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Principal Leadership Strategies in Building an Organizational Culture Based on Islamic Values in Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the principal's leadership strategies in developing an organizational culture based on Islamic values at the elementary school level. Amid the wave of globalization and moral disruption, student character building requires a school ecosystem deeply rooted in Islamic values, rather than merely relying on written curriculum formality. Using a qualitative approach with a case study design at SDN 3 Karangmangu, data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document study. The results indicate that the principal's prophetic-transformational leadership successfully bridges the gap between normative documents (espoused values) and daily practices through the utilization of primary and secondary embedding mechanisms. The implications of this study enrich Edgar H. Schein's organizational culture theory by integrating spiritual and prophetic dimensions into basic education institution governance.

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1. Introduction

The massive development of digital technology in today's era of globalization has triggered ethical shifts and weakened spiritual values in primary education settings. The challenges of moral decadence and rapid modernization require Islamic educational institutions not merely to rely on the formal curriculum, but to build a robust character ecosystem (Nuril A, 2024). Moral disruption driven by the rapid flow of information and social media means that the ideal values written in curriculum documents (*espoused values*) are often not reflected in the daily behavior of students and the wider school community, as evidenced by the gap between expected moral attitudes and the social conditions that actually occur in schools (Normah et al., 2020). With an organizational culture grounded in Islamic values, every individual can balance professional demands with spiritual responsibilities, so that worldly success is no longer viewed as the sole goal, but rather as a means of benefiting society at large and as something of *ukhrawi* (hereafter-oriented) value. An organizational culture founded on Islamic values places honesty, trustworthiness (*amanah*), justice, and the common good at the foundation of work behavior, enabling each member to carry out their professional role while simultaneously fulfilling their spiritual obligations as a form of worship (Muharyati & Bawa, 2026).

Many educational institutions experience symbolic formalism, in which Islamic values become mere wall slogans without being fully internalized into everyday work reflexes. Various studies show

that effective character formation must be grounded in direct experience rather than merely in the verbal teaching of values (Hanif.Mun, Izadi, 2025). Previous research has also shown that weak leadership role-modeling, inconsistent implementation, and a lack of community support can hinder the internalization of values in daily work practice (Kalsum et al., 2025). These values need to be brought to life through concrete examples set by leaders and teachers, meaningful habituation, and consistent reinforcement across all school activities, not only through documents or particular programs. This process requires time and collective engagement so that members of the school community do not merely know the values they hold, but turn them into habits and a foundation for action; indeed, even when religious activities are already visible in the school environment, the underlying spiritual awareness does not necessarily grow evenly (Ahmad et al., 2025). Accordingly, an aspect that has not been comprehensively examined is how the principal's tactical leadership strategies erode resistance to change and transform abstract values into the school's organizational culture.

This study was designed to address the urgent need for strategic leadership guidance in building an organizational culture rooted in prophetic values. In the contemporary schooling landscape, principals are expected not merely to meet minimum administrative standards, but to act as shapers of organizational culture capable of transforming transcendental values into an everyday work ethic. The application of these values demands consistency between the words and deeds of the entire school community, so that every policy and interaction in the school can reflect the exemplary conduct of the principal as a prophetic leader who emphasizes honesty and integrity (Tomi et al., 2024). This paper specifically seeks to respond to the shortcomings of previous studies by dissecting the concrete stages of culture formation, from the level of artifacts to that of basic assumptions. Its three specific objectives are: mapping the planning of Islamic values, analyzing the implementation of role-modeling and leadership standard operating procedures (SOPs), and identifying solutions to internal obstacles in the school culture. Through this focused formulation of the problem, the study is expected to offer a comprehensive roadmap for the managerial effectiveness of principals in primary education institutions. With such guidance for managing the school, the principal's steps can proceed smoothly.

