

Islamic Leadership Management in the Development of a Religious School Culture

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ABSTRACT

Education plays a strategic role in shaping students' religious character, making the development of a religious school culture an essential necessity in addressing the challenges of moral degradation in the era of globalization. This study aims to analyze Islamic leadership management in the development of a religious school culture in several schools in Indonesia. The study uses a qualitative approach with a multisite study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document studies involving principals, teachers, education staff, and students as informants. Data analysis was conducted thematically using an interactive analysis model that includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, and its validity was tested through triangulation and member checking. The research results indicate that Islamic leadership management is applied systematically and continuously through the functions of planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating school programs. The principal plays a central role not only as an administrative manager but also as a moral and spiritual exemplar in fostering the internalization of Islamic values. The development of a religious school culture is realized through the habituation of worship, the integration of religious values into the learning process, and the formation of students' and school members' morals and ethics. The research findings confirm that Islamic leadership that is trustworthy, participative, and consistent can build a religious school culture that is tangibly internalized in school life and contributes to the holistic character formation of students.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a strategic role in developing human resources that are not only intellectually superior but also morally and spiritually mature. In the context of Indonesian

national education, the purpose of education is inseparable from efforts to build students' character, faith, and nobility. Schools, as formal educational institutions, become the primary space for internalizing these values [1]. Therefore, the development of a religious school culture has become an urgent necessity to address the challenges of moral degradation and the crisis of values faced by the younger generation amid the flow of globalization and the increasingly rapid technological development.

Religious school culture reflects the values, habits, norms, and behaviors of the school community, grounded in religious teachings and consistently manifested in daily life. This culture is not only evident in religious rituals but also reflected in attitudes of discipline, honesty, responsibility, social care, and harmonious relationships among school members. The formation of a religious school culture does not occur automatically; instead, it requires planning, management, and continuous exemplary behavior [2]. In this case, school leadership plays a key role as the main driver in building and strengthening this religious culture.

Islamic leadership management is a relevant approach for developing the culture of religious schools, especially in Indonesia, where the majority of the population is Muslim [3]. Islamic leadership is not only oriented towards achieving organizational goals administratively, but also based on Islamic values such as trustworthiness, justice, consultation, responsibility, exemplary behavior, and excellence. These values serve as the foundation for the planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating of school programs [4]. Thus, the school leader not only functions as a manager, but also as a moral and spiritual role model for the entire school community.

In practice, Islamic leadership in schools is implemented through various policies and programs that support religious habituation, such as promoting congregational worship, fostering prayer, providing moral guidance, strengthening ethical values in the learning process, and creating a school environment with a religious atmosphere. The success of these programs is greatly influenced by the commitment, consistency, and competence of school leaders in applying the principles of Islamic leadership tangibly, rather than merely in a normative sense.

However, in some schools in Indonesia, the development of a religious school culture has not yet been fully optimal. Various challenges are faced, including differences in understanding of the concept of Islamic leadership, limitations in the managerial and spiritual abilities of school leaders, a lack of synergy among school members, and incomplete integration of Islamic values throughout the school management system. This condition often makes the implementation of a religious culture in schools symbolic rather than deeply impacting character building.

Previous research by Tajudin & Aprilianto on educational leadership and the development of a religious school culture in Indonesia has shown that school principals' leadership has a strategic role in shaping a religious climate and student character [5]. In the context of Islamic education, Islamic leadership is understood as leadership based on the values of the Qur'an and Sunnah, such as trustworthiness, justice, consultation, exemplary behavior, and moral responsibility [6]. These studies affirm that Islamic leadership values contribute positively to the formation of a religious school culture.

However, previous studies still leave a significant research gap. First, the research by Brooks & Mutohar on Islamic leadership remains normative-conceptual, emphasizing the values and ideal character of a leader, without deeply examining how these values are systematically managed in school management practice [7]. As a result, Islamic leadership is often understood as the personal attitude of the leader rather than as a managerial system integrated into the functions of planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating the school.

Second, the research by Hadi & Prayogi on religious school culture generally focuses more on symbolic and routine forms of religious activity, such as worship, the habituation of prayer, and other religious activities [8]. Research of this kind has not extensively examined the leadership and management processes that underlie the formation of this culture. In fact, school culture is the result of an ongoing leadership process that involves the interaction of values, policies, and managerial practices over the long term.

