



Celebrating Inclusion and Diversity: Utilizing Multimodality and Multilingualism to Enhance Children's Leadership

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates how multimodality and multilingualism enhance children's leadership skills through celebrating inclusion and diversity. It examines how these strategies nurture essential leadership qualities such as cultural awareness, respect, and empathy among young learners. By embracing various modes of learning and communication—visual, auditory, kinesthetic, textual, and digital—alongside multilingual environments, the study provides a holistic framework for leadership development. The research demonstrates how these approaches improve children's communication abilities, cultural competence, cognitive flexibility, and adaptability, supported by reflective discussions and diverse role models. The study argues that these strategies create inclusive environments that enrich language skills and prepare children to become empathetic leaders in a multicultural world. Parents and educators can implement practical approaches at home and in educational settings, including storytelling, cultural immersion, and interactive multilingual games, to develop empathetic, innovative, and effective leaders capable of thriving in a diverse world

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1. Introduction

The global dynamics have shifted the focus to the importance of diversity and inclusion in children's education. Children in today's schools are not just taught to think critically and do well in the classroom; they are also taught to respect other cultural values that differ from theirs. This practice allows children to have more social skills that are beneficial for their latter life. At the same time, families with multicultural backgrounds and values, have advantages in exploring different perspectives and cultural traditions within the family dynamic. As stated by Abdullah et al. (2022), the management of multicultural-based learning in early childhood must begin with planning that reflects national values and promotes caring behaviors, thus contributing to inclusive education and leadership development from an early age. Families provide children the chance to interact with many points of view, learn tolerance, and value the strengths brought about by every culture by immersing them in a multicultural family environment. This becomes a central component in fostering a balanced and empathetic worldview in children from an early age. Research by Subiyantoro et al. (2024) has shown that multimodal literacy practices in multilingual households help children build communication and adaptability, which are critical components of leadership. In Indonesian context, diversity is becoming increasingly feasible and a crucial aspect of inclusive education, particularly in early childhood education. Indonesia experiences more globalized society beside best known as multi-diverse nation from hundreds of tribes and languages. Tesar & Pangastuti (2024) emphasized that early childhood education in Indonesia should reflect cultural diversity by integrating local traditions, fostering identity and empathy from an early age. Similarly, Utami et al. (2021) argue that multicultural education in early childhood plays a significant role in building tolerance and character development, reinforcing the urgency of incorporating diverse cultural values in the classroom setting.

The global dynamics have shifted the focus to the importance of diversity and inclusion in children's education. Children in today's schools aren't just taught to think critically and do well in the classroom; they are also taught to respect other cultural values that differ from theirs. This practice allows children to have more social skills that are beneficial for their latter life. At the same time, families with multicultural backgrounds and values, have advantages in advantages in exploring different perspectives and cultural traditions within the family dynamic. Families provide children the chance to interact with many points of view, learn tolerance, and value the strengths brought about by every culture by immersing them in a multicultural family environment and become a central component in fostering a balanced and empathetic worldview in children from an early age. Research by Subiyantoro

et al. (2024) has shown that multimodal literacy practices in multilingual households help children build communication and adaptability, which are critical components of leadership. Children raised in diverse and multicultural homes have unique opportunities to develop important leadership qualities at a young age. These kids have experience interacting with people from other backgrounds by being exposed to a variety of languages and communication methods, which increases their feeling of inclusion, empathy, and flexibility. Pontier et al. (2020) emphasized that dynamic language use in bi/multilingual environments allows children to build cognitive flexibility and social awareness, both essential traits for future leaders. This essay investigates how multicultural families might actively cultivate early leadership qualities in young children by incorporating multimodality (the use of several modes of communication) and multilingualism. According to Crane-Deklerk (2020), the use of multimodal practices—such as visuals, gestures, and digital tools enhances literacy and broadens children's expression and thinking, thereby facilitating more inclusive learning environments. Moreover, Barton (2023) noted that multimodal strategies empower multilingual learners by accommodating various learning styles and encouraging confidence in communication, both of which contribute to leadership behaviors.

However, research focusing on the role of multimodality and multilingualism in enhancing children's leadership skills remains limited, particularly within Indonesian educational contexts. Many studies highlight the academic aspects of inclusion and diversity but fail to establish connections with leadership skill development. For instance, Subiyantoro et al. (2024) demonstrated how multimodal literacy practices helped multilingual children recover literacy skills, indicating the potential of such practices in building communication and adaptability—key leadership traits. Similarly, Prihantoro et al. (2022) emphasized the value of multiliteracies pedagogy in developing students' multimodal communicative competence, fostering critical thinking and expression. Hidayati et al. (2024) further supported this notion by demonstrating how translanguaging and multimodal strategies enhance learners' engagement and confidence, essential for cultivating leadership. This research aims to fill that gap by exploring how multimodality and multilingualism can foster leadership skills in children within inclusive and diverse learning environments at home while promoting these practices at school.

The primary objective of this research is to understand how multimodal and multilingual approaches influence children's leadership skills within inclusive educational contexts. More specifically, this research aims to explore how children's interactions with different languages and communication modes contribute to developing their social, emotional, and leadership skills. In a broader context, this research seeks to provide insights for educators on cultivating leadership skills responsive to diverse student needs.

This research has significant implications for inclusive education, as it underscores the importance of a holistic approach that values cultural and linguistic differences. By presenting insights on how multimodality and multilingualism support leadership skill development, this research is expected to contribute to shaping more inclusive curricula responsive to children's diverse backgrounds. Through this approach, the research aims to provide deeper understanding of how multimodality and multilingualism integrate into learning practices and how both influence children's leadership skill development. This research will also examine how children, as unique individuals, interpret their experiences in multicultural and multilingual contexts.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative, ethno-narrative approach to examine how children from a multicultural family develop and express leadership skills within a home environment that actively promotes inclusion and diversity. The ethno-narrative approach integrates ethnographic observation with narrative inquiry, making it particularly effective for capturing both the cultural contexts and the children's personal narratives that reflect their understanding of leadership. This methodology is anchored in the premise that leadership is not merely an attribute but a dynamic process shaped by interactions and experiences within specific sociocultural settings. As Creswell & Poth (2018) highlight, narrative inquiry enables researchers to access lived experiences in culturally grounded ways, while ethnography allows for deep engagement with contextual variables influencing those experiences. By observing daily family interactions and collecting narratives shared by the children, the study aims to provide an in-depth, culturally sensitive understanding of leadership formation in early childhood. Early childhood is widely recognized as a formative period for leadership development, during which foundational skills such as decision-making, cooperation, and empathy are nurtured (Muijs et al., 2004). The choice of an ethno-narrative approach also allows for a rich exploration of the interplay between culture and personal experiences, aligning with the work of Rahatzad et al. (2016) who emphasize that narrative inquiry is essential for understanding how individuals construct meaning in multicultural contexts. This understanding is crucial because early childhood is a formative period for leadership development, where foundational skills such as decision-making, cooperation, and empathy are nurtured.

