



Principal Management in Building a Religious School Culture based on Islamic Values

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ABSTRACT

Background: Developing an Islamic school culture is essential for shaping students' character and integrating Islamic values into the educational environment. The role of the principal is crucial in managing and sustaining this culture through strategic planning and leadership. **Objective:** This study aims to analyze the principal's management in fostering an Islamic school culture at SMPN 5 Kota Bengkulu. It focuses on the planning, implementation, opportunities, challenges, and evaluation of Islamic cultural activities within the school. **Method:** The research employs a qualitative approach using a case study method. Data were gathered from principals, teachers, staff, and students through observation, interviews, and documentation. The data were analyzed descriptively using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing to identify management patterns. **Result:** The findings reveal that the principal's management of Islamic school culture involves both short-term and long-term planning. Implementation includes structured activities without formal written assessments, except during competitions. Students receive rewards such as money, certificates, and extracurricular points, while sanctions are applied to those who violate school rules. **Conclusion:** The study concludes that while the principal's management supports Islamic cultural development, there is room for improvement in assessment methods and consistency in reinforcement strategies. Management efforts must be aligned with the goal of instilling Islamic values as daily habits. **Contribution:** This research contributes practical insights for school leaders in optimizing the principal's role in Islamic school culture development. It also offers recommendations for more effective management strategies to integrate Islamic values into the school's operational and cultural framework.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As an educational leader, the school principal the school principal the school principal is primarily responsible for creating a conducive school environment for the development of religious values (Daud, 2024). Effective school management contributes to establishing a school culture that reflects Islamic teachings, such as discipline, honesty, responsibility, and care for others. In this regard, the principal must be able to manage various aspects, including school policies, educators, students, infrastructure, and relationships with the community (Suhaedin et al., 2014). However, not all Islamic schools successfully build a strong religious culture (Tajudin & Aprilianto, 2020). Some common challenges include a lack of understanding of effective management strategies for implementing Islamic values, low participation from teachers and educational staff in fostering an Islamic environment, and external cultural influences that hinder the internalization of religious values in students' daily lives. Therefore, an in-depth study is needed to explore how school principals strategize building a religious school culture based on Islamic

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values. To ensure the success of these programs, the principal must develop activity programs that include supervision, periodic analysis of activity outcomes, and the establishment of committees. The principal emphasizes moral and ethical conduct programs, considering the strong influence of globalization and technological advancements that have negatively impacted students (Saidah, 2021). Hence, the religious values emphasized in implementing Islamic culture in schools include politeness, brotherhood, unity, mutual assistance, leadership, and social concern (Mustafida, 2020).

Management requires interaction and synergy among organizational components by mobilizing available resources to achieve organizational aspirations and goals. As a discipline, management has its own study objects, methods, strategies, and approaches, making it applicable and implementable in society (Sormin, 2017). Management is interconnected with various other disciplines, allowing it to be studied, analyzed, researched, and subsequently developed as an applied science in managing organizations or institutions. Management is a process that involves planning, organizing, leading, and evaluating the use of all organizational resources to achieve predetermined goals (Bahri, 2022). It is the achievement of organizational objectives effectively and efficiently through planning, organizing, leadership, and control of organizational resources (Pahira & Rinaldy, 2023).

Thus, school management refers to a principal's effort in managing an educational institution. It involves cooperation in mobilizing and directing individuals to achieve specific goals (Hardianto, 2020). School management is a distinctive process undertaken by a school principal, encompassing planning, organizing, mobilizing, and controlling actions to determine and achieve set objectives by effectively utilizing human and other resources (Syafarina et al., 2021). Proper school management facilitates the achievement of educational quality, which is crucial for enhancing educational performance (Puspitasari et al., 2020). The implementation of Islamic values in schools is evident during the new student admission process at the beginning of each academic year. SMPN 5 Kota Bengkulu strictly enforces an initial selection process requiring prospective students to demonstrate proper prayer practices and Quranic recitation skills and adhere to Islamic dress codes. Other religious activities include congregational Dhuhr prayers in the school's prayer hall, regular charity donations through Friday donation boxes, and allocating two class hours for Imtaq (faith and piety) education. Several temporary religious programs are also conducted, such as Ramadan short courses, Islamic holiday commemorations, Quran recitation competitions, call to prayer (adhan) contests, and more.