Third, the study by Alazmi & Bush on Islamic leadership and the culture of religious schools in Indonesia is still dominated by single-site research, whether in a single school or at a specific educational level. This condition results in a limited understanding of variation in Islamic leadership management practices across schools with diverse social, cultural, and institutional backgrounds [9]. In fact, the school's local context greatly influences the effectiveness of leadership and the formation of a religious culture.

Given this research gap, studies on Islamic Leadership Management in the Development of Religious School Culture in several Indonesian schools exhibit a clear element of novelty. The novelty of this research lies in its approach, which integrates Islamic leadership values into school management practices in an empirical, context-specific manner. This study not only examines the Islamic values upheld by school leaders but also analyzes how these values are translated into policies, strategies, and managerial practices in building a religious school culture.

In addition, the novelty of this research also lies in the use of a multisite approach that allows researchers to compare and construct patterns of Islamic leadership management in several schools. Thus, this study is expected to produce a conceptual model of Islamic leadership management that is more comprehensive, applicable, and relevant to the Indonesian educational context. The model is expected to enrich the body of knowledge in Islamic education management and serve as a practical reference for school principals and policymakers in developing a sustainable religious school culture.

2. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative, multisite study design to gain an in-depth understanding of Islamic leadership management practices in the development of religious school culture across several Indonesian schools. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study focuses on the meaning, processes, and dynamics of leadership built through social interactions and religious values, and thus cannot be measured statistically, but rather understood holistically and contextually [10]. The multisite design is used to obtain a comprehensive understanding and allows for comparative analysis between schools with different characteristics [11].

The research location was determined purposively, namely at several schools that consistently apply Islamic values in school management and in developing a religious culture. The selection of locations was based on the consideration that these schools have structured religious programs and are led by principals who demonstrate a commitment to the principles of Islamic leadership. This purposive approach enables the researcher to obtain relevant, rich data aligned with the research focus [12].

The research subjects consisted of the principal as the main informant, as well as the vice principal, teachers, educational staff, and students as supporting informants. The selection of informants was carried out using purposive and snowball sampling to obtain in-depth information from parties directly involved in leadership practice and in the development of a religious culture in schools. The principal is positioned as the central actor in Islamic leadership management, while the supporting informants serve to strengthen the data's validity through diverse perspectives [13].

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore the views, experiences, and strategies of school principals and related parties in managing and developing a religious school culture grounded in Islamic values. Participatory observation was conducted to directly observe leadership practices, interactions among school members, and the habituation of religious values in daily activities. Document study was used to review official school documents, such as vision and mission statements, work programs, school policies, regulations, and archives of religious activities relevant to the focus of the research [14].

Data analysis was conducted thematically using an interactive analysis model, which includes the processes of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing [15]. Data analysis was conducted in parallel with data collection. At the data reduction stage, the researcher coded and grouped the data based on themes related to Islamic leadership management and the culture of religious schools. Next, the data were presented in descriptive narratives and comparative matrices across sites to identify patterns, similarities, and differences in leadership practices. The conclusion stage was carried out continuously until consistent and credible findings were obtained.

The validity of the data in this study is ensured through triangulation techniques, which include source, technique, and time triangulation. In addition, the researcher also conducted member checks with key informants to ensure the suitability of the data and the interpretation of the research results. Diligent observation and an audit trail are used to enhance the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the research findings [16].

With a qualitative approach and a multisite design, this study is expected to yield a deep, comprehensive understanding of Islamic leadership management practices in the development of a religious school culture. This research method enables the formulation of empirical findings and conceptual models that are contextually relevant to the dynamics of education in Indonesia.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

3.1.1. Islamic Leadership Management in the Development of a Religious School Culture

Based on observations conducted in several schools that served as research sites, Islamic leadership management in developing a religious school culture appears to be implemented systematically and sustainably across the planning, organizing, implementation, and program evaluation stages. The principal plays a central role as both a leader and a role model in internalizing Islamic values into all aspects of school management. The leadership practices demonstrated are not merely administrative in nature; they also reflect the values of trustworthiness (*amanah*), exemplary conduct, deliberation (*shura*), and moral responsibility in every policy decision.

At the planning stage of the Islamic values–based religious school culture program, the principal designs programs in a structured manner by referring to the school’s vision and mission grounded in Islamic principles. Planning is carried out through deliberative forums involving vice principals, teachers, and educational staff. Religious programs are designed not only to focus on ceremonial activities but also to cultivate moral values and Islamic character in the school's daily life. Observations indicate that program planning includes habituating worship practices, strengthening moral conduct, and integrating Islamic values into the learning process and school regulations.

Furthermore, in organizing school resources from an Islamic leadership perspective, the principal distributes tasks and responsibilities proportionally and fairly based on each school member's competencies. The organization is conducted with an emphasis on cooperation and mutual support. Teachers and educational staff are given active roles in implementing religious programs, thereby fostering a sense of ownership and shared responsibility. Observations show that the principal does not adopt an authoritarian approach, but instead encourages the active participation of all school members in supporting the success of the religious culture.

In the implementation stage of the religious culture program through habituation and exemplary conduct, the principal consistently demonstrates religious role modeling, including discipline in worship, ethical communication, and polite and fair attitudes in interactions. This example is followed by teachers and educational staff, so that religious values are not only conveyed verbally but are practiced concretely. Habituation programs such as collective prayers, congregational worship, and fostering mutual respect and care have become part of the school’s daily routine. Observational findings indicate that the program is implemented consistently and has become embedded in the school culture.

At the evaluation and monitoring stage of the religious school culture program, the principal conducts periodic monitoring of program implementation through direct observation, evaluation meetings, and informal communication with teachers and students. Evaluation does not only focus on program implementation but also on changes in the attitudes and behavior of school members. Observational findings indicate that evaluation results are used to improve and strengthen programs, ensuring their continued relevance and sustainability. The principal also provides moral reinforcement and appreciation to school

members who demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting the religious culture. The observation results are consistent with the findings from interviews with several school stakeholders, which are presented below.

Based on in-depth interviews with principals, vice principals, teachers, and educational staff across several research-site schools, a consistent picture emerged of the practice of Islamic leadership management in developing a religious school culture. Informants revealed that the principal's leadership is understood not only as a structural function but also as a moral and spiritual responsibility in instilling Islamic values among all school members.

Interview results show that in planning Islamic values-based religious school culture programs, principals consciously position Islamic principles as the primary foundation in formulating the school's vision, mission, and work programs. Principals emphasized that each religious program is designed through collective deliberation with teachers and educational staff to create shared understanding and commitment. Informants stated that planning is not solely focused on implementing religious activities, but also on shaping students' character and moral conduct through sustainable habituation.

Regarding the organization of school resources, informants explained that principals apply principles of justice and trustworthiness in task distribution. Teachers and educational staff are assigned responsibilities based on their competencies and fields of expertise. Interview findings reveal that principals encourage cooperation and mutual support among school members, so that the implementation of religious culture programs is not assigned to a single party but becomes a collective responsibility. This participatory leadership approach fosters a sense of belonging and increases school members' involvement in every religious activity.

At the implementation stage, through habituation and exemplary conduct, interview findings reinforce observational data that the principal is regarded as a role model. Teachers and educational staff stated that the principal's example in worship, discipline, and polite, fair behavior is a key factor in maintaining the consistency of religious culture implementation at the school. Informants also emphasized that the habituation of religious values is applied not only through formal activities but also through daily interactions, such as communication styles, problem-solving processes, and decision-making within the school environment.

Regarding evaluation and monitoring, interview results indicate that principals conduct continuous evaluations through regular meetings, informal discussions, and direct observation of school members' behavior. Evaluation is not merely aimed at assessing program continuity, but rather at measuring the impact of programs on students' attitudes and behavior, as well as on the school's religious climate. Informants conveyed that evaluation results serve as the basis for program improvement, strengthening habituation practices, and providing motivation and appreciation to school members who demonstrate commitment to religious values.

Based on observations and interviews across several schools, it can be concluded that Islamic leadership management in developing religious school culture is implemented systematically, integratively, and sustainably through the stages of planning, organizing,

implementation, and evaluation. The principal plays a central role not only as an administrative manager but also as a moral and spiritual role model in fostering the internalization of Islamic values. Program planning is conducted participatively based on an Islamic vision and mission; resource organization is carried out fairly and collaboratively; program implementation is realized through consistent habituation and authentic role modeling; and evaluation is conducted continuously with a focus on changes in attitudes and behavior among school members. Overall, the findings indicate that Islamic leadership characterized by trustworthiness, participation, and consistency can foster a religious school culture that is not merely ceremonial but deeply internalized in the daily lives of the school community.