The choice of an ethno-narrative approach also allows for a rich exploration of the interplay between culture and personal experiences. Through this lens, the research acknowledges that children's interpretations of leadership are deeply influenced by their cultural backgrounds and the diverse environments in which they are raised. This perspective aligns with contemporary theories of leadership that emphasize relational and contextual dimensions, highlighting the importance of culture in shaping leadership practices (Hujala, 2004). The primary participants in this

study are two young children—one boy and one girl—aged between 2 to 7 years, who are members of the researchers' children. This selection of participants is intentional, as it allows for an in-depth examination of the emergence of leadership skills in early childhood within a multicultural and multilingual home environment. The children's ages represent a critical developmental stage during which they begin to express individuality, autonomy, and social awareness, making it an opportune time to explore leadership behaviors. For instance, Hujala (2004) emphasizes that leadership in early childhood settings is a socially constructed and situational phenomenon, influenced by interactions within specific cultural contexts. The children's multicultural background includes influences from at least three different cultures, which enriches the data collection process and allows for a comprehensive understanding of how leadership is expressed in diverse contexts. Each child's experience is unique, shaped by their interactions with family members and the cultural narratives they encounter. This variability is expected to reveal significant insights into how leadership is internalized and expressed differently based on individual temperament, gender, and cultural identity. Aghnaita & Murniati (2023) found that parenting practices in multiracial families are intricately intertwined with the cultural and racial backgrounds of the parents, influencing children's development of independence, discipline, and social behaviors. Particular attention is given to the dynamics within the multicultural family, as these interactions serve as a backdrop for the children's leadership development. The familial context not only provides a supportive environment for exploring leadership skills but also presents challenges and opportunities that may influence how each child perceives and practices leadership. By examining these dynamics, the research seeks to illuminate the complex factors that contribute to leadership formation in children. This approach aligns with the contextual leadership model, which views leadership as a cultural system influenced by various factors, including family, community, and societal values (Hujala, 2004)

Data Collection

Data collection for this study encompasses three primary methods: ethnographic observation, narrative inquiry, and language documentation. Each method is designed to capture different dimensions of the children's experiences, allowing for a holistic understanding of their leadership development. This triangulated approach enhances the validity of qualitative research by providing multiple lenses through which the phenomenon of early leadership can be understood (Denzin, 1978; Flick, 2014).

1. Ethnographic Observation

a. Non-Participant Observation

This research employs non-participant observation as a foundational method for examining children's leadership behaviors within the naturalistic context of family life. Observations are conducted during routine activities such as family playtime, shared meals, and daily household interactions. By maintaining the role of a non-intrusive observer, the researcher minimizes the risk of influencing participants' behavior, thus allowing for the collection of more authentic data (Kawulich, 2005).

The primary aim is to identify key leadership-related behaviors such as decision-making, cooperation, empathy, assertiveness, and conflict resolution as they occur spontaneously in a familiar setting. According to Spradley (1980), non-participant observation in ethnographic research is essential for understanding culturally embedded behaviors as they unfold in real-time social settings. Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner (1979) argue that naturalistic observation is especially valuable in child research because it respects the child's environment while allowing researchers to capture developmentally significant behaviors without adult interference.

Observing children in natural settings provides insights into how they negotiate power and influence within their immediate social group, the family, offering a window into early leadership development. This aligns with findings from Rogoff (2003), who emphasizes the importance of observing children in culturally relevant contexts to fully understand their participation in social practices. The use of this method enables the researcher to access nuanced, context-dependent data that might otherwise be overlooked in more structured research environments.

b. Participant Observation

This study utilizes participant observation with non-participant observation to enhance the comprehension of children's expression and development of leadership abilities in inclusive, multimodal, and multilingual learning contexts. The observer, functioning as both a researcher and an active participant in children's activities, adopts a more involved role—facilitating, responding to, and reflecting on the social and cultural dynamics that emerge in real time. This approach facilitates the collaborative creation of meaning between the researcher and participants, fostering a deeper, more relational comprehension of leadership behaviors (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002).

Participant observation is especially effective for examining how children from many language and cultural backgrounds navigate leadership roles via storytelling, group play, collaborative art projects, and multilingual communication. The researcher observes instances where children begin tasks, involve others, articulate cultural meanings, or express ideas using verbal and non-verbal modalities, including songs, gestures, visuals, or costumes. By participating in the group instead of staying an external

observer, the researcher can effectively capture the dynamic, performative, and frequently symbolic essence of children's leadership (MacNaughton, 2005).

This methodology corresponds with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural perspective, which underscores that growth transpires through engagement and involvement in culturally significant activities. In multilingual and multimodal environments, leadership is not solely conveyed through the use of a dominant language, but rather through a variety of communicative modalities, including code-switching, translation, embodied expression, and symbolic actions. Participant observation renders these less apparent types of leadership more discernible and significant.

Furthermore, direct engagement with children from diverse cultural backgrounds enables the researcher to investigate the influence of inclusive environments on leadership emergence, particularly for children who may be marginalized in monolingual or monocultural contexts. Through engagement in and contemplation of these experiences, the researcher can record the ways in which children develop collective agency, cultivate empathy, and reinforce identity via shared multimodal practices—thereby enhancing the expanding literature on inclusive, culturally responsive leadership in early childhood (Ritchie & Rau, 2006; Cummins, 2000).