The school principal has undertaken various efforts to implement a religious culture, as evidenced by initial observations showing that a religious school culture is in place at SMPN 5 Kota Bengkulu. In an interview with the school principal on September 8, 2020, it was revealed that the implementation of Islamic culture in the school has been carried out to instill Islamic religious and moral values in students. According to the principal, embedding these values positively impacts students' motivation to learn, improves their daily social interactions with teachers and peers, and is a foundation for their future lives in society. However, the practical application of religious values is not yet fully optimized. For instance, some students lack awareness in performing congregational Dhuhr prayers, show minimal enthusiasm for charity, have low Quran reading interest, and exhibit disrespectful behavior toward teachers. Additionally, some students still engage in conflicts and misunderstandings with their peers. Therefore, effective school management is required to maximize the implementation of religious culture. Management plays a crucial role in achieving organizational objectives.

This study aims to analyze and understand the role of school management in fostering a religious school culture based on Islamic values. It seeks to identify the strategies school principals employ in creating a school environment that strengthens Islamic values through policies, activity programs, and leadership focused on morality and spirituality. By examining various approaches and challenges school principals face in building a religious culture, this research is expected to contribute to the development of Islamic educational management theories and serve as a reference for education practitioners in managing schools based on Islamic values.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative approach with an evaluative method, aiming to analyze and assess the role of school management in establishing a religious school culture based on Islamic values. This method was chosen because it allows researchers to explore in-depth information regarding strategies and policies, and supporting and inhibiting factors in implementing a religious culture in schools. The evaluation technique follows the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, and Product) model to assess the effectiveness of religious school culture implementation at SMPN 5 Kota Bengkulu.

2.2 Research Subjects

This research was conducted at SMPN 5 Kota Bengkulu in 2024. The object of this study is the principal's management in establishing a religious school culture at SMPN 5 Kota Bengkulu. The study focuses on school policies, implementation strategies, supporting and inhibiting factors, and the impact of religious culture on the school environment. The research subjects consist of: (1) The principal, as the leader in managing the religious school culture; (2) Teachers and educational staff, who play a role in implementing the religious culture; (3) Students, as the beneficiaries of the implementation of the religious school culture.

2.3 Data Collection Techniques

Data collection in this study was carried out through several techniques, including: (1) In-depth interviews conducted with the principal, teachers, educational staff, students, and parents to gather information regarding policies and implementation of the religious culture; (2) Participant observation, directly observing religious activities and the implementation of religious culture at the school, such as congregational prayers, religious programs, and the practice of Islamic values; (3) Document analysis, examining school policy documents, work programs, schedules of religious activities, and other supporting data related to the principal's management in establishing a religious culture.

2.4 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data was analyzed using a descriptive-qualitative approach through the following stages: (1) Data reduction, sorting and selecting relevant data based on the research focus; (2) Data presentation, organizing data in the form of narratives, tables, or diagrams to facilitate analysis; (3) Conclusion drawing, summarizing findings based on the collected data and evaluating the effectiveness of the principal's management in establishing a religious school culture; (4) Data validation, using source and method triangulation techniques to ensure data accuracy by comparing interview results, observations, and documentation.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

a) Implementation of Religious School Culture at SMPN 5 Kota Bengkulu

Implementing a religious school culture at SMPN 5 Kota Bengkulu is carried out by considering the school environment, students, educators, educational staff, and the surrounding community that supports this initiative.

