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Paper: “Elementary School Principals’ Reported Culturally Responsive Leadership Practices: A Quantitative Examination by Race”

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Corresponding Author: Ezzeldin R. Aly

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Peer review:

Reviewer 1: Carlos M. Azcoitia
National Louis University, USA

Reviewer 2: Stamatios Papadakis
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Asyut University, Egypt

ESJ Manuscript Evaluation Form 2026

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Please respond within the appointed time so that we can give the authors timely responses and feedback.

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Evaluation Criteria:

Please give each evaluation item a numeric rating on a 5-point scale, along with a thorough explanation for each point rating.

Questions	Rating Result [Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]
1. The title is clear, and it is adequate for the content of the article.	4
(Please insert your comments)	

The title is clear and reflects the main focus on elementary school principals, culturally responsive leadership, and race. However, the phrase “quantitative examination by race” suggests a stronger statistical design than the manuscript actually supports.	
2. The abstract presents objectives, methods, and results.	2
<i>(Please insert your comments)</i> The abstract includes the objective, sample, instrument, and general findings, but it contains inconsistencies. It reports no significant racial differences while also claiming significant differences in specific domains that are not properly supported later in the results.	
3. There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.	1
<i>(Please insert your comments)</i> There are more than a few errors. The manuscript contains repeated grammar, wording, and spelling problems, including terms such as “school moral,” “ethnic of bonding,” “teacher effectiveness,” and unclear sentences that affect meaning.	
4. The study methods are explained clearly.	2
<i>(Please insert your comments)</i> The general design, sample, instrument, and analysis are described, but key details are insufficient or unclear. The sampling strategy is inconsistent, the adaptation and reliability of the instrument are not adequately reported, and the categorisation of Likert-scale scores is not well justified.	
5. The results are clear and do not contain errors.	1
<i>(Please insert your comments)</i> The results contain serious errors. The manuscript reports $p = .388$ as non-significant in one place but later describes the same result as significant and even reports $p = 3.88$, which is impossible. The chi-square assumptions are also violated, with many expected cell counts below five.	
6. The conclusions or summary are accurate and supported by the content.	2
<i>(Please insert your comments)</i> The conclusions are only partly supported. The manuscript makes broad claims about ethical practice, relationship building, and leadership effectiveness, but these claims are not backed by complete statistical evidence. The discussion over-interprets weak and inconsistent findings.	

7. The references are comprehensive and appropriate.	1
<i>(Please insert your comments)</i> <i>The reference list includes relevant foundational literature, but citation accuracy needs careful checking. Some in-text citations do not clearly match the reference list, and some sources appear only weakly connected to the claims they support.</i>	

Overall Recommendation (mark an X with your recommendation) :

Accepted, no revision needed	
Accepted, minor revision needed	
Return for major revision and resubmission	
Reject	

Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):

Dear author(s)

The manuscript addresses an important topic, namely culturally responsive school leadership and the possible relationship between principals' racial identities and their perceptions of culturally responsive practice. The topic has clear relevance for educational leadership, equity, and school improvement. However, the current version is not yet publishable because the research design, statistical reporting, interpretation of findings, and writing do not provide a sufficiently reliable basis for the conclusions being drawn.

The most serious problem concerns the statistical analysis. The manuscript relies mainly on chi-square tests of independence, but the reported table states that six cells, or 66.7%, have expected counts below five, with a minimum expected count of .39. This violates a core assumption of the chi-square test and means that the reported p-value cannot be treated as reliable in the way the manuscript currently treats it. With a total sample of 46 and three racial groups, the cell sizes are too small for several of the comparisons being attempted. If the analysis is retained, the manuscript needs either a more suitable statistical approach or a much more cautious interpretation. As it stands, the inferential results do not support the strength of the claims made in the abstract, results, discussion, and conclusion.

There is also a major inconsistency in the interpretation of the main finding. One part of the results reports $\chi^2(4, N = 46) = 4.136, p = .388$ and correctly states that the null hypothesis was not rejected. A later paragraph describes the same result as statistically significant and reports $p = 3.88$. A p-value cannot be greater than 1, and .388 is not statistically significant at the .05 level. This is not a minor typographical issue because it changes the meaning of the study's main result. The manuscript needs to correct this and ensure that all claims about statistical significance correspond exactly to the reported analysis.

The manuscript also claims that statistically significant differences emerged in ethical practices, relationship building, and leadership effectiveness, but the necessary statistical evidence is not provided. There are no complete tables showing domain-level descriptive statistics, observed and expected frequencies, chi-square values, degrees of freedom, p-values, or effect sizes for those domains. Without these details, the reader cannot evaluate whether these domain-specific claims are valid. If such analyses were conducted, they need to be reported transparently. If they were not conducted, the claims should be removed.