This study's participant observation reinforces the objective of honoring diversity and inclusion by elucidating the formation of leadership within diverse, pluralistic environments. It provides access to interactions that are collaboratively generated, contextually grounded, and reflective of the genuine voices and agency of young children in multicultural educational environments.

c. Audio-Visual Recordings

In addition to observational field notes, this study incorporates audio-visual recordings of selected family activities to capture the full spectrum of communicative behaviors. These recordings, made with informed consent, document both verbal and non-verbal elements of communication, including tone of voice, gestures, facial expressions, and posture. Heath et al. (2010) assert that video-based ethnography enhances the capacity for microanalysis, enabling researchers to examine how participants coordinate their actions and speech in real-time interactions.

This multimodal approach is especially relevant for studying young children, who often rely on non-verbal cues to convey leadership behaviors, particularly before their verbal abilities are fully developed. (Jewitt, 2009) emphasizes that in research involving young children, multimodal data including gesture, prosody, and physical movement are essential for interpreting the complexity of their communicative intent. Similarly, Flewitt (2006) notes that multimodal video analysis allows for a more holistic understanding of children's meaning-making processes, especially in social contexts like the home.

The use of video recordings also allows for repeated viewing, which increases analytical depth and supports the identification of recurring patterns in children's leadership expression. Goodwin (2000) stresses that embodied actions—such as gaze, gesture, and spatial orientation are central to how social roles and identities are negotiated during interaction. By combining audio and visual data, the study captures the fluid and dynamic nature of leadership as performed through everyday family discourse and actions.

d. Contextual Analysis

To complement behavioral observations and audio-visual data, the study includes contextual analysis, focusing on environmental and situational factors that may influence children's leadership behaviors. This includes recording details such as the physical layout of the home, the time of day, and the presence or absence of family members during interactions. Contextual analysis is vital because children's behaviors are not isolated acts but are shaped by their immediate social and physical environments (Kontos et al., 2002).

Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), the study situates children's leadership behaviors within the microsystem of the family, where relational patterns and environmental cues play a critical role in development. Tudge et al. (2009) argue that capturing contextual variables is essential for understanding how ecological systems interact to influence children's actions, particularly in naturalistic settings. These contextual details help illuminate how environmental affordances and constraints influence children's capacity to lead, negotiate, and make decisions.

Moreover, understanding the timing and relational dynamics of interactions helps uncover how leadership behaviors emerge during specific routines, such as transitions or conflicts. According to Siraj-Blatchford et al. (2002), contextual documentation enhances the richness of ethnographic data, making it possible to interpret children's social participation more accurately. Through detailed contextual analysis, the study connects micro-level behaviors to macro-level structures, offering a comprehensive view of how leadership is situated within the everyday ecology of family life.

2. Narrative Inquiry

a. Storytelling Sessions

This research employs narrative inquiry to delve into children's perceptions of leadership within familial contexts. Narrative inquiry allows for the exploration of personal experiences, facilitating an understanding of how individuals make sense of their world through storytelling (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In educational research, this method has been instrumental in capturing the complexities of human experience and the meanings individuals ascribe to them (Clandinin, 2006). Weekly storytelling sessions are organized, providing children with a platform to share experiences related to leadership, decision-making, and responsibility. These sessions are designed to be child-centered, encouraging authentic expression and reflection (Riessman, 2008). Through narrative, children construct and convey their identities, offering insights into their understanding of social roles and responsibilities (Bruner, 1991).

b. Play-Based Reflections

Complementing storytelling, play-based reflections are incorporated, allowing children to engage in role-playing scenarios that mirror leadership roles. Play serves as a vital context for cognitive and social development, enabling children to experiment with social roles and norms (Bodrova, E., & Leong, D, 2024). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes the significance of imaginative play in the development of higher mental functions, highlighting its role in internalizing social and cultural experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). Through role-play, children navigate complex social situations, demonstrating their understanding of leadership dynamics and decision-making processes. This method provides a window into children's internalization of leadership concepts and their application in social contexts (Goncu & Gaskins, 2007).

c. Parental Involvement

To enrich the data collection process, parental involvement is encouraged during storytelling and play-based activities. Parents' participation offers a dual perspective, shedding light on family dynamics and cultural narratives that shape children's leadership experiences (Rogoff, 2003). Guided participation, where caregivers support children's learning through shared activities, is pivotal in the development of cognitive and social skills (Rogoff, 1990). Involving parents also facilitates a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural context influencing children's behavior and perceptions. This collaborative approach ensures a holistic view of children's leadership development within their immediate social environment (Tudge et al., 2009).

3. Language Documentation

a. Children Language Pattern

This study closely monitors and documents children's use of language in multilingual home environments to explore how linguistic behaviors reflect emerging leadership qualities. Observations focus on how children navigate between languages, such as when and why they code-switch, the contexts in which they show language preference, and the linguistic strategies they use to influence or guide others during interaction (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Grosjean (2010) argues that bilingual individuals do not function as two separate monolinguals; rather, their language use is dynamic, context-dependent, and shaped by communicative needs. This perspective is reinforced by Wei (2018), who emphasizes that translanguaging practices reflect speakers' flexible and strategic use of their full linguistic repertoires to negotiate meaning and social positioning.

Therefore, the children's language patterns are interpreted not simply as linguistic acts but as meaningful reflections of their cultural and social identities within the family unit (Li, 2011). The documentation pays particular attention to instances where language is used to assert control, resolve conflicts, or offer guidance, situations where leadership behaviors typically surface (Raelin, 2016). This linguistic behavior is situated within the social environment, supporting the notion that language is not neutral but is a form of social action (Gee, 2015). For bilingual children, their language choices may reveal deeper layers of agency, including how they align themselves with certain cultural values or familial expectations depending on whether they speak in their mother tongue or in a second language (Duranti, 2009). As such, language use becomes a site where identity, power, and leadership intersect in subtle but significant ways (Norton & Toohey, 2011).

b. Linguistic Analysis

To interpret these observations, a systematic linguistic analysis is conducted on the recorded verbal exchanges. The aim is to identify language patterns that are consistently associated with leadership behaviors, such as initiating group discussions, directing play scenarios, or offering solutions during conflicts (Blum-Kulka, 1997). Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (2004) provides a theoretical foundation for this analysis by positing that language functions simultaneously in ideational, interpersonal, and textual dimensions. This framework is particularly useful in uncovering how children's linguistic choices serve different social purposes in context (Eggins, 2004).