3.1.2. Principal's Strategy in Building a Religious School Culture

Based on observations conducted across several schools that served as research sites, principals implement well-planned, sustainable strategies to build a religious school culture. These strategies are not merely oriented toward organizing religious programs, but also toward internalizing religious values into all activities and interactions among school members. The principal positions himself or herself as the central actor who mobilizes, coordinates, and consistently exemplifies the practice of religious culture.

In the internal strategy, the principal emphasizes role modeling, habituation, and value reinforcement as the primary foundations of a religious school culture. Observational findings indicate that principals consistently demonstrate religious behavior in their daily lives, such as being disciplined in performing worship, maintaining ethical communication, and acting fairly and courteously in decision-making. This exemplary conduct serves as a reference for teachers, educational staff, and students. In addition, principals encourage the habituation of religious values through daily school routines, such as collective prayers and congregational worship, and by fostering attitudes of mutual respect, honesty, and responsibility. Value reinforcement is carried out through guidance, advice, and appreciation for positive behavior among school members that reflects Islamic values.

Furthermore, through collaborative strategies with teachers and educational staff, principals foster harmonious, participatory cooperation. Observations show that teachers and educational staff are actively involved in planning and implementing religious culture programs. Principals encourage open communication and clear role distribution according to each individual's competence. Through this collaboration, teachers and educational staff act not only as program implementers but also as strategic partners in instilling religious values in students, both through the learning process and through informal interactions within the school environment.

Regarding the strategy of involving students and parents, principals strive to cultivate shared awareness and responsibility in developing a religious school culture. Observations indicate that students are actively involved in various religious activities and value-habituation programs through specific roles, such as serving on religious activity committees and as school character ambassadors. Meanwhile, parents are engaged through regular communication, school meetings, and support for reinforcing religious values within the family environment. This involvement aims to create continuity between the religious

culture at school and at home, so that the values instilled can be more deeply internalized. The observational findings are consistent with the interview results from several school stakeholders, which are presented below.

Based on in-depth interviews with principals, vice principals, teachers, and other educational staff across several research-site schools, a consistent picture emerged of principals' strategies for building a religious school culture. Informants stated that the principal is viewed not only as a structural leader but also as a role model who carries moral and spiritual responsibility in instilling religious values among all school members.

Interview findings reveal that in the internal strategy, principals consciously position role modeling as the primary approach in developing a religious culture. Informants explained that principals strive to set an example in performing worship, maintaining discipline, and demonstrating polite, fair, and consistent attitudes in their interactions. In addition to role modeling, principals encourage the habituation of religious values through daily school routines, such as collective prayers and congregational worship activities. Informants emphasized that value reinforcement is carried out through guidance, advice, and the provision of motivation and appreciation for positive behaviors that reflect Islamic values.

In collaborative strategies with teachers and educational staff, informants explained that principals actively involve them in planning and implementing religious culture programs. Principals foster open communication and harmonious cooperation, ensuring that every school member feels a shared responsibility in building the religious culture. Teachers and educational staff perceive this participatory approach as enhancing commitment and consistency in program implementation, both in classroom learning activities and in daily interactions within the school environment.

Regarding student and parent involvement, interview results show that principals seek to cultivate collective awareness to support the religious school culture. Students are actively involved in religious activities through roles and responsibilities, making them not merely objects but also subjects in strengthening religious culture. Meanwhile, parents are engaged through regular communication, school meetings, and collaboration in habituating religious values within the family setting. Informants conveyed that parental involvement is considered crucial in maintaining continuity between the reinforcement of religious values at school and at home.

Based on observations and interviews, it can be concluded that the success of developing a religious school culture is largely determined by the principal's strategic, consistent, and sustainable leadership. The principal acts as the central figure who not only designs and coordinates religious programs but also exemplifies and internalizes religious values in all school activities. Internal strategies through role modeling, habituation, and value reinforcement serve as the primary foundation, strengthened by participatory collaboration with teachers and educational staff. In addition, the active involvement of students and parents reinforces religious values and creates continuity between school and home. The alignment between observational and interview findings indicates that a religious school culture can be effectively established when the principal's leadership

comprehensively integrates Islamic values into the school's systems, practices, and interactions.

3.1.3. Implementation of a Religious School Culture in School Life

Based on observations conducted in several schools that served as research sites, the implementation of a religious school culture appears to be systematically internalized in school life through the habituation of worship practices, the integration of religious values into the learning process, and the cultivation of moral character and ethics among all school members. This implementation is not merely ceremonial; rather, it is carried out consistently and sustainably, thereby shaping a religious school climate conducive to character strengthening.

In the aspect of habituating worship and religious activities, observational findings indicate that schools have developed religious routines as part of their daily activities. Practices such as collective prayers before and after learning sessions, congregational worship, and the commemoration of religious holidays are conducted on a scheduled basis and involve all school members. These activities function not only as ritual obligations but also as means of spiritual development and as vehicles for instilling discipline, togetherness, and responsibility. The consistency with which these worship practices are implemented reflects the school's commitment to making religious values the foundation of school life.

Furthermore, the integration of religious values into the learning process is evident in teachers' efforts to contextualize subject matter with Islamic values. Observations show that teachers emphasize not only cognitive aspects but also guide students to understand the moral and spiritual meanings of each lesson. Values such as honesty, hard work, responsibility, and mutual respect are internalized through teaching methods, contextual examples, and educational interactions between teachers and students. In this way, the learning process becomes a strategic means of instilling religious values that are integrated with academic objectives.

Regarding the development of moral character and ethics among school members, observational findings reveal that religious culture is reflected in the daily attitudes and behaviors of the entire school community. Interactions among school members take place in an atmosphere of mutual respect, polite communication, and a strong commitment to justice and responsibility. The school also implements rules and norms based on religious values as behavioral guidelines, accompanied by guidance and positive reinforcement for behaviors that reflect noble character. Such a school environment encourages the formation of religious character, evident not only in formal activities but also in everyday habits and ethical conduct. The observational findings are consistent with the interview results from several school stakeholders, which are presented below.

Based on in-depth interviews with principals, vice principals, teachers, and educational staff in several research-site schools, findings aligned with the observational results regarding the implementation of religious school culture in school life. Informants stated that religious culture has become an integral part of daily activities and interactions among school members, not limited to formal religious activities but also reflected in attitudes, values, and behaviors.

Regarding habituating worship and religious activities, informants explained that schools consistently implement various worship routines as part of their culture. Principals and teachers stated that collective prayers before and after learning sessions, congregational worship, and other regular religious activities are viewed as means of spiritual development, discipline, and unity building. Informants emphasized that the involvement of all school members, including leaders and teachers, in worship activities provides exemplary reinforcement, encouraging students to worship with awareness rather than merely out of obligation.

Regarding the integration of religious values into the learning process, interview findings indicate that teachers consciously strive to relate subject matter to religious values. Teachers explained that in the learning process, they focus not only on academic achievement but also on instilling values such as honesty, responsibility, hard work, and mutual respect. The integration of religious values is carried out through contextual examples, reinforcement of positive attitudes, and reflection on values during teaching and learning activities. Informants believe that this approach helps students understand that religious values are relevant to all aspects of life, including academic pursuits.

In developing moral character and ethics among school members, informants revealed that religious culture is reflected in daily interactions and behaviors within the school environment. Teachers and educational staff stated that polite communication, mutual respect, and adherence to school rules grounded in religious values have become shared habits. The principal emphasized the importance of continuous guidance through advice, positive reinforcement, and role modeling to ensure that noble moral values are consistently embedded. Informants also conveyed that implementing rules accompanied by educational guidance is considered effective in shaping the ethics and religious character of school members.

Based on the overall findings from observations and interviews, it can be concluded that the implementation of religious school culture in the research-site schools has been carried out in a planned, consistent, and well-integrated manner within school life. Religious culture is not positioned merely as a ceremonial activity but has become an integral part of the educational system and daily interactions among school members. This is reflected in the routine habituation of worship and religious activities involving all school members, the integration of religious values into the learning process that balances academic achievement with character formation, and the cultivation of moral character and ethics manifested in polite, respectful, and responsible behavior. Observational findings are reinforced by interview results indicating collective awareness and shared commitment among principals, teachers, and educational staff to instill and strengthen religious values through role modeling, habituation, and continuous guidance. Thus, religious school culture plays a significant role in creating a conducive, religious school climate oriented toward the holistic character development of students.

3.2. Discussion

The results of this study indicate that Islamic leadership management, applied systematically through the functions of planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating,

plays a significant role in developing a religious school culture. These findings align with Siswanto's study, which asserts that effective school principal leadership is not only oriented toward administrative aspects but also toward strengthening values and character as the core of school culture [17]. From an Islamic leadership perspective, the school principal functions as a moral and spiritual leader who instills the values of trustworthiness, exemplary behavior, and responsibility, as stated by Illah et al., who argue that leadership based on Islamic values requires consistency between the leader's words, policies, and actions [18].

