptable, low-cost but high-impact model of inclusive education. (Lambrecht et al., 2022). emphasizes the importance of transformational leadership in supporting collaboration in schools to create effective inclusive practices (Lambrecht et al., 2022).

Challenges in Implementation

Diversity of Student Backgrounds The main challenge faced is the diversity of student characteristics, especially those who have not gone through early childhood education (ECE). This leads to significant differences in confidence levels, emotional maturity and social skills. Tejeiro et al. (2024) mention that one of the barriers to inclusive education is ensuring that all students, regardless of background, have equal access and opportunities (Tejeiro et al., 2024).

Teacher Time and Resources Teachers face challenges in providing additional time to mentor lead students each week, conduct regular

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evaluations and modify classroom administration. Shields et al. (2015) revealed that limited time and resources are often the main barriers to implementing inclusive leadership in schools (Shields et al., 2015).

Different Levels of Student Participation Some students, especially those who are shy or lack confidence, require additional assistance to carry out their leadership roles. This requires a personalized approach by teachers to ensure all students feel comfortable and able to lead. Nurfadhillah, (2021) notes that teachers' lack of preparedness in supporting inclusive students is often a major obstacle in achieving the goals of inclusive education (Nurfadhillah, 2021).

Relevance of the SEMAI Program to Inclusive Literacy

The SEMAI program contributes to the development of an inclusive learning environment that provides space for all students to learn and lead, in accordance with the principles of inclusion in education. The program also supports global efforts to achieve sustainable development goal (SDG) 4, which is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Óskarsdóttir et al. (2020) assert that effective inclusive leadership must be supported by policies that enable students from diverse backgrounds to participate fully in their learning experiences (Óskarsdóttir et al., 2020).

In addition, the distributed leadership model applied in SEMAI allows students to learn through hands-on experience and involves all parties in creating an inclusive educational environment. This reinforces the program's role as an effective leadership learning platform for primary school students.

The SEMAI program proves that with a simple yet innovative approach, primary education can be an inclusive place and support the development of students' leadership, communication and emotional management skills. While challenges remain, the success of this program shows great potential for replication and adaptation in other schools. With policy support, teacher training and community collaboration, this program can contribute to the creation of an inclusive and resilient generation of future leaders.

5.   CONCLUSION

The SEMAI program at PAM Makassar Pilot Primary School is an effective model of educational innovation in developing students' leadership, communication and emotional management skills at the primary school level. By providing rotating opportunities for each student to become a class leader, the program has successfully increased students' self-confidence, social skills, and participation in school activities. In addition, the program is able to reduce students' dependence on gadgets and shift their focus to productive activities. However, the implementation of this program is not free from challenges, such as the diversity of student backgrounds, the need for additional time and energy for teachers, and differences in student participation levels. Nonetheless, the success of the program has inspired other schools to adopt similar approaches, making it a model of good practice in inclusive education. The SEMAI program is also relevant to global inclusive education goals, particularly in supporting the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education.

Teachers need to receive specialized training in assisting students in leadership roles. This training could include confidence-building techniques, inclusive classroom management, and performance-based evaluation strategies.The principal needs to integrate the SEMAI program into school policies, including the allocation of time and resources for program implementation. Formal recognition of the program will make it easier for teachers and staff to implement activities optimally.Parent involvement needs to be continuously improved to provide additional motivation to students. In addition, collaboration with the community, such as other educational institutions or government agencies, can support the expansion of the program's impact.The provision of supporting tools, such as digital evaluation tools and visual materials to introduce leadership roles to students, will help increase the effectiveness of the program.It is recommended to conduct follow-up research that focuses on the long-term impact of the SEMAI program on students' academic achievement, leadership skills, and social success in the future.

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