From this perspective, the way children use language can reveal their understanding of social roles and relationships, especially in how they position themselves as leaders, followers, or negotiators in social

interactions (Christie, 1991). For instance, if a child frequently uses imperatives, mitigated directives, or persuasive language while interacting with siblings, it may indicate a growing ability to influence and manage group dynamics (Cross, 2011). Additionally, variations in tone, register, and vocabulary when speaking with adults versus peers can offer insight into the child's sensitivity to audience and social norms (Corsaro & Everitt, 2023). According to Hasan (2009), linguistic choices are deeply embedded in social structures and reflect underlying power relations, which further supports the view that children's language use is a window into their social cognition and leadership formation (Bernstein, 2003).

c. Cultural Linguistics

Beyond grammar and structure, this research incorporates principles from Cultural Linguistics to understand how language encodes culturally specific ways of thinking and interacting (Sharifian, 2017). This subfield recognizes that language is not just a vehicle for communication but also a repository of cultural values, beliefs, and worldview (Palmer, 1996). By analyzing the metaphors, expressions, and discourse patterns children use when taking on leadership roles, the study seeks to uncover the cultural narratives that shape their understanding of leadership (Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2004).

For example, expressions that reflect collectivist values such as including others in decision-making or using inclusive pronouns like "we" and "us" may reflect cultural teachings about shared responsibility (Triandis, 2018). In contrast, assertive or directive language may be shaped by cultural models of hierarchy and authority within the family (Markus & Kitayama, 2014). Sharifian (2017) argues that cultural conceptualizations encoded in language guide individuals in navigating social relationships, including leadership roles. By embedding this linguistic-cultural analysis in the children's daily interactions, the research offers a richer, context-sensitive understanding of how language and leadership co-evolve in early childhood within a multilingual and multicultural setting (Kramersch, 2013).

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study utilizes both thematic and narrative analysis, enabling the identification of patterns related to leadership behaviors, language use, and cultural expression.

1. Thematic Analysis

a. Coding Process

The initial phase of the analysis involves reviewing and interpreting qualitative data sources namely, field notes, audio-visual recordings, and transcriptions from storytelling sessions. These materials are subjected to open coding, a foundational component of grounded theory methodology in which the data is broken down into discrete parts for comparative analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This method allows the researcher to identify, label, and categorize observable behaviors and narrative content relevant to the research focus (Charmaz, 2006).

Open coding is especially effective in early childhood research because it facilitates the discovery of emergent patterns without imposing pre-established categories (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, codes such as "assertiveness," "empathy," "role assumption," and "collaborative decision-making" are initially identified. These reflect not only the verbal expressions but also non-verbal and situational behaviors associated with children's leadership, aligning with findings by Palaiologou (2016), who emphasizes the importance of observing children's interactions in naturalistic settings.

b. Refinement of Themes

After the initial open coding, the process continues with the refinement and categorization of these codes into broader themes and detailed sub-themes. This aligns with Braun & Clarke (2006) six-phase approach to thematic analysis, which includes reviewing, defining, and naming themes to ensure they meaningfully capture the nuances within the data. Thematic analysis is especially valuable for its flexibility and capacity to reveal both semantic and latent meanings in qualitative research (Nowell et al., 2017).

As themes develop, they are divided into more granular sub-themes. For instance, the broad theme of "assertiveness" may be split into "verbal assertiveness," "non-verbal cues," and "contextual assertiveness," depending on how the children express leadership across different situations. This practice of organizing themes into increasingly abstract units of meaning reflects Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's (2014) conceptualization of qualitative data analysis as a cyclical process of data reduction and abstraction. Moreover, thematic refinement is essential in ensuring that each theme remains closely tied to the data while contributing to a coherent analytical framework (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

c. Cross-Comparison

To further enrich the analysis, a cross-comparison is conducted between the leadership behaviors of the two children involved in the study. This technique uses the constant comparative method outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967), where data segments are continuously compared across cases to identify similarities and differences. This method supports theory development through the ongoing integration and differentiation of data points (Boeije, 2002). Such comparative analysis allows

researchers to explore the role of individual differences, such as gender, personality traits, or temperament, in shaping leadership behaviors. For example, research by MacNaughton (2005) indicates that children's leadership styles are often influenced by socio-cultural expectations of gender, while Denham et al. (2014) highlight the role of emotional self-regulation in peer leadership. By examining these nuances, the analysis can more accurately account for how leadership is uniquely constructed and demonstrated by each participant. To maintain rigor and trustworthiness throughout the coding and analytical process, multiple strategies are employed. One key method is data triangulation, which involves validating findings across different data sources such as transcripts, observational notes, and visual recordings (Patton, 2015). This strengthens the credibility of the themes and reduces the risk of bias or misinterpretation (Carter et al., 2014).

Additionally, iterative coding where coding is revisited multiple times as new insights emerge is applied to ensure that themes remain grounded in the data and reflect the evolving understanding of participant behavior (Saldaña, 2021). The practice of audit trails and reflexive memoing, as recommended by Lincoln & Guba (1985), is also employed to document the researcher's analytical decisions and ensure transparency. These steps align with Nowell et al. (2017), who emphasize the importance of methodological rigor and transparency in thematic analysis to establish trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry. The data analysis technique employed in this study is thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method used to analyze qualitative data by identifying patterns that lead to the emergence of themes from the data collected by the researcher (Braun & Clarke, as cited in Heriyanto, 2019). This method is considered appropriate for analyzing qualitative data, and it involves six key phases as developed by Braun and Clarke in 2006 (Zulystiawati, 2020).