As a manager, the principal must understand the steps of management. The essence of these management steps lies in how a group collaborates to achieve predetermined goals, ensuring that this cooperation is well-organized and properly managed. One key managerial aspect discussed in this study is the principal's ability to develop planning steps in implementing a religious school culture at SMPN 5 Kota Bengkulu.

The implementation steps serve as a guideline and benchmark for structuring future work programs. These steps form the foundation of the management process since well-planned implementation will positively influence the organization, mobilization, and evaluation processes. Conversely, poor implementation will negatively impact all management processes. The principal implements religious school culture in two phases: short-term planning (annual programs) and operational planning. The short-term planning steps are the principal's responsibility as the school organization's top manager. Meanwhile, the operational planning steps are delegated to the *Imtaq* supervisor or designated teachers.

The principal further discusses the steps for implementing a religious school culture in collaboration with the relevant teachers. These religious school culture activities are then communicated to students to ensure proper execution according to expectations.

b) Management in Implementing a Religious School Culture

Optimism and hard work will receive guidance and help from Allah SWT. This is explained in Surah Al-Ankabut, Verse 69:

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

Meaning: And those who strive for Us – We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good. (Q.S. Al-Ankabut/29:69).

The verse above emphasizes that those who put forth sincere effort in positive endeavors must remain optimistic and believe that Allah's help will come in various ways and solutions that ease their path.

Aligned with this principle, the implementation of religious school culture at SMPN 5 Kota Bengkulu consistently applies management principles and guidelines to achieve the best results. The management process discussed in this study focuses on how the principal implements religious school culture effectively.

The principal applies the religious school culture gradually, consisting of two phases: short-term planning and operational planning.

For short-term planning (annual programs), the principal is responsible for structuring the plan as part of the school's yearly program. The development of this annual plan follows specific steps: (1) Clearly and explicitly defining objectives; (2) Analyzing the current situation and conditions to determine feasible work programs; (3) Identifying potential problems and finding appropriate solutions; (4) Establishing evaluation tools to measure the achievement of objectives.

For operational planning, this phase serves as a follow-up to the annual program, with its execution entrusted to the *Imtaq* supervisor and teachers. The principal delegates authority to the supervisor to manage the technical implementation of each religious school culture activity at SMPN 5 Kota Bengkulu, including assigning extra-curricular activity mentors among teachers.

c) Opportunities in Implementing a Religious School Culture

Implementing religious school culture at SMPN 5 Kota Bengkulu is supported by several opportunities that facilitate its realization within the school environment. These opportunities come from both within the school (internal opportunities) and outside the school (external opportunities).

(1) The Majority of the School Community Follows Islam

At SMPN 5 Kota Bengkulu, 99% of the school community, including teachers, staff, and students, are Muslim. The school community comprises people from mixed ethnic backgrounds, such as Javanese, Padang, and native Bengkulu residents, who predominantly follow Islam. This shared religious identity provides a strong foundation for implementing a religious school culture, as there is unity in beliefs and perspectives.

(2) Support from the School Principal

The support of the school principal plays a significant role in implementing a religious school culture. As the top leader and manager of the school, the principal ensures the continuity of religious values by (1) Maintaining and strengthening existing religious school culture, (2) Consistently reinforcing religious practices within the school, (3) Attending and participating in religious activities; (4) Setting a good example for teachers and students; (5) Motivating teachers and staff to support the religious school culture; (6) Endorsing and facilitating religious programs within the school.

(3) Availability of a Worship Facility

The school has a multipurpose hall (aula) that serves as a center for religious activities and Islamic education. Named At-Taqwah, the hall has a capacity of 500 students. While not very large, it has played a significant role in promoting and supporting implementing a religious school culture at SMPN 5 Kota Bengkulu.

(4) Teachers' Commitment

The commitment of teachers is a crucial factor in ensuring the success of a religious school culture. At SMPN 5 Kota Bengkulu, five religious teachers two males and three females are responsible for guiding 981 students. Without strong commitment and awareness of the importance of religious values, teachers may only fulfill their teaching hours without actively fostering a religious atmosphere in the school.