The operationalisation of the dependent variable needs stronger justification. The manuscript states that Likert-scale responses were totalled and then grouped into low, moderate, and high cultural responsiveness categories. This transformation loses information and appears arbitrary. The cut-points of 1.0–2.0, 2.1–3.0, and 3.1–4.0 are not justified theoretically or empirically. This decision also contributes to the sparse-cell problem in the chi-square analysis. The manuscript should explain why this categorisation was necessary and why it is preferable to analysing scale or domain scores using methods more appropriate for ordinal or continuous composite measures.

The instrument section is underdeveloped. The manuscript reports that the Culturally Responsive Principals Rating Scale was adapted from prior work and that reliability coefficients exceeded .80, but it does not report the exact coefficients, whether they refer to the original instrument or the present sample, or whether each subscale was reliable in this study. Since the instrument appears to have been adapted from another context, the manuscript also needs to explain how its content validity was assessed for elementary principals in Florida's Panhandle. Several items in the appendix appear context-specific or awkwardly worded, and some seem to refer to school-wide practices rather than principals' own leadership practices. This matters because the study interprets the responses as principals' culturally responsive leadership, while the instrument may partly measure perceptions of school climate, teacher behaviour, and community engagement.

The sample description is inconsistent and needs correction. The abstract states that sixty-six principals were involved but forty-six participated. Later sections report different distributions for Caucasian and Hispanic principals. In one place, Caucasian principals are 21.7% and Hispanic principals 19.6%; elsewhere, Hispanic principals are 21.7% and White principals 19.6%. The table shown in the results section is incomplete, listing only African American principals and the total. These inconsistencies make it difficult to understand the actual composition of the sample. The manuscript should provide one accurate demographic table including race, gender if collected, years of experience, district context, and any other variables used in the analysis.

The sampling strategy also needs clearer explanation. The manuscript describes the sampling as purposeful and says that representation across race, gender, and experience was ensured. However, the study invited the full target population of 66 elementary principals and received 46 responses. This appears closer to a census attempt with non-response than to purposeful sampling. If purposeful sampling was used, the criteria and recruitment process need to be described more precisely. If all eligible principals were invited, then the manuscript should state this and discuss possible non-response bias.

The discussion currently over-interprets the findings. The main reported result is non-significant, and the statistical assumptions are not met. Yet the discussion makes broad claims about culturally responsive leadership being driven more by reflective practice, professional competence, relational capacity, ethical decision-making, and inclusive environments than by race. These claims may be plausible, but they are not demonstrated by the analysis presented. The study did not appear to measure reflective practice, professional competence, preparation, school demographic context, or observed leadership behaviour in a way that would allow such conclusions. The discussion should

be rewritten to distinguish clearly between what the data show, what the literature suggests, and what remains speculative.

The manuscript would also benefit from a more focused contribution. At present, the literature review covers culturally responsive pedagogy, culturally sustaining pedagogy, critical race theory, leadership, accountability policy, education debt, discipline, and professional development. Much of this material is relevant in a broad sense, but the review does not always lead directly to the research question and the chosen quantitative design. The manuscript needs a sharper argument explaining why principals' race is the central independent variable, what prior empirical studies have found on this specific relationship, and what gap this study can realistically fill with a sample of 46 principals from one region.

The literature review is mostly centred on US-based equity and leadership scholarship, which is understandable given the study context. Still, some references are broad, older, or only loosely connected to the specific empirical question. The manuscript would benefit from a more selective review of recent empirical work on culturally responsive school leadership, principal identity, leadership preparation, and equity-oriented school leadership. It should also avoid using citations to support claims that they do not directly address. It is also suggested that the authors consider the following studies to enhance the intro and LR sections of the present study. Karakose, T., Tülübaşı, T., & Papadakis, S. (2023). The scientific evolution of social justice leadership in education: Structural and longitudinal analysis of the existing knowledge base, 2003–2022. *Frontiers in Education*, 8, Article 1139648. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2023.1139648>

The reference list and citation logic require careful checking. Several in-text citations do not appear to match the reference list precisely. For example, "Fuller, 2020" appears in the text, while the reference list includes Johnson and Fuller. "Barnett, 2016" appears in the text, while the reference list includes Ritter and Barnett. There is also an incomplete reference-style citation to Ladson-Billings in the text. Some sources seem only weakly connected to the claims they support, such as the use of Berwick's work on moral determinants of health in relation to school achievement gaps. These issues do not prove misconduct, but they do require editorial and authorial verification. The manuscript should be checked line by line to ensure that each citation exists, is accurate, and supports the claim being made.

The ethics reporting is partly adequate but still needs refinement. The manuscript reports institutional review board approval, a reference number, an approval date, voluntary participation, and informed consent. This is appropriate for a survey study with adult human participants. However, the appendix includes direct personal contact details and a consent form that may not be suitable for publication in its current form. The manuscript should ensure that no unnecessary identifiable or private information is published. It should also state more clearly how anonymity or confidentiality was maintained, who had access to the raw data, how long data will be stored, and whether participants could be identified indirectly given the small number of principals in a defined geographic area.