At the planning stage, research findings indicate that the religious school culture program is designed participatively through deliberation involving teachers and educational staff. This aligns with Farwati's research, which states that participatory planning increases school members' sense of belonging in the programs carried out [19]. In the context of Islamic leadership, deliberation is a fundamental principle that strengthens the legitimacy of policies and collective commitment, as emphasized by Azizah et al., who argue that deliberation in Islamic education management unifies vision and strengthens brotherhood [20].

The aspect of organizing school resources fairly and proportionally also supports the effectiveness of developing a religious culture. This finding is in line with the research of Mahmud & Ramli, which shows that a clear division of tasks according to competence encourages teachers' and educational staff's performance optimally [21]. From an Islamic perspective, the principles of justice and trustworthiness in organizations serve as an important foundation, enabling every school member to carry out their role with moral responsibility, as stated by Akhyar et al. in their study on Islamic education management [22].

At the implementation stage, the research results show that the principal's exemplary behavior becomes a key factor in the internalization of religious values. This finding reinforces Syarifuddin's (2020) study, which concluded that a religious culture is more effectively built through the leader's example than through mere formal instructions. The exemplary behavior demonstrated by the principal in worship practices, communication ethics, and decision-making fosters the habituation of authentic, sustainable values. This aligns with Fauzah & Faizi's view that school leaders' behavior becomes the primary reference in shaping the organizational culture of education [23].

Furthermore, the principal's strategy, which combines an internal, collaborative approach with student and parent involvement, aligns with Nazili & Julaiha's findings that a strong school culture is formed through the synergy among the school, students, and families [24]. Parental involvement in supporting the habituation of religious values strengthens the continuity of character education between school and home, as also emphasized by Nazwa et al., who note that the success of internalizing religious values is greatly influenced by the consistency of formal and informal educational environments [25].

The implementation of a religious school culture that is integrated into the habituation of worship, the learning process, and the formation of the morals and ethics of school members is also in line with the research of Mahasa et al., which emphasizes the importance of integrating character values into daily learning [26]. The findings of this study indicate that religious values are not treated as ceremonial activities but are incorporated into

the education system and practices. This supports the findings of Mahfudi & Rifa'i, who stated that effective character education must be internalized in all school activities, not just through incidental programs [27].

Overall, this discussion shows that the research results are consistent with a range of empirical and theoretical studies on Islamic leadership and the culture of religious schools. The leadership of a principal who is trustworthy, participative, and consistent has been proven capable of integrating Islamic values into the school management system, cultural development strategies, and the daily practices of school members. Thus, the findings of this study not only reinforce existing theory but also provide empirical evidence that Islamic leadership, when fully and sustainably implemented, contributes significantly to the development of a vibrant and meaningful religious school culture.

3. CONCLUSION

Based on the overall results of observations and interviews conducted at several schools that served as research sites, it can be concluded that Islamic leadership management plays a very significant role in developing and strengthening a religious school culture. School leadership grounded in Islamic values is carried out systematically, integratively, and sustainably across the stages of planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating programs. The principal not only performs administrative functions but also serves as a moral and spiritual role model, internalizing the values of trust, exemplary behavior, deliberation, justice, and responsibility across all aspects of school management. Planning of religious culture programs is carried out participatively, involving teachers and educational staff, so that the programs are not merely ceremonial but are oriented toward habituating Islamic moral and character values in the everyday life of the school. Resource organization is carried out fairly and collaboratively, encouraging the active involvement of all school members and fostering a sense of ownership and shared responsibility. The implementation of a religious culture is realized through the exemplary behavior of leaders, the habituation of worship, the integration of religious values into the learning process, and the consistent formation of students' and school members' character and ethics.

Meanwhile, program evaluation is conducted continuously with an orientation toward changes in attitudes, behavior, and the school's religious climate as a basis for program improvement and strengthening. Overall, the findings of this study indicate that Islamic leadership that is trustworthy, participative, and consistent can build a religious school culture that is internalized and concretely embedded in the system, practices, and interactions of school life. Religious culture is not only present in formal religious activities, but it also becomes an integral part of the learning process, daily behavior, and the holistic development of students' character. Thus, school leadership grounded in Islamic values has been proven to be a key factor in creating a religiously conducive school climate oriented towards character development.

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