



School Culture Based on Islamic Values for Enhancing Teacher Performance in Primary Schools of Aceh Tamiang Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of an Islamic value-based school culture on the improvement of teacher performance in elementary schools within Aceh Tamiang Regency, Indonesia. Although Islamic ideals have been incorporated into school traditions for an extended period, their assimilation into teachers' professional practices remains variable. This qualitative case study examines two public elementary schools—SD Negeri Alur Sentang and SD Negeri Paya Rahat—through in-depth interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis. Utilizing Schein's organizational culture theory and Bernardin & Russell's performance model, the study investigates the expression of cultural artifacts, embraced values, and foundational assumptions that influence teacher conduct and work ethics. The findings indicate that Islamic cultural practices, including daily prayers, tadarus, and moral reminders, are evident yet not fully integrated into teachers' professional activity. The cultural dynamics are shaped by three main things: (1) artifacts that represent religious identity, (2) values that are important to people, such as discipline, amanah, and responsibility, and (3) beliefs that work is religion. All of these things together affect how well teachers do their jobs in terms of discipline, relationships with others, and devotion. Nonetheless, deficiencies persist in leadership modeling, implementation consistency, and community support. The study finds that to make Islamic value-based school culture stronger, we need strategic leadership, meaningful habituation, and working together. Suggestions are given to schools and policymakers to help teachers become more professional and culturally aware in a more complete way.

1. Introduction

The culture of a school is crucial in influencing institutional efficacy and the overall quality of education (Dewi, 2024). It comprises a framework of shared meanings, values, norms, and behavioural expectations that together influence individual actions inside an organization (Hartono, 2023). In the Indonesian context—especially in Aceh, where Islamic identity is profoundly integrated into the social and cultural framework—school culture often integrates Islamic ideas as its ethical and spiritual foundation (Rahman & Smith, 2024). These values function as ethical principles and foundational elements for developing learning experiences, professional behaviour, and interpersonal relationships within the school community (Habibulloh et al., 2024).

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Fundamentally, school culture constitutes a framework of shared significances—commonly accepted perceptions of "the manner in which we conduct ourselves here." These collective significances are articulated through formal components (institutional vision and mission statements, regulations, timetables, ceremonies) and informal components (narratives, humour, symbols, figures of admiration and disdain within the educational community, and implicit norms on appropriate conduct)(Ulfah, 2021). Collectively, these establish a framework of behavioural expectations that effectively influence decision-making and interactions, even in the absence of explicit rule enforcement(Dwi Tsoraya et al., 2022).

In Indonesia, namely in Aceh, only one province is permitted to enforce Islamic sharia law in conjunction with national legislation, the educational landscape is profoundly influenced by Islamic identity(Mujahid, 2021). In this perspective, Islam transcends religious education classrooms; it pervades the entire school environment as a fundamental moral, ethical, and spiritual framework(Ahmad, 2021). This widespread influence establishes Islamic beliefs as fundamental components in directing conduct, moulding institutional culture, and delineating the expectations for teachers, students, and school officials(Fasyiransyah et al., 2025).

Islamic values such as honesty (*şidq*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), accountability, discipline, sincerity (*ikhlas*), and *ihsan* (performing one's duties to the highest standard) play a crucial role in shaping teachers' work ethics and professional identity(Saada, 2023). Numerous studies have demonstrated that Islamic-based cultural practices foster positive student behavior and contribute to a more harmonious and conducive school environment(Hendawi et al., 2024). However, the majority of these studies focus primarily on student outcomes, leaving a significant gap in understanding how Islamic principles influence teachers' performance(Ackfeldt, 2024). The mechanisms through which these values are internalized by teachers—and subsequently manifested in their professional conduct, motivation, and instructional practices—remain underexplored, highlighting the need for deeper investigation in this area(Fitriyawany et al., 2022).

Initial observations at SD Negeri Alur Sentang and SD Negeri Paya Rahat reveal that although Islamic rituals—such as *tadarus*, congregational prayers, and collective supplications—are regularly implemented, these practices often remain ceremonial rather than being fully internalized into the professional conduct of teachers(Achruh et al., 2024). Many teachers continue to struggle with core aspects of work discipline, including punctuality, collaboration with colleagues, and consistently perceiving their teaching responsibilities as acts of worship grounded in Islamic values(Tambak et al., 2021). This situation reflects a noticeable discrepancy between the Islamic ideals promoted within the schools and the actual behaviours exhibited in daily professional practice(Guna et al., 2024). The inconsistency is further compounded by variations in leadership modelling, as not all school leaders demonstrate strong and consistent adherence to the values, they seek to instil(Dwirahayu et al., 2025). Moreover, the degree of support from the surrounding community in reinforcing a cohesive Islamic school culture is uneven, which weakens efforts to embed these values sustainably across all levels of the school environment(Komalasari et al., 2023).

This gap raises an essential inquiry: In what ways does a school culture rooted in Islamic beliefs enhance teacher performance in elementary education? Addressing this inquiry is crucial, as the calibre of education is intricately linked to the efficacy and professionalism of teachers(Pallathadka et al., 2023). This study aims to elucidate the institutionalization and perpetuation of Islamic principles within school culture, as well as their impact on teacher behaviour, motivation, and professional conduct(Bakar et al., 2023). This research conducts a thorough examination of cultural artefacts, articulated values, and foundational assumptions to investigate how Islamic cultural practices influence teachers' work ethics and boost overall performance.

The study enhances the theoretical discussion on religiously-oriented corporate culture and provides practical, evidence-supported strategic recommendations for educational leaders and policymakers in Aceh Tamiang.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Approach and Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design, allowing in-depth exploration of Islamic value-based school culture within its natural context. The approach facilitated holistic understanding of cultural dynamics, teacher behaviors, and internalization processes.

2.2 Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at two public elementary schools situated in Aceh Tamiang Regency, specifically SD Negeri Alur Sentang and SD Negeri Paya Rahat. The participants in this study included school administrators, teachers, and administrative personnel, all chosen to offer in-depth perspectives on the cultural practices and professional interactions inside each institution. Along with people, the study also used a number of supporting documents, such as school programs, daily routines, and institutional policies. These were important sources of contextual and corroborative data for understanding how Islamic value-based school culture was put into practice.

2.3 Data Collection

The data for this study were gathered through three principal methods: semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews, ranging from 60 to 90 minutes, were done to investigate participants' views on cultural practices, leadership roles, teacher discipline, and the internalization of Islamic values in the educational setting. Non-participant observations were conducted in classrooms, staff meetings, worship activities, and various daily school routines to document genuine behavioral patterns and the lived manifestation of school culture. Furthermore, document analysis was utilized to examine school regulations, lesson plans, cultural program documents, and records of religious activities, offering further evidence that enhanced and corroborated the findings derived from interviews and observations.

2.4 Data Analysis

The analysis of data employed Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive approach, characterized by a continuous and iterative process of data reduction, data display, and conclusion formulation. In the process of data reduction, the researcher categorized information pertaining to cultural artifacts, value assertions, and indices of teacher effectiveness to discern pertinent themes. Themes were systematically organized and presented using thematic matrices that highlighted the correlations between components of Islamic value-based school culture and observed teacher behaviors. Ultimately, findings were derived by analyzing emergent patterns and relationships within the data, enabling the researcher to cultivate a thorough grasp of how school culture influenced teacher performance in the two primary schools examined.

3. Results

The culture of Islamic-based schools is not simply an enhancement of the religious environment; it functions as a behavioral framework that influences teachers' interpretations and execution of their professional responsibilities. Once principles such as trustworthiness, discipline, civility, and

compassion are both imparted and absorbed by the principal's example and consistent practice, this culture evolves into an institutional identity that governs behavior without explicit directives. The ideals and beliefs inherent in this school culture cultivate an internal motivation that inspires teachers to engage in the spiritual understanding that teaching constitutes an act of worship.

This motivation forms the foundation for consistent and sustained teacher performance, including administrative organization, the quality of the educational process, and harmonious social interactions within the school environment. A robust cultural basis yields superior performance, indicating that enhancements in teacher professionalism arise not merely from technical interventions, but from the reinforcement of the value system inherent in each teacher.

3.1 Islamic Values-Based School Culture.

The analysis of interview data indicates that the themes of exemplary conduct and the perception of work as an act of worship were the most commonly cited among all participants, underscoring the significance of these values in influencing the school culture at SD Negeri Alur Sentang and SD Negeri Paya Rahat. Educators and administrators continually asserted that their professional obligations are inextricably linked to their spiritual convictions, demonstrating a profound recognition that education is both a moral responsibility and a type of ibadah. This signifies that cultural practices in schools transcend mere formal routines or procedural adherence; rather, they are ingrained as core ideas that direct everyday behaviors and interpersonal relations. This internalization is manifested in instructors' modeling of ethical conduct, exhibiting sincerity and discipline in their work, and fostering respectful and caring connections with students.