1. **Familiarization.** The first phase involves becoming deeply acquainted with the data to gain a comprehensive understanding before beginning detailed analysis of individual elements.
 2. **Coding.** Coding refers to highlighting sections of the text—typically phrases or sentences—and assigning shorthand labels or "codes" that describe the content of these segments.
 3. **Generating themes.** In this stage, the researcher examines the established codes, identifies patterns among them, and begins to develop broader themes. Themes are more abstract and comprehensive than individual codes.
 4. **Reviewing themes.** This phase involves ensuring that the developed themes are meaningful and accurately represent the dataset. The researcher revisits the data, and if issues arise, themes may be split, combined, discarded, or newly constructed.
 5. **Defining and naming themes.** After finalizing the list of themes, each theme is clearly defined and appropriately named. This definition process helps articulate the core meaning of each theme, which is essential for interpreting the data.
 6. **Writing.** The final phase is writing the thematic analysis. As with all academic texts, this includes an introduction that outlines the research questions, objectives, and approach. The methodology section must also explain how data were collected (e.g., through semi-structured interviews or open-ended survey questions) and how the thematic analysis was conducted
2. Narrative Analysis

Narrative Framing: Each child's storytelling responses will be analyzed as distinct narratives, focusing on how they frame their leadership experiences and sense of agency. This analysis will explore the themes and motifs present in their narratives, examining how children construct their identities and understanding of leadership through storytelling. **Agency and Identity:** A critical component of narrative analysis involves understanding how children perceive their roles within the family and the larger cultural context. The focus is on narrative framing, wherein children articulate their leadership experiences and sense of agency through story. According to Riessman (2008) narrative analysis involves studying the ways in which people construct meaning in and through their storytelling, paying attention to both content and structure. By analyzing the language and imagery used in their stories, the research will reveal insights into how children see themselves as leaders and the attributes they associate with effective leadership. As Bamberg (2006) argues, narratives not only reflect identity but actively shape and perform it. **Cultural Context:** The narrative analysis will also consider the broader cultural narratives that inform the children's storytelling. This aspect of the analysis aims to connect individual narratives to larger cultural discourses on leadership and agency. As Bruner (1990) explains, narratives are deeply embedded in cultural frameworks that influence how individuals interpret and relay their experiences.

A key component of narrative analysis involves examining how children position themselves within their stories, particularly in relation to others, such as peers, family members, or authority figures. This positioning reveals the extent to which they perceive themselves as active agents or passive participants in leadership contexts. Bamberg (2006) asserts that narrative identity is performative, children use stories not only to describe experiences but to enact and negotiate their identities. By analyzing linguistic features such as pronoun use, evaluative language, and metaphors, this study seeks to uncover how children see themselves as leaders and how they attribute meaning to their actions and decisions. Finally, narrative analysis involves ethical reflection on how children's stories are

interpreted and represented in research. Researchers must remain sensitive to the authenticity and complexity of children's voices, avoiding reductionist interpretations. As Chase (2005) emphasizes, narrative research requires attentiveness to the co-construction of meaning between researcher and participant, as well as the ethical implications of presenting those meanings to broader audiences. This study will ensure that children's narratives are presented with contextual depth and interpretive care.

3. Ethical Considerations and Reflexivity

Given that the researcher is also a parent of the participants, maintaining ethical integrity and managing potential biases is paramount. Reflexive practices are employed throughout the research process to ensure objectivity and transparency. As Guillemin & Gillam (2004) assert, reflexivity is not only about methodological transparency but also about being ethically responsive throughout the research process.

To enhance the credibility and reliability of this study, multiple strategies are implemented. Triangulation is employed through the use of multiple data sources, including observations, interviews, and document analysis, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. This methodological triangulation strengthens the credibility of findings by allowing cross-verification of data from different sources. Prolonged engagement with participants over an extended period allows for deeper understanding and helps establish trust, thereby enhancing the dependability of the data collected. Audit trail and Code-Recode were used to ensure the research is done in a clear, consistent, and methodical way so that the results can be trusted and aren't the result of biases or choices made without thinking about them first. Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that methodologies such as audit trails, code-recode procedures, and stepwise replication are crucial for ensuring dependability in qualitative research. Their primary objective is to guarantee that the research process remains systematic, consistent, and transparent, thereby enhancing the credibility of findings. These strategies ensure methodical, consistent, and transparent research processes, producing reliable findings uninfluenced by uncontrolled biases or arbitrary decisions. An audit trail provides comprehensive documentation of the research process, enabling others to follow data collection, analysis, and interpretation methods, improving transparency and accountability. The code-recode technique assesses consistency in researcher judgments over time by comparing initial and subsequent coding of identical data, mitigating temporal bias effects and ensuring result consistency. These measures collectively strengthen the trustworthiness and rigor of the qualitative research design.

Reflexive Practices: Reflexive journaling is utilized as a method for the researcher to document personal reflections, thoughts, and feelings related to the research process. This practice encourages self-awareness and helps to separate personal perspectives from objective observations, promoting a clearer understanding of the data. By regularly reflecting on the researcher's role and influence, the study aims to mitigate bias and enhance the validity of the findings. This aligns with the views of Finlay (2002) who emphasizes that reflexivity involves ongoing critical reflection on one's assumptions, values, and behavior. By documenting thoughts and emotions throughout the data collection and analysis phases, the researcher can trace how interpretations may be shaped and consciously work to manage bias.

Peer Reviews: Incorporating peer reviews is another critical aspect of maintaining ethical rigor. Throughout the research process, the researcher seeks feedback from colleagues and experts in qualitative research to ensure the robustness of emerging themes and interpretations. Lincoln & Guba (1985) advocate for peer debriefing as a key strategy in establishing confirmability and dependability in qualitative studies. These collaborative discussions provide diverse perspectives and help to refine the analysis, enhancing the credibility of the research findings.

Informed Consent and Confidentiality: Informed consent is obtained from all family members prior to participation in the study. In addition, strict attention is paid to informed consent and confidentiality. As outlined by the British Educational Research Association British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2018) ethical research with children must ensure that participants and their guardians are fully informed, and their identities protected. The children's parents are fully briefed on the research aims, methods, and potential outcomes, ensuring that they understand the nature of their involvement. Supporting this, Mathews (2022) emphasize that ethical engagement in research involving minors requires transparency, ongoing consent, and the safeguarding of identity. Additionally, pseudonyms are used in all research outputs to maintain confidentiality and protect the participants' identities. This commitment to ethical standards reinforces the respect for the participants' privacy and autonomy, while also ensuring the integrity of the research.