(5) Government Policies

Both national and regional government policies support implementing religious values in educational institutions across South Bengkulu. Under the current autonomy system, the central government allows local authorities to align education policies with regional cultural and social needs.

(6) Local Cultural Influence

The cultural heritage of South Bengkulu, where most of the population follows Islam, provides a strong foundation for religious school culture. Historically, Islamic values have deeply influenced the local traditions and continue to shape societal norms. One notable example is the custom of wearing a kebaya during wedding ceremonies, which aligns with Islamic modesty principles. Such cultural elements create an environment that supports and reinforces the religious school culture at SMPN 5 Kota Bengkulu.

d) *Challenges in Implementing a Religious School Culture at SMPN 5 Kota Bengkulu*

In establishing a religious school culture, several challenges have been encountered, including:

(1) Limited Islamic Education Facilities and Infrastructure

The school's multipurpose hall (aula) can only accommodate 500 students, while the total student population is 981. As a result, Dhuhr prayers must be conducted in two separate sessions: the first for male students and the second for female students.

(2) Lack of Support from Homeroom Teachers and Teachers from Other Disciplines

Strong support from the entire school community is essential to successfully integrate a program into the school culture. However, at SMPN 5 Kota Bengkulu, support from teachers of non-religious subjects, especially homeroom teachers, remains minimal in religious activities such as congregational prayers. Religious teachers, assisted by vice principals, some homeroom teachers, and school security personnel, play a significant role in ensuring that religious activities, such as Friday prayers, continue to be conducted in an orderly manner.

(3) The Influence of Globalization and Advanced Technology

The rapid advancement of globalization and technology has hurt the character development of young generations. The school principal at SMPN 5 Kota Bengkulu has identified these external influences as one of the main obstacles to successfully implementing a religious school culture.

(4) Family and Community Influence

Another external challenge comes from the lack of parental involvement in instilling religious values in students. Parents often do not provide adequate attention to their children's religious upbringing. Additionally, students' social environments outside of school also contribute to difficulties in reinforcing religious values within the school setting.

3.2. Discussion

A religious school culture is key to shaping students' noble character. The school principal plays a strategic role in managing and instilling Islamic values within the school environment. By implementing effective management, the principal can create a religious culture that supports academic learning and supports academic learning and strengthens students' moral and spiritual development.

A religious school culture is a system of values, norms, and habits applied in the school environment based on Islamic teachings (Hayati & Susatya, 2020). This culture includes worship, morality, and social interactions, reflecting Islamic values in daily life. Several indicators of a strong religious school culture include (1) Regular worship practices, such as congregational prayers and collective supplications; (2) Moral reinforcement programs, such as Islamic studies and the habitual practice of Islamic greetings; (3) Social interactions based on Islamic brotherhood values (ukhuwah Islamiyah); (4) The habit of reading the Al_Qur'an and diniyah (Islamic religious) learning.

As a leader, the school principal is responsible for designing and implementing programs that support a religious school culture (Alfisyah et al., 2024). This task involves several essential stages that must be systematically carried out to ensure that the religious culture grows and develops effectively within the school environment.

The first stage is planning. The school principal must develop a vision and mission based on Islamic values to ensure a clear direction and objective in shaping students' religious character. Additionally, school policies must be designed to align with the reinforcement of religious culture, such as implementing rules that support religious activities (Rohmah, 2023). Furthermore, the principal must create sustainable religious programs, including regular Islamic studies, commemorations of Islamic holidays, and social activities rooted in Islamic values (Aruman et al., 2024).