The data availability statement is not satisfactory. The manuscript states that all data are included in the paper, but the paper does not include the data needed to verify the analyses. It includes only limited demographic information and one incomplete or partial statistical table. If the journal permits data sharing, an anonymised dataset or at least a full statistical output should be made available. If data cannot be shared because of confidentiality risks in a small professional population, the statement should say this clearly and explain what can be made available on reasonable request.

The writing needs substantial revision. The issue is not only grammar. There are repetitions, contradictory statements, incomplete sentences, incorrect terms, and wording errors that affect meaning. Examples include "school moral" instead of "school morale," "ethnic of bonding" instead of

“ethics of bonding,” “expected countless than five,” “teacher effectiveness,” and “systemic racism in interacts structures.” The discussion and conclusion repeat several ideas without adding analytical depth. The manuscript needs careful editing for accuracy, concision, and internal consistency after the analysis has been corrected.

In its present form, the manuscript does not provide a sufficiently valid empirical basis for its conclusions. The central statistical result is misreported and misinterpreted, the assumptions of the main test are violated, the claimed domain-level findings are not documented, and several parts of the manuscript contradict one another. A publishable version would need a corrected and transparent analysis, a more defensible treatment of the survey data, complete tables, a clearer account of the sample and instrument, a more restrained discussion, and a thorough reference and language check.

Comments and Suggestions to the Editors Only:

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Please respond within the appointed time so that we can give the authors timely responses and feedback.

NOTE: ESJ promotes a peer review procedure based on scientific validity and technical quality of the paper (not perceived impact). You are also not required to do proofreading of the paper. It could be recommended as part of the revision.

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Date Manuscript Received: May 18	Date Review Report Submitted: May 29
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You approve, your name as a reviewer of this paper is available in the "review history" of the paper:	
You approve, this review report is available in the "review history" of the paper: Yes	

Evaluation Criteria:

Please give each evaluation item a numeric rating on a 5-point scale, along with a thorough explanation for each point rating.

Questions	Rating Result [Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]
1. The title is clear, and it is adequate for the content of the article.	5
The article is accurate and clear. It signals the target population and the core framework.	
2. The abstract presents objectives, methods, and results.	4
The abstract includes all foundational components. However, it loses a point because it states that the	

study examined sixty-six principals, but in very next sentence clarifies that only forty-six participated. To improve flow, it should simply state “this quantitative study examined the perceptions of forty-six-participating elementary school principals”.	
3. There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.	2
There are a critical sentence cuts off mind-thought “Black students and African American males who are educational leaders must move”. This leaves the sentence grammatically broken or It looks like text was accidentally deleted during drafts There are spelling errors for example, domain 1 as “Ethnic of bonding” should be Ethics of Bonding as written in Appendix. The authors need to data swapping. You mention White principals are cited as 9 participants 19.6% and Hispanic as 10 (21.7%). In another point, the raw numbers are suddenly swapped (Caucasian n = 10 and Hispanic n= 9.	
4. The study methods are explained clearly.	4
The research methodology section is detailed and highly structured.	
5. The results are clear and do not contain errors.	1
This is the most critical failure of manuscript. In inferential analysis section, the authors state there is no statistically significant relationship based on race ($\chi^2 = 4.14$, $p = 0.39$) and that they fail to reject the null hypothesis. This matches the SPSS output table $p = 0.388$. However, the authors state “The analysis revealed a statistically significant association between elementary school principals’ race and their cultural perceptions, $\chi^2 (4, N=46) = 4.136$, $p = 3.88$.” A p-value represents a probability and must fall between 0 and 1. Writing $p = 3.88$ is a major statistical error. The authors accidentally moved a decimal point or confused the asymptotic significance 0.388 with their actual Chi-square value 4.136. Because $0.38 > 0.05$, the results are not significant.	
6. The conclusions or summary are accurate and supported by the content.	4
The general discussion and conclusion narratives are well written. It rightly argues that culturally responsive leadership is an active, learned paradigm rather than an identity-intrinsic one. However, because the text vacillates between reporting the results as "statistically significant" and "not significant," the baseline data supporting these conclusions is compromised. The discussion sections alternate between treating race as a non-factor and treating it as a distinct domain variant without stable statistical proof	
7. The references are comprehensive and appropriate.	4
All citations in within the text map to the comprehensive appendix list. But you need to update your references for 5 years previously at least	

Overall Recommendation (mark an X with your recommendation) :

Accepted, no revision needed	
Accepted, minor revision needed	

Return for major revision and resubmission	
Reject	

Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):

Core statistical contradictions & mathematical error

Violation of chi-square test assumptions

Sample demographic data discrepancies

Comments and Suggestions to the Editors Only: