

Construction of organizational culture for ideal performance of Islamic-based junior high schools in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The deficiency of Islamic-based schools (called as Pesantren in Indonesia) in science requires adjustment. In this sector, Indonesian government is present through the implementation of the Islamic-based boarding Junior High Schools (henceforth SMP-BP) program, which was established by the Ministry of Education and Culture to equip students with intellectual, moral, and spiritual balances. However, there is still a need for constructing a framework of organizational culture to enhance the efficacy of the program. Hence, the present study delves into a framework of organizational culture for ideal performance of and the efficacy of education process in Pesantren. This study was based in two SMP-BPs in Aceh, a province of Indonesia (e.g. Al Mujaddid and Darul Amin), and was conducted by following the procedure of descriptive research under qualitative design. The required data were gathered using interviews from a total of 12 informants consisting of school principal, coordinator of the program, and teachers. The data were further analyzed by following Miles and Huberman's stages of qualitative data analysis comprising coding, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results revealed that the construction of organizational culture for an ideal performance of Pesantren in Indonesia encompassed four key dimensions, i.e. (1) establishing organizational behavior standards, (2) increasing the stability of organization's social system, (3) revitalizing school management, and (4) developing human resources. This study contributes to equipping Pesantren stakeholders with awareness and willingness to improve the efficacy of Islamic-based school performance in Indonesia. Future research is directed to efforts of fostering dynamic organization culture and school management both cultural and philosophical education.

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Introduction

As Indonesia is a country with the largest Muslim population in the world, it offers promising space for Islamic-based schools to grow and to develop (Ni'am, 2015; Saat, 2018). There are two types of Pesantren which are modern and traditional, and in Indonesia, most of Pesantren is generally associated to traditional Islamic education system (Prasetyo & Anwar, 2022; Zarkasyi, 2015). Islamic-based boarding schools

(Pesantren and Madrasa) refer to micro social groups since they arose from the acculturation of diverse Indonesian cultures (Fauzi & Hosna, 2022). Thus, Pesantren is often called as Islamic educational institution which is based on the local culture of Indonesia (Nuraeni & Irawan, 2021). In the recent years, it becomes an alternative school for people who want to emphasize on spiritual and religious education for their children. Notwithstanding this fact, many Pesantren in Indonesia have begun to acknowledge the adaptive orientation of science and general knowledge integration (Hidayati & Rifa'i, 2020).

In Indonesia, the structure of Pesantren is under the guidance of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, while public school is under the administration of the Ministry of Education and Culture (Sysling, 2016). This condition left an implication that there has been a dichotomy between religion and science in Indonesian education system (Daulay & Tobroni, 2017; Hidayaturrahman et al., 2021; Syamsul & Ma'arif, 2018). However, this paradigm has been slowly but surely shifted nowadays, from a dichotomy to an integration of religious knowledge into science and spiritual into intellectual dimension (Ali, 2019; Nasir et al., 2020). Indonesian Pesantren education system is directed to begin developing school-based integration between religious teachings and science, one of which is by establishing Boarding Junior High School Program (called as SMP-BP, in Indonesia *Sekolah Menengah Pertama berbasis Pesantren*). The SMP-BP program is designed with the aim to enhance science education within Islamic boarding schools and Pesantren (Prasetyo & Anwar, 2022). SMP-BP is a collaborative program between the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Religious Affairs to improve the quality of Pesantren in the field of science and general subjects, covering mathematics, natural science, and social studies (Suhardi, 2012). In addition to improving the quality of science learning, the program also focuses on building the character of students (Fauzi & Hosna, 2022). Aiming to modernize the learning process by not only delivering Islamic teachings, as well as to improve the management, Pesantren changes its form into an Islamic-based boarding school (Das et al., 2016). By this context, related stakeholders strive to meet people's expectations through institutional development, system renewal, curriculum adaptation, and integration of science into religious courses, and vice versa (Nurjaman et al., 2022).

By this significant development, characterizing Islamic educational system by enhancing the organizational culture in a local context to reach an ideal performance of SMP-BP becomes a crucial issue to investigate. Organization culture refers to the collection of values, expectations, and practices used as guidance and information to take actions for institutions (Cui & Hu, 2012; Lubis & Hanum, 2020), in the context of this research is for the development of Islamic-based senior high schools. Previous research on organizational culture yielded a fundamental role in improving the performance and effectiveness of school organizations. Arifin et al. (2019) and Durkheim (2012) demonstrated the significance of culture as an aspect of functional Islamic boarding schools. Moreover, Schneider & Barbera (2014) found relevant government policies as a fundamental component of organization culture, which in turns resulted in the efficacy of organization activities. Conversely, a misunderstanding of the values in organization culture causes ambiguity among school administrators, which results in hindering the process of education sustainability (Maryati et al., 2020). Precedent studies have reported that application of organization cultures requires policy supports; hence for this reason, schools that do not have cultural characters become less competitive (Barratt-Pugh & Krestelica, 2018; Knight & Duncheon, 2020).

With regards to SMP-BP program, studies indicated that its implementation has been found ineffective due to the lack of science teachers and inferior-quality of curriculum integration (Rozi & Aminullah, 2021; Zainal et al., 2022). Such a circumstance creates discrepancy between expectation and reality (Prasetyo & Anwar, 2022). Furthermore, it was depicted that the quality of Islamic-based boarding schools remained inferior than public schools (Assa'idi, 2021; Muthmainnah et al., 2021). This situation was

worsened by the lack of government policy to establish regulation of Islamic boarding school development. As a result, there was a disparity in academic achievement, particularly in terms of science subjects, between Pesantren and public-school students (Mahmud, 2019; Muslim, 2021). This current situation implies that Pesantren is being progressively marginalized. It is in a contradiction to the idea of SMP-BP program, which aims to foster education efficacy of Pesantren in the beginning of its establishment. Hence, exploring the organization culture of Pesantren is becoming a crucial matter to enhance the quality of education system in Islamic-based schools.

This study is conducted in responding to the current issue of Islamic-based junior high school practices in Indonesia through the implementation of SMP-BP program. The presence of SMP-BP program should be able to boost the performance of Pesantren in a wider context including in sciences. Therefore, the present study is at the cutting edge of exploring construction of organization culture for an ideal performance of Islamic-based schools such as Pesantren and Madrasa in Indonesia. Under the procedure of qualitative descriptive research, this study was based in two Pesantren in Aceh province Indonesia, i.e. Al-Mujaddid and Darul Amin. Research on practical implementation of SMP-BP contributes to raising the development of religious education and its integration to science as a whole ideal education system (Muslim, 2021; Nurochim, 2016). School administration requires a proper organization culture to ensure stability and sustainability of school institutions.

Method

As this study aims to delve into an in-depth understanding of organizational culture of Pesantren, descriptive research under qualitative design was adopted. The required data were in forms of informants' responses related to the primary issue of this study. This study was conducted at two Islamic junior high schools in Aceh province Indonesia. The first is SMP-BP Al-Mujaddid, which is located in Sabang city, the western region of Aceh province. The second is SMP-BP Darul Amin which location is in the southeast of Aceh province. This study reached a total of 12 informants, 7 from Darul Amin and 5 from Al-Mujaddid (see Table 1). The informants of Darul Amin consisted of a headmaster (*Rais Aam*), director of the program, school principal, deputy curriculum, extracurricular coordinator, and two resident teachers. Meanwhile, the informants from Al-Mujaddid were two school principals, deputy leader, curriculum coordinator, and a senior teacher. The informants were purposively chosen based on the primary criteria of having strategic role in the administration of the Pesantren. The data were collected through interviews (see Appendix 1). The data were further analyzed by referring to Miles and Huberman's stages of qualitative data analysis comprising data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2018).

Table 1. Informants

Code	Informant	SMP-BP
DA.1	Headmaster (<i>Rais Aam</i>)	Darul Amin
DA.2	Program director	Darul Amin
DA.3	School principal	Darul Amin
DA.4	Deputy curriculum	Darul Amin
DA.5	Extracurricular coordinator	Darul Amin
DA.6	Resident teacher 1	Darul Amin
DA.7	Resident teacher 2	Darul Amin
MJ.1	School principal 1	Al-Mujaddid
MJ.2	School principal 2	Al-Mujaddid
MJ.3	Deputy leader	Al-Mujaddid
MJ.4	Curriculum coordinator	Al-Mujaddid
MJ.5	Senior teacher	Al-Mujaddid

Findings

Informants' Perceptions on Organization Culture

First of all, this study sought to the informants' perceptions on organization culture in the context of SMP-BP administration. The finding of interviews revealed that values of organization play crucial role as guideline for SMP-BP administrators to ensure the continuity of school institutions. According to the informants, the basic value of cultural formation in SMP-BP is to remove the dichotomy between public school institutions and Pesantren because it causes organizational boundaries. Most SMP-BPs in Indonesia have private status with a long history which goes hand-in-hand with the society, and this becomes special value for them. The finding further highlights how organization culture becomes a means of constructive social interaction, so teachers and school stakeholders work collaboratively and sustainably to reach a harmony between SMP-BP and society. As a deputy leader of SMP-BP Al-Mujaddid said:

Informant MJ.3: Several Pesantren in Aceh, and I think in Indonesia, are generally established along with cultures or values of their surrounding societies. So, the administration and education practices of the Pesantren are significantly integrated with norms, values, and habits of the societies. It has a long history, and I think it was fossilized, and what we can do is fostering the integration of culture with Pesantren modernity to reach the goals of our school education.

Furthermore, the finding shows that management practices performed in SMP-BP represent Pesantren cultural complexity, which closely contributes to the dynamic of organization administration. The limitation of organizational culture framework is always in line with organizational culture comprehension. In this context, there are two overlapping areas, that is between organizational culture and organizational climate. Darul Amin school principal revealed:

Informant DA.3: The establishment of the Pesantren atmosphere is carried out through symbolic activities, which differs from the formation of the organizational culture. Meanwhile, organizational culture is implemented through vigorous socialization of the program vision at both formal and informal occasions.

In short, according to the interviews with some informants, organizational culture refers to the behavioral norms, assumptions, and beliefs of an organization, while organizational climate refers to the perceptions of people in the organization that reflect norms, assumptions, and beliefs. Organizational culture is a form of beliefs, basic assumptions, values, norms, behavior, ideology, attitudes, habits, and expectations that are owned by the organization and represented through the behavior and actions of organizational members. About this, the SMP-BP program implemented in Pesantren is to develop the organization values. As the school principal of Al-Mujaddid stated:

Informant MJ.1: The pattern of forming the organizational culture of Islamic boarding schools is to achieve the objectives of implementing the SMP-BP program which requires synergy among all components and stakeholders, particularly in terms of leadership policies and curriculum integration.

A crucial matter for the sustainability of organizational culture is the attitude of members. In SMP-PB context, teachers play the most significant role to ensure the quality of education process that will directly affect the values of school institution. The finding of this study further depicted that teachers of both Al-Mujaddid and Darul Amin Pesantren must obey the regulation in terms of commitment, responsibility, and discipline. The school principal of Pesantren Al-Mujaddid stated that building values of organization requires a perfect synchrony between thought and action. The members of Pesantren, particularly teachers, must be willing to 'sacrifice' themselves for the sake of organization development.

Informant MJ.2: Building organization values needs a balance between ideas and action. What created in mind should be implemented in a real action. Otherwise, it is nothing. In here, we encourage teachers and all school members to have discipline, responsibility, and commitment to develop the Pesantren.

Construction of Organization Culture for Ideal Performance of SMP-BP

Based on the interviews with all informants, the findings of this study show that there are four key aspects which are crucial for constructing organization culture to develop SMP-BP. The four key aspects were revealed based on experience and ideas of the informants who are experts in organizing Pesantren and sit on important roles in the development of the Pesantren. The four construction of organization culture for ideal performance of SMP-BP are establishing organizational behavior standard, increasing the stability of organization's social system, revitalizing school management, and developing human resources.

Establishing Organizational Behavior Standard

The first value of organization culture resulted from the interviews is establishing organizational behavior standard. The school principal, as an organizational leader, needs to construct a reference base for the commitment of all organization members through an organizational culture designed with adaptation and acculturation governance of the organization with the surrounding environment. This can be done through internal integration (internal functions) that deals with the integration of various resources that exist within the organization, including human resources. On this basis, the viscosity of the internal integration function is getting stronger if the organization norms, regulations, traditions, and customs are obeyed by its members. This process has implications for the Pesantren's ability to build a strong and integrated organizational culture to increase the school efficacy to reach education goals. Related to this, the senior teacher of Al-Mujaddid opined:

Informant MJ.5: A favorable organizational culture may be demonstrated in the comprehension of the vision by both people and groups in the organization. The organization's effectiveness can be increased through group work expressed in a favorable scope of work. All members must obey to the regulations of the Pesantren. By this, the education process and goals of the Pesantren can successfully be achieved.

This informants' explanation demonstrates that efforts to govern educational institutions require a succession of systems to control to preserve professionalism. As a result, school leaders must improve their cultural intelligence (CQ) and widen their global views to successfully manage education cultures and values, which are the foundation of increasing organizational performance. An effective culture can control organizational behavior from the individual to the group level. Through an evaluative concept that relies on empirical data, Pesantren can also be measured through mission achievement so that corrective steps can be taken to overcome deficiencies. Correction is a gradual process of changing organizational culture by managing internal resistance and building consensus among the members. Hence, Pesantren must have and continuously develop its standard of organization behavior that must be obeyed by all its members and stakeholders. The headmaster (*Rais Aam*) of Darul Amin Pesantren said:

Informant DA.1: To run a Pesantren, school leaders must have cultural intelligence. As a result, they can manage the organization by establishing good standard of organization behavior. It is important as the organization behavior will determine attitudes of all members. The organization behavior can be developed through establishing regulations and building habits.

Increasing the Stability of Organization's Social System

The existence of SMP-BP is a manifestation of community participation which considers the urgency of planting religious values in education. The public realizes how

important the presence of this program is in preparing students who are religious and ready to adapt to the current challenges of globalization which have implications for changes in people's attitudes and behaviors. Through this study's findings, it is known that SMP-BP plays a role in the filtering function of institutions against the influence brought by globalization. Hence, strengthening social system is highly required. Social system is the patterned network of relationships that exist between individuals, groups, and institutions. In the context of this study, social system of the Pesantren can be fostered by building positive networks among all members and stakeholders. The program director of Darul Amin Pesantren said:

Informant DA.2: Building social system in developing Pesantren is a must. Social system can be developed by improving relationships and networks among its members including school leaders, teachers, students, and parents. Good relation among them should be maintained.

Moreover, the informants also emphasized on solidarity and harmony between Pesantren and community around. To form a good identity of a school, leaders should develop the concept of communal culture. It offers friendship and commitment among people involved in the organization. About this, a resident teacher of Darul Amin Pesantren argued that Pesantren and SMP-BP must kindly form social system which includes good relationship among all stakeholders, not only internal members of the Pesantren but also external community that can be involved in the process of improving the quality of education. As he said:

Informant DA.6: In my opinion, Pesantren should form a good quality of social system to improve the effectiveness of education process and the continuity of the institution. It can be done by strengthening relation and networks among stakeholders, not only internal members of Pesantren but also external ones, such as community, society, and parents.

Revitalizing School Management

This study depicts that school management becomes the most crucial aspect of developing Pesantren. All informants agreed that the key role of administering a school is how its members manage its action. In the context of SMP-BP of Al-Mujaddid and Darul Amin, good Pesantren management is begun with constructing clear vision and mission which is fundamental for the development of Pesantren. According to the informants, school management in Pesantren is managed by the headmaster (*Rais Aam*) and the school principals as the leaders and coordinators. They provide regulations, rules, policies, and suggestions for other members of Pesantren. Decision related to the Pesantren is taken together through a consensus of all members of Pesantren under the leadership of the *Rais Aam* and school principals. As the headmaster of Darul Amin Pesantren said:

Informant DA.1: In here, all activities including providing regulations, rules, and policies is under the coordination of school leaders who are the Rais Aam and the principals. Teachers, staffs, and other members of Pesantren are involved in making decision about the development of the Pesantren. In taking a decision, we invite all parties such as teacher, staff, parent, and society.

In the informants' opinion, SMP-BP program in Indonesia is already good, but it needs assistance in terms of application. To support its effectiveness, revitalizing Pesantren management is required. Building a good management of Islamic-based schools includes constructing curriculum integration between religious knowledge and science. Pesantren must be an Islamic-based school that is aware of the globalization and advancement of technology. Nowadays, most of Pesantren are taking into account the development of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) as one of the crucial aspects of education process. Thus, curriculum in Pesantren must be adaptive to this current situation. As curriculum coordinator of Al-Mujaddid Pesantren said:

Informant MJ.4: Yes, of course it is crucial to do. Integrating science into Pesantren curriculum is crucial to make students (santri) adaptive to the current globalization and technology advancement. I regularly join trainings and seminars on this issue. So, it is one of school management that should be done by Pesantren to equip santri with adequate knowledge of religion as well as having good competency in science and technology.

Developing Human Resources.

The findings of interviews further show that developing human resources is becoming more crucial nowadays as human is the main player of a school development. Particularly teachers, enhancing the quality of human resources will determine the success of Pesantren. All informants agreed that teachers must have pedagogical and intellectual as well affective skills to run education process. Teachers in Pesantren today must be well-equipped with the knowledge of religion and the knowledge of science and technology. As the school principal of Darul Amin Pesantren said:

Informant DA.3: In Darul Amin, we acknowledge that the quality of human resources have significant role in developing our Pesantren, especially teachers. We require teachers here to always improve their skills and performances. Teachers should be able to be a good role model, as well as having good knowledge of both religion and science.

Despite of the teachers, staffs and school administrators also needs capacity enhancement. Both Darul Amin and Al-Mujaddid Pesantren always encourage their staffs and administrators to develop their capacity through various ways such as joining seminars/trainings, peer feedbacks and discussion, and assistance among the members of the Pesantren. As the school principal of Al-Mujaddid Pesantren said:

Informant MJ.2: We give all members of Pesantren including staffs and school administrators to develop their personal competency. And we hope they can use their competency to contribute to the development of Pesantren.

Discussion

Through the process of interviews, this study yields significant results about the construction of organizational culture for ideal performance of Pesantren. The Pesantren administrators involved in this study consider organizational culture and values as an important aspect to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the school institution. The findings further demonstrate that Pesantren Darul Amin and Al-Mujaddid in Aceh province of Indonesia acknowledge four key elements to enhance the organizational culture, they are (1) establishing organization behavior standard, (2) increasing organization social system, (3) revitalizing school management, and (4) developing human resources. These four elements of organization culture are crucial to reach today's education goals in terms of creating sustainable education and fostering the integration of religious knowledge into science. Then, what do these results imply?

Related to the first finding of this study in terms of establishing organization behavior standard, encouraging leadership in the Pesantren becomes the main concern. The findings of this study provide an implication that the standard of organization behavior in Pesantren and other Islamic-based schools contributes to improving teachers' and staffs' job performance, job satisfaction, promoting innovation, and encouraging leadership, which is in line with what is said by [Gagne \(2018\)](#). This is relevant with the findings of [Ali \(2019\)](#), [Nasir et al. \(2020\)](#), and [Zaenal et al. \(2022\)](#), that organization behavior determined how people interact with another inside the organization, in this context is SMP-BP and Islamic-based schools. According to [Tasselli et al. \(2018\)](#), These interactions subsequently influence how the Pesantren behaves and how well it takes actions and applications.

The second aspect of organization values emphasized in this study is increasing organization social system. This study finds that strengthening the social system is not only by building good relationship among the internal members of Pesantren, but also

with the social community lived in around the Pesantren. It is undeniable that Pesantren is initially build by the involvement of community participation which consider that religious values are crucial for education. Hence, the finding of this study highlights that the sustainability of Pesantren is determined by how it builds and maintains good connection with its stakeholders. The finding supports the social theory proposed by [Fuchs \(2017\)](#) that defined social system as the network of connections of a coherent whole that exist between individuals, groups and institutions. In the context of Pesantren, networks among school stakeholders including leaders, teachers, staffs, parents, and societies are the most powerful aspect to ensure the success of education process. This finding is in a consistency with [Fauzi and Hosna \(2022\)](#) and [Mahmud \(2019\)](#) that SMP-BP including Pesantren must have mutual relationship with stakeholders both internal and external.