Once the planning is well-established, the next stage is implementation (organizing & actuating). In this stage, the principal is responsible for organizing teachers and school staff to ensure their active participation in fostering a religious culture within the school (Ambrose, 2021). One concrete step is implementing religious habituation activities, such as Al_Qur'an recitation (tadarus) before lessons begin, daily short sermons (kultum), and intensive religious programs (pesantren kilat) involving the entire school community. Additionally, active participation from students, teachers, and parents should be encouraged to ensure that religious culture is not just the school's responsibility but becomes an integral part of daily life for the entire school community (Anisah, 2023).

Finally, the principal must conduct monitoring and evaluation (controlling) to ensure that implementing religious culture aligns with the established objectives (Nasir et al., 2024). Regular evaluations should be carried out to assess the effectiveness of the programs (Constantinou & Wijnen-Meijer, 2022). If obstacles or challenges arise,

the principal should provide feedback and guidance to both teachers and students to help them better internalize Islamic values in their daily lives. Moreover, innovations and strategies should be developed to keep the religious culture in schools relevant and adaptable to modern developments (Afifi & Yufriadi, 2024).

With well-structured planning, organized implementation, and effective monitoring, the school principal can ensure that religious culture becomes an inseparable part of the school environment (Wahyuni et al., 2024). This effort will not only shape students into individuals with noble character but also create a harmonious school atmosphere enriched with Islamic values and foster the development of a faithful and pious generation (Hanafiah et al., 2022).

The principal's management in building a religious school culture is key in creating an educational environment grounded in Islamic values. Through proper planning, implementation, and supervision, the principal can transform the school into a place that focuses on academic education and instills a strong Islamic character in all members of the school community.

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Research Implications. The findings of this study guide school principals in formulating policies that support the strengthening of religious culture in schools. It encourages teachers and school staff to take a more active role in creating an Islamic learning environment. Additionally, this research serves as a foundation for policymakers in designing regulations related to school management based on Islamic values.

Research Contributions. This study contributes to the development of school management based on Islamic values, ensuring that schools produce academically excellent students and individuals with strong religious character. Furthermore, it helps school principals optimize the roles of teachers, students, and parents in supporting and enhancing religious culture within the school environment.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

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6. CONCLUSION

Implementing religious school culture at SMPN 5 Kota Bengkulu is carried out through a systematic managerial planning process led by the school principal, which includes annual programs and operational plans delegated to Imtaq (faith and piety) mentors and teachers. The management of religious culture implementation involves goal formulation, situational analysis, problem identification, and evaluation to ensure effectiveness. Several factors support the implementation of religious culture in this school, including the predominantly Muslim school community, strong leadership from the principal, availability of prayer facilities, teacher commitment, government policies, and the influence of Islamic-based local culture. However, several challenges exist, such as limited infrastructure, lack of support from homeroom teachers and subject teachers, the negative impact of globalization and technology, and minimal family involvement in instilling religious values in students. Despite these challenges, effective management ensures the sustainability of religious culture implementation, contributing to forming Islamic character within the school environment.

The role of the school principal is crucial in creating a school environment oriented toward Islamic values. The principal is an administrative leader and a moral and spiritual role model for the entire school community. The strategies implemented include strengthening Islamic-based policies, organizing structured religious programs, and creating a physical and social environment that supports Islamic practices. Furthermore, religious culture in schools can flourish optimally through Islamic transformational leadership, which emphasizes the principles of *uswah hasanah* (exemplary leadership) and prophetic leadership. The integration of Islamic values into the curriculum and the active involvement of teachers, students, and parents also plays a vital role in successfully establishing a religious

school culture. Thus, this study confirms that effective school management based on Islamic values can shape a strong, sustainable religious culture that contributes to developing students' Islamic character.

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Author Contribution Statement

The author has fully contributed to this article, titled School Principal Management in Establishing a Religious School Culture Based on Islamic Values.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Ethical Approval Statement

The authors declare that this study was conducted with due regard for research ethics, including obtaining approval from the institution. This includes respecting the autonomy of participants, maintaining confidentiality of data, and ensuring their safety and well-being, in accordance with applicable research ethics guidelines.

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