The results indicate that Islamic principles are not solely conveyed through formal programs or written rules, but are actively exemplified by school leaders and educators, fostering a living culture that is continually reinforced through practice. Consequently, the cultural environment of these institutions serves as a potent medium for the organic development of character. Students see role models that exemplify integrity, accountability, and dedication, enabling them to assimilate these qualities organically through observation and regular interaction. In this regard, school culture functions as both an educational framework and a moral ecosystem, influencing the character and conduct of the entire school community. This profound integration of thought and practice underscores the idea that Islamic values are not merely taught but ingrained in the professional identity and routine behavior of educators in both institutions.

3.2 Teacher Performance.

The enhancement of teacher performance at both institutions did not occur abruptly or solely through the imposition of regulations. The enhancement was intricately linked to the internalization of principles at the fundamental level of school culture. Three primary aspects interacted and reinforced one another: intrinsic motivation (genuine goals), the principal's exemplary conduct, and established habits:

1. Intrinsic motivation, rooted in the conviction that "teaching is a form of worship," inspires educators to engage with self-awareness rather than under supervisory coercion. The teacher's assertion reveals his discomfort with tardiness, since he perceives teaching as a trust that necessitates accountability. The findings indicate that the teacher's work ethic is derived from spiritual drive, resulting in consistent and autonomous work conduct.
2. The principal's example conduct serves as the fundamental paradigm for educators in executing these ideals. The principle not only provides guidance but also exemplifies courtesy, discipline, and sincerity in conducting religious activities with students. The principal stated, "Children do not comprehend immediately when merely given commands; they require prior examples." This indicates that the conveyance of values transpires through observation and imitation, rather than solely through vocal directives. This commendable conduct enhances educators' confidence in using a humanistic and value-oriented pedagogical approach.

3. Structured habit formation develops through morning prayers, Asmaul Husna, congregational prayers, the 5S culture, and courteous speech in daily encounters. This continuous habit formation animates the school culture and operates as a system that autonomously directs the actions of the school community.

3.2 Cultural Integration and Performance.

The culture of Islamic-based schools serves not merely as an institutional framework but as a critical determinant affecting the quality of teacher performance. This culture manifests through artifacts evident in religious practices and visual symbols, bolstered by communal values like as trust, discipline, and civility, and grounded on the fundamental belief that work constitutes a sort of worship. When these values and beliefs are continuously embraced, they cultivate a robust intrinsic motivation among educators.

This inner drive further compels teachers to exert effort independently of external regulation. Teachers' punctuality, meticulously develop comprehensive instructional materials, and execute their pedagogical responsibilities with a profound knowledge of their ethical and spiritual obligations. This aligns with Schein's thesis, which posits that the consistent and repeated conduct of organizational members is affected not just by formal regulations but also by deeply ingrained shared ideas.

3.3 Evaluation of Strategies for Flood-Prone Schools.

The assessment phase was conducted post-flood receding through introspective dialogue among the principal, educators, and school committee. The assessment encompassed the efficacy of learning methodologies, the effectiveness of parental communication, and the preparedness of emergency facilities and infrastructure.

KS-TM stated: *"Following the flood, we consistently conduct a joint evaluation. We examine ineffective aspects, particularly coordination and the preparedness of instructional materials."*

This assessment method embodies the supervisory role in educational management as articulated by Terry (2019), indicating that evaluation serves to ensure activities adhere to the established plan and to identify potential enhancements for the future. In both institutions, the assessment outcomes were used to enhance evacuation standard operating procedures, revise the inventory of alternative learning sites, and bolster educators' preparedness in facilitating autonomous learning. This indicates that school evaluation transcends basic administration, functioning as a dynamic process of organizational learning that evolves from practical experience.

4. Conclusions

This study concludes that a school culture based on Islamic values has significant potential to enhance teacher performance in primary schools, especially in Aceh Tamiang Regency. The results indicate that cultural artifacts, articulated values, and ingrained assumptions collaboratively influence teacher conduct, work ethic, and professional dedication. These cultural aspects cultivate a climate that promotes ethical behavior, strengthens accountability, and nurtures a sense of spiritual purpose in the execution of teaching responsibilities. Notwithstanding this beneficial impact, the study indicates that cultural internalization among educators remains suboptimal. Numerous Islamic practices—such as daily rituals and religious routines—are often performed metaphorically, functioning more as formal responsibilities than as transforming factors affecting teachers' work ethics or instructional efficacy. The disparity between superficial adherence and authentic internalization indicates the necessity for enhanced leadership, consistent exemplification, and

profound engagement to guarantee that Islamic values are not merely enacted but substantially incorporated into teachers' professional identities and daily practices.

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