In terms of school management, this study portrays that the informants emphasize management of curriculum integration between science technology and religious knowledge. In addition, good quality of school management is characterized by achieving several aspects such as policies, material and huma resources, programs, activities, equipment, etc. So, in the context of Pesantren, good management is reflected from how the members plan, manage, execute, and evaluate school programs and activities for the sake of Pesantren development. This finding is in line with [Maryati et al. \(2020\)](#) and [Rozi and Aminullah \(2021\)](#) that managing Islamic-based schools like Pesantren is different from the public schools. What makes it different is Pesantren requires more attention in relation with curriculum structure and social networks. Management of Pesantren needs not only religious knowledge, but also affective skills ([Hidayati & Rifa'i, 2020](#)). Hence, building organizational culture of Pesantren should consider its good management.

Moreover, this study depicts that human resources should be taken into account for constructing the organization culture. To add the value of Pesantren, school leades must pay more attention to the development of human resources. Not only do teachers who need development supports and assistances, but staffs and other school administrators are also to be supported. Based on the interviews, this study clearly shows that Pesantren should provide full supports for human resource development through seminars, trainings, workshops, or other relevant activities. This finding indicates that to be able to compete with public schools, human resources in Pesantren must be equipped with not only religious knowledge, but also science and technology. This finding is relevant with [Nurjaman et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Nurochim \(2016\)](#) that Indonesian Pesantren is on the way to strengthening the capacity of teachers and staffs to reach the Islamic education goals which not only concerning on religious studies but also science and technology.

Lastly yet importantly, this study contributes to providing clear description of construction of organizational culture for the ideal performance of Pesantren. On the way to the transformation of Pesantren, the findings of this study should be considered as input enhancement. The four values of organization as depicted in this study can be used as guideline and reference for developing Pesantren. Developing Pesantren needs organization behavior standard, good social system, excellent school management, and good-quality of human resources. Finally, the authors have to say that Pesantren in this modern era is not like Islamic-based schools in decades ago. It has transformed to the modern era by integrating religious knowledge into science and technology. Hence, santri (Pesantren students) are well-equipped with religiosity, intellectual, and affection in one package of education.

Conclusion

In conclusion, drawing on the issue of SMP-PB program in Islamic-based schools, the current study explores the construction of organization culture and values for ideal performance of the Pesantren. Involving Pesantren Al-Mujaddid and Darul Amin in Aceh province of western Indonesia, this study is conducted under the procedure of qualitative

research design using descriptive analysis. The primary findings reveal that all informants from the two Pesantren consider organization culture as a crucial aspect of school development. Moreover, four key aspects of organization culture construction are depicted in this study, which include organizational behavior standard, social system, school management, and human resources development. This study provides practical implication for Pesantren in Indonesia that these four aspects are highly necessary to ensure the sustainability and educational goals, as well as to achieve good-quality of Islamic-based schools. The finding of this study is also in an agreement that Pesantren is not only identical with religious knowledge, but today's Pesantren in Indonesia is going to a transformation of integration between religious knowledge and science.

Due to the time and cost consuming, this study is narrowly conducted in above-mentioned Pesantren addressed in Aceh province in western Indonesia. However, the authors ensure that this study resulted in an in-depth understanding about organization culture of the Pesantren. In addition, this study is limited in interviews as the single data collection method. Therefore, future research is directed to explore the organization culture of other Pesantren in Indonesia, particularly modern Pesantren that has already applied curriculum integration between science and religion. Moreover, other set of data collection method such as Focus Group Discussion (FGD), observation, and document analysis should also be well-considered to depict deeper understanding of the findings.

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Appendix 1

List of Interview Questions

1. In the last recent years, Pesantren in Aceh shows significant development. What do you think about this? How do you respond to it?
2. To run a Pesantren successfully, we need organization culture. How do you see it? To what extent is organizational culture important in developing a Pesantren?
3. How do you see SMP-BP program? And How do Pesantren implement the program?
4. What values or cultures should a Pesantren have to ensure the sustainability of the education process?
5. How do Pesantren respond to the challenge of twenty-first century education, where schools have to begin to acknowledge the integration between religious knowledge and science?