This study advances the basic argument that the successful development of an Islam-based organizational culture depends heavily on the consistency of the principal's prophetic-transformational leadership. The working hypothesis tested in this study is that when the principal consistently optimizes primary mechanisms such as role-modeling and responses to crises, Islamic values will be transformed into collective basic assumptions. This argument is tested on the basis of a synthesis of prophetic leadership theory and Edgar H. Schein's framework of the levels of organizational culture, examined through empirical phenomena in the field (Agung et al., 2026). Therefore, this study holds that a leadership approach integrating the values of *Siddiq, Amanah, Tabligh,* and *Fathonah* is the main key to the successful internalization of school culture.

2. Methods

This study designates Sekolah Dasar Negeri (SDN) 3 Karangmangu, a public elementary school, as the unit of analysis and the main material object for examining the phenomenon of organizational culture. The site was selected purposively because the school is considered to excel in implementing an Islamic organizational culture and transformative leadership. The researcher was present at the research site for one week to observe social interactions in depth. Through this case study, the researcher sought to trace how the principal's strategies, policies, and practices in developing an organizational culture based on Islamic values are implemented. Data were collected through various techniques, including field observation, in-depth interviews with relevant parties, and the school's administrative documentation. This was done to provide a comprehensive picture of the leadership strategies used at the school to develop its organizational culture. The study focuses on how the principal carries out leadership strategies to develop an Islam-based organizational culture in an

elementary school. Defining this unit of analysis ensures that the observation of the principal's leadership strategies can be explored in a specific and contextual manner.

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. A qualitative research method was chosen because it is considered an appropriate way to organize the data or information collected by the researcher, with a written account as the final output. A qualitative design was selected because it aims to gain an in-depth understanding (thick description) of social dynamics and the meaning of actions in a natural setting. Through this case study design, the researcher comprehensively explored a bounded system without any experimental manipulation of the variables studied (Sumilih et al., 2025). Qualitative research is a method grounded in the philosophy of postpositivism and is used to study objects in their natural conditions. The researcher is the key instrument, data are collected through triangulation, data analysis is qualitative, and the results of qualitative research emphasize meaning rather than generalization (Sugiyono, 2025). A case study is a research method or approach that focuses on a particular case in an in-depth, detailed, and contextual manner (Pasla et al., 2022). This choice of design enables the collection of rich empirical data on the principal's leadership strategies and challenges in the field.

Two types of data were collected, namely primary data and secondary data. Informants were selected through purposive sampling in order to obtain credible and in-depth data. The selection of informants was based on their knowledge and their direct involvement in the research focus under study. According to Sugiyono (2025, p. 298), primary data are obtained directly from the first-hand source in the field, whereas secondary data are obtained from documents or other relevant parties. Primary data were obtained through direct interviews with the principal as the policymaker, teachers who implement the policies, and students as the ultimate recipients of organizational culture formation at the school. Secondary data were collected from various supporting documents, such as Dapodik (the national basic education database) records and the school's activity logs. Combining these two types of data thus provides a more comprehensive and objective picture of the principal's leadership in developing the school's organizational culture.

The data collection techniques applied in this study used triangulation, combining several observational approaches. According to Sugiyono (2025, p. 296), data collection is the most strategic step in research because the main purpose of research is to obtain data. In qualitative research, data can be collected through observation, interviews, documentation, and triangulation. These techniques include semi-structured in-depth interviews, passive participant observation of religious ritual activities, and documentary study of archives. Based on this view, data in this study were collected through three main approaches, namely in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentary study. In-depth interviews were conducted to obtain a comprehensive picture of the principal's leadership strategies in developing organizational culture. Observation focused on aspects such as organizational structure, rituals, language, procedures, stories, and the physical layout of the work environment. In addition, a document study was conducted on the school's vision and mission, Dapodik data, and the school's SOPs. The combination of these three techniques enabled the researcher to obtain holistic, contextual, and valid data in line with the research objectives.

Data analysis in this study follows the interactive analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), as cited in (Fitriono et al., 2025), which comprises three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. This model was chosen because it is systematic and allows data processing to proceed dynamically from the beginning to the end of the study. The stages of analysis consist of data condensation, data display, and continuous conclusion drawing and verification. At the data reduction stage, the researcher selected and simplified the data in accordance with the research focus. Data were displayed in the form of descriptive narratives, tables, or charts to facilitate the interpretation of findings. Verification was carried out continuously by reviewing the findings and triangulating sources to ensure the consistency of information from the principal, teachers, and documents. In addition, a member check was conducted with the informants to confirm the accuracy

and appropriateness of the interpretation of the findings, thereby ensuring the scientific trustworthiness of the data.

3. Literature Review

In the discourse of Islamic educational management, leadership is understood not merely as holding a structural administrative position, but as a moral and spiritual trust (*amanah*) grounded in prophetic exemplary conduct (*uswah hasanah*). From this perspective, leadership based on *amanah* regards every position as a moral responsibility for which one is accountable, rather than as a means of power or personal interest, so that decisions are transparent and oriented toward the interests of the institution (Ramadan et al., 2026). Accordingly, leadership exercised on the basis of *amanah* also requires a willingness to open space for deliberation (*musyawarah*), so that the strategic decisions of educational institutions emerge from fair and responsible collective consideration (Rochim & Muttaqien, 2025). Prophetic leadership rests on four main attributes, namely *Siddiq* (integrity), *Amanah* (accountability), *Tabligh* (effective communication), and *Fathonah* (strategic intelligence) (Muh.Hanif, 2024). The integration of these prophetic values not only strengthens the legitimacy of leadership but also serves as the main driving instrument for giving meaning to organizational culture, so that it remains oriented toward deeply ingrained values of *tawhid* (divine oneness) and Islam. Based on this definition, Islamic leadership functions as the main driving force that animates all managerial policies in primary education institutions.

The operational elaboration of Islamic leadership encompasses several categories of essential functions in everyday managerial practice in schools. These categories are articulated in the principal's roles as the primary role model (*uswah hasanah*), spiritual leader, and visionary manager and educator (Marwaji et al., 2025). Concrete forms of these categories include personal role-modeling, the habituation of religious rituals, and the management of internal conflict based on deliberation (*shura*) and brotherhood (*ukhuwah*) (Nurhayati & Hanif, 2025). These operational categories then become tactical instruments for the principal in mobilizing the organizational commitment of teachers and education personnel (Arifin & Arsyada, 2025). From the perspective of Edgar Schein's theory of organizational culture, these tactical leadership instruments work systematically to transform Islamic values into the three levels of culture: from the arrangement of the school's physical and symbolic artifacts, through the formulation of espoused values such as SOPs and a sharia-based code of ethics, to the formation of shared basic underlying assumptions, in which the work ethic is transformed into spiritual awareness and the intention to worship (*lillahi ta'ala*) within all members of the school community (Ardiyan et al., 2023). Thus, the principal's operational functions are not oriented solely toward administrative order, but also serve as the main driver in building an organizational ecosystem imbued with *tawhid* and oriented toward the common good.

Organizational culture in educational institutions can be understood through three interrelated levels, namely visible artifacts, consciously held values, and basic assumptions that are unwritten and often unrecognized by members of the school community (Iskandar & Hasbi, 2024). The first level consists of artifacts, that is, observable organizational structures and processes whose meaning is nevertheless difficult to interpret directly (Fauziah & Purwanto, 2026). The second level consists of the values consciously held by the school community, as reflected in the vision, mission, and behavioral norms expected of all members of the organization (Wangi et al., 2023). The third level consists of deeply embedded basic assumptions, namely beliefs, perceptions, and thoughts about human nature, time, and relationships with the environment that are taken for granted and serve as a frame of reference for action and behavior (Wardani, 2025). This three-layer analytical framework provides an adequate conceptual basis for examining how school culture is formed, maintained, and passed down from one generation of the school community to the next (Jukić, 2025). In this process of transmission, the principal's leadership plays an important role as the driver that maintains consistency among the artifacts, values, and basic assumptions established in both madrasahs and schools (Dhiyaulrizq et al., 2026).

The concept of organizational culture is important for mapping the extent to which Islamic values are fully internalized in the institutional life of the school, within the interconnected hierarchy of Schein's theoretical framework. These three categories are formulated to measure objectively the depth to which values are internalized into the psychological and behavioral structure of the school organization (Ababil & Arifin, 2025). The categorization comprises the level of artifacts, in the form of physical symbols and visible behavior; espoused values, in the form of official rules and the vision; and basic underlying assumptions, in the form of unconscious beliefs (Hanif, Muh, Hamidah, 2026). The first level is artifacts, namely the directly visible manifestations of culture, such as organizational structure, rituals, language, procedures, stories, and the physical layout of the work environment, which can be observed by anyone who enters the organization (Reader et al., 2020). Artifacts are easily accessible, but their meaning is not always easy to understand without knowledge of the underlying culture (Fitriani et al., 2022). The second level is espoused values, namely the principles and goals consciously declared by management, which are often set out in the organization's vision and mission statements (Pincus, 2023). The third level, the deepest and most difficult to observe, is basic assumptions, namely beliefs and perceptions that have become embedded and are taken for granted by group members as the correct way of seeing, thinking about, and feeling about various organizational issues (Maulidin, Y et al., 2024). Through this categorization of cultural levels, the dynamics of behavioral change among members of the school community can be evaluated systematically and measurably.

The curriculum and the school complement each other through both the official curriculum and the covert curriculum. The curriculum is designed by both central and regional governments and, on the one hand, is implemented according to its program; on the other hand, there is a covert or unofficial curriculum that operates within the school organization, the school system, and the education system more broadly, which is referred to as the hidden curriculum (Aslan, 2019). The hidden curriculum is an important conceptual instrument that supports the formation of organizational culture through unwritten learning experiences (Hanif, M, 2023). The hidden curriculum consists of values, norms, and habits that are not written in formal curriculum documents but are consistently accepted and internalized by the school community through daily interactions, so that they ultimately help shape the school's organizational culture (M Nurhalim & Hasbullah, 2026). The effectiveness of cultivating Islamic values depends heavily on strengthening a hidden curriculum that is integrated with daily habituation (Nasukah, 2020). Thus, the concept of the hidden curriculum complements formal classroom learning, allowing the cultivation of Islamic character to take place naturally and sustainably.

The institutionalization of organizational culture requires systematic mechanisms, categorized as strategies through which leaders embed values (Miftah Farid, 2024). These mechanisms are divided into Primary Embedding Mechanisms (such as what leaders pay attention to, reactions to crises, and the allocation of rewards) and Secondary Reinforcing Mechanisms (such as the design of organizational structure and physical space) (Schein & Schein, 2016). Organizational leaders play a central role as the main agents who translate abstract values into concrete actions that sustain the organization's core beliefs (Hossain, 2025). Through consistent behavior and everyday decision-making, leaders directly shape members' perceptions of which values are truly appreciated and practiced (Srimulyani & Hermanto, 2022). In line with this, leaders can embed values through the language, symbols, and rituals applied in daily organizational activities (Fahlevi & Satrya, 2020). Leaders also embed values through consistent systems of reward, supervision, and role-modeling, so that members of the organization understand that these values are not mere slogans but expected standards of behavior (Salim et al., 2024). Thus, these categories of mechanisms provide a clear framework for principals to engineer cultural change in a planned and effective manner.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

The first finding shows that the construction of organizational culture at the school is clearly visible in the form of physical and symbolic religious artifacts. This can be seen in the arrangement of the school environment, which places a well-kept mosque at the center of activities, together with separate ablution facilities for boys and girls. Field observations showed that the walls of classrooms and corridors are decorated with calligraphy carrying moral messages, slogans encouraging worship, posters of the supplication for entering the toilet near the toilet doors, the supplication for entering the mosque in front of the mosque/prayer room door, and posters of Islamic words of wisdom on classroom and corridor walls. Islamic attributes are used consistently, with a *syar'i* (Islamically appropriate) dress code applied with discipline to all teachers and students. The pictures, posters, and slogans are displayed as reminders for members of the school community to always behave in accordance with Islamic values, so that the school culture can be realized. These physical and symbolic forms represent the outermost layer of organizational culture, which can be directly observed by any visitor to the school.

Another aspect of organizational artifacts is manifested in well-structured patterns of behavior and daily religious rituals. This ritual habituation is designed as a manifestation of Islamic values in the daily routine activities of the school community. The habituation activities carried out to develop the school culture include congregational *Dhuha* prayer, morning Qur'an recitation (*tadarus*), the 5S culture (*Senyum, Sapa, Salam, Sopan, Santun*: smile, greet, salute, be polite, be courteous) upon arriving at school and when meeting teachers, commemoration of Islamic holidays (PHBI), congregational *Dhuhr* prayer, reciting prayers before and after lessons, and reciting a prayer before the free nutritious meal program (*Makan Bergizi Gratis*, MBG) at midday. The school also runs *madrasah diniyah* (Madin) activities in cooperation with a nearby Qur'anic education center (*Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an*, TPQ). These categories of behavior reinforce the empirical evidence that behavioral artifacts coexist harmoniously with physical attributes in the school environment. This series of daily ritual activities forms collective habits that characterize the distinctive Islamic identity of the institution.

These artifacts are underpinned by core values formally adopted by the school. The values are deliberately articulated in the vision and mission documents and the code of ethics so that they serve as moral guidelines for the entire school community. The stated mission is that students consistently practice worship in accordance with their religion and beliefs. The principal emphasized that the habituation of worship, such as congregational *Dhuha* and *Dhuhr* prayers, is not merely a routine activity but the main instrument for building students' character of spiritual discipline. In the interview, the principal (KS) stated that Islamic values are not merely jargon in the vision and mission. Congregational *Dhuha* prayer is held routinely every morning and is accompanied by teachers as a form of role-modeling for students. The principal established the prophetic attributes (*Siddiq, Amanah, Tabligh, Fathonah*) as indicators of the achievement of the school's vision, integrated into an Islamic Code of Conduct (Saifullah & Hanif, n.d.). The principal set out the religious vision in daily SOP documents, the curriculum, and the school rules. The formulation of these values provides formal legitimacy for the entire school community to uphold standards of behavior consistent with Islamic teachings.

The second finding reveals a shift in the work paradigm among educators toward a deep spiritual meaning of their work. This transformation of mindset has changed teachers' work motivation from mere administrative compliance into a calling of worship. Interviews with teachers indicated that the principal consistently integrates the values of *siddiq, amanah, tabligh,* and *fathonah* into every school policy. The principal instills Islamic values not merely as written rules but through a deep appreciation that teaching is a form of worship to be carried out sincerely and with a full sense of responsibility. Observations showed that teachers routinely lead prayers before and after lessons. The habit of praying before morning activities is also practiced by all teachers and staff. Every action

of educators in the learning process is essentially a form of devotion that has the value of worship as well as a great social responsibility (Mokoagow & Arif, 2024). Thus, teaching and guiding students can be understood as a manifestation of worship performed solely for the sake of Allah SWT (*lillahi ta'ala*), as well as a form of *da'wah* that conveys Islamic values through role-modeling and the nurturing of students' faith and morals (Hidayatullah & Hafidz, 2025). This change in work orientation demonstrates that the internalization of values has penetrated the deepest mental layer of the members of the organization.

There is a close relationship between the principal's communication patterns and the creation of harmonious working relationships among teachers. The principal applies a participatory and transformative leadership approach grounded in compassion (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*). The strategies used include deliberation and open dialogue that involve teachers in formulating the vision, mission, and programs so that they feel a sense of ownership of the school's vision, holding monthly reflections, giving rewards and recognition to highly dedicated teachers and staff, and demonstrating exemplary conduct (Mokoagow & Arif, 2024). This was revealed in the interview with the principal, who stated that teachers and staff are involved in school program planning meetings and that supervisory coaching and weekly reflection meetings are held routinely. Appreciation is also given to the best-performing teachers and staff. Persuasive and egalitarian communication strengthens the sense of brotherhood and reduces the potential for internal conflict at the school. Institutional interactions are consistently based on the principles of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood), deliberation, and openness in resolving every school issue (Hanif, Muh, Hamidah, 2026). The synergy among these dimensions creates a conducive and supportive working climate founded on a strong sense of kinship.

These harmonious relationships are supported by continuous spiritual motivation from the school leadership. The principal periodically reinforces values through guidance forums so that collective commitment is well maintained. This takes the form of short morning sermons (*kultum*), guidance during weekly coordination meetings, and internal religious study sessions (*majelis taklim*) regularly attended by all education personnel. Interviews with the principal revealed that every morning before teaching and learning activities, a morning assembly and prayer are held, together with a brief discussion to build a shared understanding of each school activity to be carried out. In addition, internal religious study sessions for teachers are held to renew their intention in educating. The morning assembly, collective prayer, routine discussions, and internal study sessions at the school run well. As a result, all members of the school community have a strong commitment to realizing an organizational culture based on Islamic values. Guidance is provided during the morning assembly or at specific times such as monthly meetings. This periodic guidance serves as an effective bond for maintaining solidarity and alignment of vision among all members of the school community.

The third finding highlights the principal's strategic role in systematically applying mechanisms for embedding organizational culture. Choosing the right driving instruments, such as leadership style, organizational culture, and organizational commitment, is key for leaders in instilling the desired values in all members of the organization (Perawati & Badera, 2018). The principal optimizes Primary Embedding Mechanisms through close monitoring of worship discipline, fair responses during crises, and character-based rewards (Schein & Schein, 2016) as cited in (Rapina et al., 2025). The principal also models exemplary behavior for the school community, such as arriving early and consistently performing prayers on time. This was evident from both observations and interviews with the principal, who stated that he holds the principle that role-modeling (*uswah hasanah*) is far more effective than mere verbal instruction. The principal applies a participatory and transformative leadership approach grounded in compassion (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*) (M. Hanif, 2026). The strategies used include deliberation and open dialogue, empowerment and spiritual motivation, and appreciation of teachers. Other strategies, such as the morning 5S habituation, congregational worship, and collective Qur'an recitation, are carried out routinely. The implementation of these

culture-embedding mechanisms ensures that the process of value transformation is well directed and reaches all operational aspects of the school.

The culture-embedding strategy is further elaborated through the use of secondary mechanisms to strengthen the infrastructure that supports Islamic values. Strengthening physical and structural infrastructure is necessary to create an environment aligned with the school's religious mission. Adequate physical infrastructure, such as a proper prayer room, parking space, a clean water supply, and facilities supporting worship, is a prerequisite for the optimal religious character development of students (Sopiah et al., 2026). This strategy includes the formation of a dedicated spiritual affairs team, a leadership structure based on deliberation, and a physical layout that facilitates access to worship (Annabil et al., 2026). As an initial step, the principal of SDN 3 Karangmangu formed a habituation implementation team to manage the activities carried out. The religious affairs team works together with the facilities and infrastructure team to ensure the availability of places of worship and supporting facilities. Worship facilities that are not yet sufficient for all students are supplemented by making use of existing rooms and the school yard. These secondary strategies complement the effectiveness of the primary mechanisms in building a holistic educational ecosystem.

The leadership strategies applied by the principal have great potential to be replicated in other primary education institutions. The internalization of Islamic values in school activities gives rise to artifacts such as the school mosque, slogans and posters displayed around the school environment, and behavioral artifacts in the form of students who have internalized the habituation with discipline. The 5S habituation and congregational prayer shape students who are friendly, disciplined, and responsible. The approach that combines personal role-modeling with operational systems has proven able to reduce resistance among teachers. The principal sets an example in implementing programs both in conduct and in writing. The principal models early attendance, conducts coaching, gives appreciation, involves teachers and staff, and carries out regular evaluation and supervision. This motivates the school community to uphold their shared commitment to building the organizational culture. The prospects for success are evident from the high level of participation among educators and the positive response of parents to the school's religious habituation programs (Salabi & Prasetyo, 2022). The practical value of this strategy gives reason for optimism that cultural transformation based on Islamic values can be effectively realized in a wide range of educational units.

4.2 Discussion

The findings on physical artifacts, rituals, and *espoused values* imply that formal religious symbols serve a dual function, as a visual identity and as an instrument of social control in the elementary school environment. Organizational artifacts, such as logos, slogans, guidance documents, and standard operating procedures, act as carriers of meaning that give abstract values a form that members of the organization can interpret and understand (Kupangwa et al., 2024). Visual attributes and written rules provide clear normative boundaries for the daily behavior of the entire school community. As analyzed within Edgar H. Schein's cultural framework, artifacts and written, socialized values (*espoused values*) are the initial anchor that facilitates the internalization of values among all members of the organization. This consistent symbolic arrangement has proven effective in turning abstract norms into visible behavioral guidelines that elementary school students can easily understand and follow. In other words, the consistent display of symbols and formal rules is an important first step before these values permeate the beliefs of the school community.

Testing the argument against the first finding shows that the successful enforcement of artifacts and values is attributable to the consistent role-modeling (*idealized influence*) of the principal's prophetic leadership. When leaders and teachers demonstrate alignment and consistency between words and deeds in accordance with the vision and mission, members of the school community are encouraged to comply with formal rules without feeling coerced. This phenomenon is consistent with transformational leadership theory, in which the exemplary conduct of the leader is the main

determinant of *voluntary compliance* (Sugiarto & Farid, 2024). The principal's exemplary conduct in everyday behavior serves as an example for the entire school community. The principal's daily behavior is the benchmark for how the school community upholds its shared commitment. Consistent role-modeling by the leader can erode symbolic formalism, so that religious attributes do not remain mere wall decorations. This causal structure therefore confirms that exemplary leadership is the main determinant in upholding the school's formal values.

The formation of Islamic basic assumptions has resulted in teachers' work ethic and students' behavioral patterns shifting toward an independent spiritual awareness (autotelic spiritual consciousness). The basic assumptions established by the school have been understood and internalized by the entire school community, so that they are put into practice through each member's own awareness. The belief instilled by the principal in teachers that work is worship has become a basic value practiced in daily life. This mental transformation leads educators to carry out their professional duties with full sincerity (*lillahi ta'ala*) without depending on rigid bureaucratic supervision. This achievement confirms Schein's theory that the peak of the institutionalization of organizational culture is reached when core values have been internalized as unconscious beliefs (basic underlying assumptions) (Schein & Schein, 2016). As a consequence, the school's managerial efficiency increases significantly because external control is replaced by value-based self-control within each individual. In other words, successful cultural institutionalization lightens the leader's supervisory function because every individual possesses strong internal control.