Impact of Researcher Identity: The researcher's identity as a parent and family member is acknowledged as a potential influence on the research process. As Pillow (2003) warns, uncritical self-disclosure can reinforce rather than resolve power imbalances. This recognition encourages a critical examination of how personal biases may shape observations and interpretations. By actively engaging in reflexive practices and seeking external feedback, the researcher aims to navigate these complexities and ensure that the research remains focused on the participants' voices and experiences. Inclusion and diversity in children's education have become increasingly important focuses amid the ever-diversifying global dynamics. According to Cummins (2000), integrating multimodality and multilingualism in educational practices enhances children's agency and engagement, enabling them to express themselves through varied modes and languages. Modern education not only aims to develop children's cognitive knowledge and academic skills but also encourages social and cultural values that enable them to interact, collaborate, and appreciate differences in a multicultural society. In this context, children's leadership skills,

recognized as an important social capital, play a key role in shaping a generation with cultural, social, and linguistic awareness. Utilizing multimodality and multilingualism as pedagogical approaches can provide children with rich opportunities to develop these skills in an inclusive and diverse environment.

3. Result And Discussion

3.1. Result

This section summarises and analyses the study's findings on how multicultural and multilingual home contexts influence early childhood leadership development. In-depth observation, narrative accounts, and ethnographic insights have revealed key themes, emphasising the importance of multicultural family dynamics, multilingualism, multimodal communication, early leadership traits, and inclusive thinking in developing leadership skills in young children. The following discussion interprets these themes and sub-themes to provide a thorough knowledge of how these elements contribute to early leadership development in a diverse home situation.

Table 3.1. Core Themes and Sub-Themes

Core-Themes	Sub-Themes
Multicultural Family Dynamics	a. Exposure to Multiple Cultures b. Family Values on Diversity and Inclusion
Early Childhood Leadership Development	a. The Positive Impact c. The Negative Experiences
Multilingualism and Language Development	a. Language Switching and Adaptability b. Cognitive and Social Benefits of Multilingualism
Multimodal Communication	a. Verbal Communication Skills b. Non-Verbal Communication Skills c. Creative Expressions d. Social Awareness
Leadership Skills Development	a. Intercultural Communication b. Empathy and Perspective-Taking c. Symbolic and Creative Expression

In a multicultural family, children grow up exposed to various cultural perspectives and practices, shaping their understanding of diversity and inclusion from an early age. As multicultural and multi-language family, the children engage in some of multi-traditions activities and celebrations. Through the help from aunties and grandmothers/grandfathers, the children explored the cultural and leadership values from bed-time stories, folklores, legend, and myth. Culinary and traditional costumes brought or given by families for their school harmony day in Australia shown the exposures of the variations in their cultural background. When lived in Australia, they were exposed with multi-ethnic and multinationality friends from their fellow Indonesian, India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Singapore, Fiji, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Bosnia, and Cambodia, in everyday interaction.

The study shows that children raised in multi-tribal and multi-national contexts inherently cultivate empathy and perspective-taking as fundamental leadership competencies. They acquire the ability to identify various emotions and cultural responses; for example, comprehending why certain classmates bow in welcome while others extend a handshake. These youngsters are introduced early to a variety of worldviews, enabling them to respect and adjust to differing attitudes like sharing, authority, or celebration. They intently absorb narratives, melodies, and sensations conveyed in various languages or dialects, frequently discerning meanings that transcend mere words. When encountering different habits or behaviors, they pose insightful inquiries, demonstrating interest and respect rather than judgment. They cultivate a robust feeling of inclusion, frequently engaging with those who may be marginalized owing to cultural or linguistic disparities. A child might see that a peer from a different tribe abstains from pork and inform others without mockery. Another option may use a peer with poor Bahasa proficiency utilizing gestures or illustrations for communication. A third child might console a buddy lamenting the absence from a cultural holiday by inquiring about their familial traditions and attentively listening. These minor yet impactful actions exemplify nascent leadership rooted in empathy, cultural sensitivity, and concern for others.

Symbolic and creative expression is an important leadership skill for young children, especially those from different tribes and nations. This talent is about using visual arts, performance, dance, or traditional clothing to show who you are culturally and encourage your peers to be proud of their own culture. Participation in cultural festivals, storytelling activities, or costume-themed days at school or in the community is a common way to encourage it. Through these activities, kids learn how to be expressive leaders and have confidence in their own sense of style. These are important skills that let them communicate in meaningful ways and encourage inclusiveness without having to use words. For instance, a 5-year-old child with Makassarese/Buginese-Gorontalo ancestry who was born and reared in Melbourne in both Australian and Indonesian communities is a great illustration of this. During a cultural event at school, the child sings a song in three languages: Bahasa Indonesia, Gorontaloan, and English. They also tell their classmates what a traditional Indonesian greeting means, which adds context and warmth to the

performance. The child makes sure that everyone in the group feels seen and heard, especially those from backgrounds that aren't as well represented. By doing this, the child shows not only symbolic and artistic expression, but also a mix of multicultural communication, empathy, storytelling, and inclusion, which are all important parts of early leadership development.

Table 3.2. Sub-Themes and Activity Samples

Sub-Themes	Example Responses or Activities
Exposure to Multiple Cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Nenek (Grandma) from mother side, regularly visit from neighboring province, introduced the children with new food, new stories and sharing time, as they always asked their Nenek to sleep in their room and have the sleep-over party. b. They celebrated their harmony day to see that they came from multicultural background with their national food, customs, songs, and of course, language.
Multilingualism and Language Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Language Acquisition Patterns b. Code-Switching and Language Mixing c. Leading The Conversation d. Identity Formation e. Mommy-Daddy Roles f. Technology and Language Rich-Media
Multimodal Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Story telling b. Home Puppet Show c. Bedtime Stories d. Ask me Anything
Leadership Skills Development	<p>Lisya went to local kindergarten in Gorontalo and went to Westall Primary School in Melbourne, while Abdillah born and raised in Melbourne and went to kindergarten in Gorontalo school. Abdillah experienced allineation as he speak English as his first language in 100 percent Indonesian-Gorontalo Speaking School, resulting in less-gained local and Indonesian language, while Lisya gained more friends and language development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Building Cross-Cultural Friendships vs Alienation. b. Empathy and Perspective-Taking c. Symbolic and Creative Expression