Collective basic assumptions are shared beliefs formed indirectly through daily routines and interactions, so that school values are not only taught explicitly but are also internalized through the *hidden curriculum*, which operates continuously in school life. This habituation process becomes stronger when supported by a persuasive communication approach grounded in compassion, in line with the value of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, so that members of the school community do not feel forced but are encouraged to accept and internalize the values voluntarily (Adawiyah et al., 2026). Consistent habituation of worship and open dialogue gradually dissolve mental resistance and change the outlook of the school community. This process is supported by the application of the *Tabligh* approach and *ukhuwah*-based conflict management, which effectively eases the *anxiety of change* (Mustaqim et al., 2021). The positive responses of students and parents confirm that values instilled in a courteous and consistent manner can transform external rules into inner needs. This causal structure thus explains that deep beliefs are not formed instantly, but through a structured habituation process accompanied by consistent and sustained environmental conditioning.

Within this framework, the principal not only manages resources and administrative procedures but also shapes the values, vision, and collective identity of the school community through consistent and meaningful leadership actions (Kurniawati et al., 2020). In this context, the principal's role as manager does not stop at administrative matters; it also includes planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising the implementation of a religious culture that directly strengthens students' character education (Fuadi et al., 2025). This role requires the principal to translate the organization's vision into concrete and measurable actions, so that the values espoused by the school are truly internalized in the daily practice of the school community (Tursina, 2023). This indicates that the successful formation of collective basic assumptions is determined not solely by the intensity of habituation, but also by the consistency of school leaders' role-modeling in the face of differences and social pressures in the surrounding environment. Integrating mechanisms for embedding basic assumptions has proven able to focus the shared spirit of teachers and students on realizing the Islamic vision promoted by the school (Wejang et al., 2025). The application of this systematic leadership strategy offers practical guidance that developing an Islamic organizational culture requires the integration of exemplary figures, firm systems, and the provision of supporting infrastructure.

The final test of the argument shows that the successful transformation of the school culture is attributable to a harmonious synergy between a qualitative managerial approach (clan culture) and

systemic order (hierarchy culture). The principal's application of the prophetic attributes (*Siddiq, Amanah, Tabligh, Fathonah*) has unified the internal ecosystem (teachers and students) and the external ecosystem (parents and the community/TPQ). Thus, the positive response of all stakeholders is evidence that prophetic-transformational leadership can build a strong, adaptive, and character-based organizational culture in elementary schools. This structure of relationships therefore explains why the principal's strategies were able to create a strong, adaptive, and character-based organizational culture.

5. Conclusion

The most important finding of this study is the demonstrated effectiveness of a harmonious combination of prophetic leadership and Schein's cultural theory at the elementary school level. Without this in-depth field research, the mechanism of transition from mere visual symbols (artifacts) to unconscious beliefs (basic assumptions) would not have been fully revealed. This study found that the key to successful internalization lies in the principal's consistency in optimizing primary embedding mechanisms rather than merely updating policy documents. The principal's success in building organizational culture through prophetic leadership and role-modeling has mobilized the school community to embody it in daily life. Accordingly, this research contributes a new understanding that a religious organizational culture can only thrive when it is led by an exemplary figure who embodies prophetic values.

The main scholarly contribution of this study is to enrich the body of knowledge in Islamic Educational Management by extending Schein's theory of organizational culture. This study confirms that religious values can be systematically operationalized as a key variable in building a school's institutional resilience. The strength of this research lies in its ability to combine the transformational leadership model with the prophetic attributes (*Siddiq, Amanah, Tabligh, Fathonah*) within a modern governance framework. Therefore, the concept offered provides a new theoretical framework that strengthens the literature on the integration of science and religion in education.

This study is limited in that it focuses on a single case study in one leading primary education institution with a distinctive religious character. The specific characteristics of the sample mean that these findings require contextual adjustment if applied to public schools with different social backgrounds. In light of this limitation, future research is recommended to use quantitative or mixed-methods approaches with a broader sample. Through such further research, a more comprehensive understanding of the correlation between Islamic organizational culture and graduate quality can be obtained in the future.

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