3. Discussion

This study explores the use of multiple variations of modes and language as key strategies to celebrate diversity and inclusivity while fostering children's leadership abilities. The utilization of different learning and communication modes in multilingual environments will help children have a comprehensive framework for leadership development. Barton (2023) emphasizes that multimodal strategies, such as Visual Thinking Strategies and Talking Drawings, provide multilingual learners with diverse avenues to access content and express themselves, thereby enhancing their leadership skills. Similarly, Lexander & Androutopoulos (2023) highlight that digital communication tools enable children in multilingual families to maintain social relationships and construct transnational identities, fostering leadership qualities like adaptability and cultural competence. Palviainen & Rais (2023) found that children using instant messaging applications like WhatsApp for family communication practiced writing in heritage languages, promoting informal language learning and leadership skills. Meanwhile, this research underscores how these approaches improve children's leadership skills which also covers cultural competence, cognitive flexibility, and adaptability. Through the implementation of inclusive leadership workshops, multimodal and multilingual clubs, and diverse community projects, the study illustrates practical applications and benefits. Ultimately, this research aims to prepare children to become empathetic, innovative, and effective leaders capable of thriving in a diverse and interconnected world.

In an increasingly globalized society, children raised in diverse and multicultural homes have unique opportunities to develop important leadership qualities at a young age. Engaging in multilingual family literacy activities supports children's cultural and linguistic identities, as affirmed by (Harris et al., 2025). These practices promote cognitive flexibility and adaptability, essential traits for effective leadership. Moreover, the use of translanguaging and plurilingual practices in family communication, as observed by Dillon et al. (2024) allows children to navigate complex linguistic environments, further developing their leadership competencies. The incorporation of home languages in educational settings, as advocated by Barton (2023), also reinforces children's cultural competence and self-esteem, contributing to their overall leadership development. These kids have experience interacting with people from other backgrounds by being exposed to a variety of languages and communication methods, which increases their feeling of inclusion, empathy, and flexibility. This essay investigates how multicultural

families might actively cultivate early leadership qualities in young children by incorporating multimodality (the use of several modes of communication) and multilingualism. In this case, "multimodality" means using different ways of communicating to make it easier to understand and explain yourself, such as spoken and written language, visual aids, gestures, and digital media. In contrast, a multilingual child hears and uses multiple languages at home and in the community. This exposure can help them develop a more well-rounded view of the world and their brainpower. All of these ideas work together to make a welcoming space that values difference and pushes kids to learn important leadership skills that they will need to get through the complicated world we live in today.

Leadership abilities of children are significantly enhanced by the diverse communication practices that exist within multicultural families. Implementing inclusive leadership workshops, multimodal and multilingual clubs, and diverse community projects provides practical applications of these findings. Mistretta (2021) emphasizes that personalized, face-to-face, informal communication best supports positive family–school partnerships, which are crucial for children's leadership development. Engaging families in culturally sustaining pedagogies, as discussed by Harris et al. (2023), ensures that children's home languages and cultures are valued and integrated into their learning experiences. Additionally, the use of digital communication tools, as highlighted by Lexander and Androutopoulos (2023), facilitates the maintenance of heritage languages and cultural identities, further supporting children's leadership skills. These approaches collectively prepare children to become empathetic, innovative, and effective leaders capable of thriving in a diverse and interconnected world. It underscores that these abilities can be fostered through routine home interactions. By studying the benefits of multimodal and multilingual interaction, the discussion will demonstrate how families may build nurturing environments that foster empathy, problem-solving, adaptability, and effective communication, all of which are essential for successful leadership.

Diversity and inclusion: important roles in the formative years of children's lives

Nurturing a diverse and inclusive perspective in children begins at an early age and is essential to their personal growth and development. Studies have shown that kids who grow up in places with lots of different cultures, languages, and ways of expressing themselves are more likely to be open-minded, socially flexible, and caring about other people. This is important because empathy and the ability to change are integral parts of effective leadership. According to Clayden et al. (2023) exposure to multiple languages and cultures during early childhood enhances not only cognitive abilities but also fosters inclusive thinking and cultural sensitivity. Emmanuel & Smith (2023) emphasize that intercultural experiences during childhood are associated with increased pro-social behaviors and reduced prejudice, contributing to a more inclusive worldview. Similarly, O'Reilly et al. (2022) found that early engagement with diverse communities significantly boosts children's capacity for critical thinking and moral reasoning. In addition, Barrett (2018) suggest that children raised in multicultural households display stronger intercultural communication skills and a deeper appreciation for diversity, preparing them to be empathetic leaders in a globalized society. Families who immerse their children in a multicultural home environment provide them the opportunity to engage with a diverse range of ideas, learn tolerance, and appreciate the benefits that each culture brings.

A diversified upbringing is beneficial to a child's cognitive development, according to research. Research in developmental psychology suggests that early exposure to several languages and cultures fosters cognitive flexibility, or the capacity to shift gears and adapt to novel contexts. Harvey (2011) found that dual language learners exhibit superior executive functions, including problem-solving and adaptability, compared to monolingual peers. Similarly, a study by Fan et al. (2015) demonstrated that children exposed to multiple languages develop better perspective-taking abilities, facilitating more nuanced social interactions. Moreover, research by Tadmor & Tetlock (2006) indicates that bicultural individuals possess greater cognitive complexity, enabling them to navigate complex social situations effectively. These findings collectively suggest that a multicultural upbringing fosters essential leadership skills by promoting cognitive agility and social understanding. According to Banks (2015), young leaders who are required to negotiate complex social circumstances and make decisions that consider many points of view could benefit tremendously from possessing this competence. Furthermore, research by Phinney & Ong (2007) suggests that multicultural experiences contribute to a more integrated and confident personal identity, which is foundational for authentic leadership. Thus, embracing diversity from a young age equips children with the cultural awareness and self-assurance necessary for effective leadership. In order to develop good interpersonal skills, children need to learn to appreciate differences, and this is best accomplished when they are raised in an accepting and diverse atmosphere that embraces diversity. Exposure to inclusive practices early on also helps kids learn how to work well with others from different backgrounds, which can assist them in their future leadership roles. As Petrovic & Olmstead (2001) emphasizes, empowering children through language and cultural inclusion is key to developing their full potential as future leaders. Children in multicultural contexts learn that diversity is a strength by knowing and respecting different cultural norms and recognising the benefits of different communication techniques. Once they get older, this base will help them connect with people from all walks of life in deeper ways, making them leaders who care about others and welcome everyone.

Multimodal and Multilingual Pathways to Children's Inclusive Leadership Model

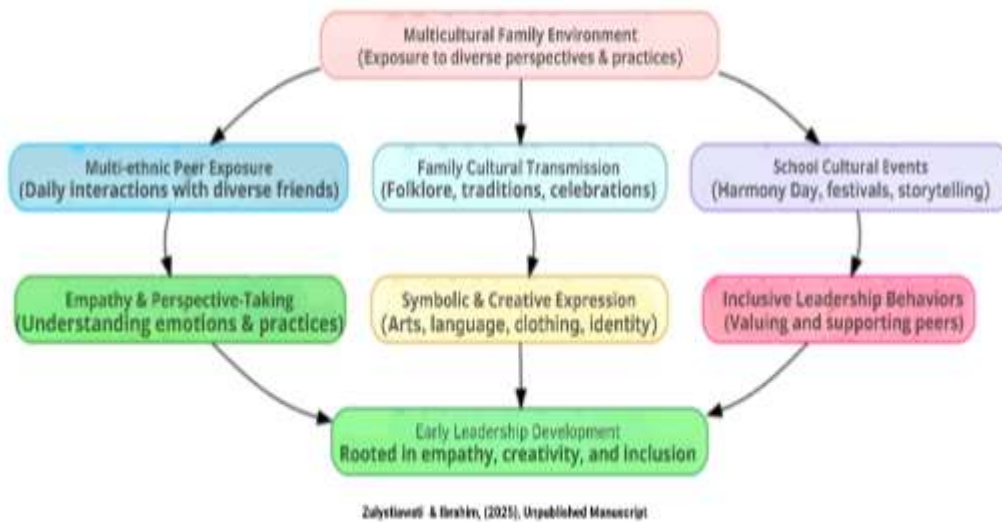


Figure 3.2.1. The Model of Multimodal and Multilingual Pathways to Children's Inclusive Leadership

Children in multicultural and multilingual homes encounter a variety of customs, languages, and behaviors via familial narratives, cultural festivities, and encounters with peers from diverse ethnic backgrounds. These experiences enable students to observe, engage, and articulate themselves through narrative, visual art, music, and symbolic performances. Consequently, they cultivate early leadership competencies including empathy, cultural awareness, inclusivity, communication, and creative expression. This ultimately promotes inclusive leadership and intercultural competence, allowing for the respect of variety and the cultivation of belonging from a young age.

2. Study Limitations and Future Research Directions

This research acknowledges several important limitations that may impact the generalizability and scope of findings. First, the sample size and demographic representation were limited to multicultural families within a specific geographical context, which may not capture the full spectrum of diversity found in other cultural settings or socioeconomic backgrounds. The researcher's dual role as both parent and investigator, while managed through reflexive practices, may have introduced inherent biases that could influence data interpretation despite triangulation efforts. The longitudinal scope of this study was constrained, limiting observations of leadership development over extended periods. Leadership skills evolve gradually, and a longer observation period would provide more comprehensive insights into their development trajectory. Additionally, the measurement of leadership skills in young children presents inherent challenges, as traditional leadership assessment tools may not be developmentally appropriate for early childhood contexts. The study's focus on home environments may not fully capture how multimodal and multilingual practices translate to formal educational settings or peer interactions outside family contexts. Furthermore, cultural variations in leadership conceptualization across different cultural backgrounds were not extensively explored, potentially limiting the universality of findings.

Future research should expand the sample diversity to include families from various socioeconomic backgrounds, geographical locations, and cultural contexts to enhance generalizability. Longitudinal studies tracking children's leadership development from early childhood through adolescence would provide valuable insights into the sustained impact of multimodal and multilingual practices. Comparative studies examining leadership development in monolingual versus multilingual households could strengthen evidence for the specific contributions of multilingualism to leadership skills. Additionally, research investigating the translation of home practices to school settings would illuminate how educational institutions can better support and leverage multicultural students' linguistic and cultural assets. Quantitative measures complementing qualitative observations could provide more robust evidence of leadership skill development. Future studies could also explore technology-mediated multimodal practices given the increasing role of digital communication in children's lives. Cross-cultural investigations examining how different cultural conceptualizations of leadership influence the development and expression of leadership skills in multicultural contexts would contribute to a more nuanced understanding. Finally, intervention studies testing specific multimodal and multilingual strategies in controlled educational settings could provide practical guidance for educators and policymakers seeking to implement these approaches systematically.

3. Conclusion

Children's leadership abilities are best fostered in multicultural and multilingual household contexts, according to the results. Children learn to be confident in unfamiliar social circumstances, articulate their ideas well, and model inclusive and empathetic leadership when they interact with others from different cultural backgrounds and language backgrounds. Teachers and parents may do a better job of encouraging young children to become leaders by helping them grasp these dynamics and laying an emphasis on flexibility, tolerance, and variety. Children from multicultural households are more likely to grow up to be compassionate, accepting, and self-assured global citizens because of the experiences they get in their early years. It is advised that subsequent studies examine the impact of multicultural and multilingual household dynamics on children's leadership development throughout different educational phases and social environments. Governments and educational authorities should incorporate multicultural education, inclusive language practices, and intercultural leadership training into early childhood and primary school curricula for effective policy implementation. Policies may also offer organized assistance for parents and communities, including parenting workshops, multilingual educational materials, and intercultural exchange initiatives that promote the principles of empathy, tolerance, and flexibility. By institutionalizing these strategies, governments can establish more equitable chances for children from varied circumstances to develop leadership qualities that equip them to succeed as compassionate and globally competent citizens.

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