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## Leadership and Organizational Culture in Islamic Schools: Implications for Educational Innovation

Nur Efendi

Universitas Islam Negeri Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, Indonesia

[nurefendi2016@gmail.com](mailto:nurefendi2016@gmail.com)

### INFORMATION ARTICLE

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the relationship between leadership and organizational culture and its implications for educational innovation in an Islamic school context at MTsN Tulungagung. The study addresses how leadership shapes organizational culture, how culture influences innovation, and how both interact within institutional practices. A qualitative case study design was applied to explore experiences of the principal, teachers, and administrative staff. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis, followed by thematic analysis. The findings show that leadership establishes a value-based organizational culture characterized by trust, collaboration, and continuous learning, which becomes a foundation for institutional practices. This culture encourages teachers to engage in reflective practice, experiment with instructional strategies, and integrate innovative approaches in teaching. Educational innovation is reflected in interactive learning methods, collaborative activities, and adaptive instructional design that respond to student needs. The study also reveals a cyclical relationship where leadership shapes culture, culture supports innovation, and innovation outcomes provide feedback that refines leadership strategies and institutional development.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Organizational Culture, Educational, Innovation, Islamic School.

### INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions are required to respond to rapid changes in knowledge, technology, and societal expectations by developing innovative learning systems that remain relevant and effective. Schools operate in environments characterized by increasing demands for accountability, adaptability, and measurable outcomes, which place pressure on institutions to continuously improve their practices.

Innovation in education is reflected in the ability of schools to design creative instructional approaches, integrate technology meaningfully, and respond to diverse student needs. The capacity to innovate is closely linked to how institutions organize their internal processes and mobilize their human resources toward shared goals. Leadership becomes a central factor in shaping these conditions because it determines how institutional direction is



defined, how change is introduced, and how stakeholders are engaged in the process. Leadership that emphasizes clarity of purpose and responsiveness to change contributes to the development of educational systems that are both structured and adaptable. Empirical research indicates that leadership significantly influences school improvement by shaping organizational conditions that support innovation and learning (Leithwood et al., 2019).

In Islamic schools, the development of innovation is situated within a framework that integrates academic excellence with moral and religious values. Educational practices are expected to reflect not only cognitive achievement but also character formation and ethical awareness. This dual orientation creates a distinctive environment in which innovation must align with institutional values and religious principles. Leadership in this context is required to guide the integration of these dimensions by ensuring that innovation does not compromise the ethical foundations of education. Leaders establish direction by articulating values that connect knowledge,

behavior, and social responsibility, creating a holistic vision for institutional development. Organizational culture becomes an essential element in this process because it influences how teachers and staff interpret leadership direction and translate it into practice. A culture that supports openness, collaboration, and continuous learning provides a foundation for the development of innovative approaches in both teaching and institutional management. Studies highlight that organizational culture plays a significant role in enabling innovation by shaping attitudes, behaviors, and shared meanings within educational institutions (Schein, 2017). Based on this context, this study addresses how leadership shapes organizational culture in MTsN Tulungagung.

Organizational culture in educational institutions consists of shared values, beliefs, and practices that guide behavior and decision-making among members of the institution. These cultural elements influence how teachers approach their work, how they interact with colleagues, and how they respond to institutional expectations. In Islamic schools, culture is closely connected



with religious values that inform daily routines, instructional approaches, and social interactions. Leadership plays a key role in cultivating this culture by modeling values, establishing expectations, and facilitating collaboration among stakeholders. Leaders who demonstrate consistency between values and actions contribute to the development of trust and commitment within the organization. A supportive organizational culture encourages teachers to experiment with new teaching methods, engage in reflective practice, and participate in professional learning activities that enhance their competence. Educational innovation emerges when teachers are provided with opportunities, support, and autonomy to develop creative instructional strategies that respond to student needs and contextual challenges. Research indicates that school culture significantly influences teachers' willingness to adopt innovative practices, as it shapes perceptions of risk, collaboration, and professional growth (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). This relationship highlights the importance of understanding how organizational culture influences educational

innovation within the institutional setting. Based on this background, this study examines how organizational culture influences educational innovation in MTsN Tulungagung.

The relationship between leadership, organizational culture, and educational innovation reflects a dynamic interaction within the institution that evolves over time. Leadership practices shape the development of culture by establishing values, norms, and expectations that guide behavior. Organizational culture, in turn, influences how innovation is implemented in teaching and organizational processes by shaping attitudes toward change and collaboration. Teachers interpret leadership direction through the lens of cultural values, which affects how they design instructional activities and engage with students. Innovation outcomes, including student engagement and instructional effectiveness, provide feedback that informs leadership strategies and supports continuous improvement. This interaction creates a cycle in which leadership, culture, and innovation are interconnected and mutually reinforcing.



Alignment between these elements becomes essential in sustaining institutional development and ensuring that innovation remains consistent with educational goals and values. Evidence suggests that schools that achieve alignment between leadership and organizational culture are more successful in implementing innovation and sustaining improvement over time (Hallinger & Kulophas, 2020).

Understanding this interconnected relationship requires attention to both structural and cultural dimensions within the institution. Structural elements include policies, planning processes, and evaluation systems that provide a framework for implementing innovation. Cultural elements involve shared beliefs, values, and norms that influence how individuals engage with these structures. Leadership operates across these dimensions by aligning institutional systems with cultural values, creating coherence between formal processes and everyday practices. In Islamic educational contexts, shared religious values strengthen this alignment by providing a common foundation for action and decision-making.

Teachers and staff are more likely to engage in innovative practices when they perceive alignment between institutional expectations and their personal values. This alignment enhances motivation, strengthens collaboration, and supports sustained institutional development. Based on this perspective, this study addresses how leadership, organizational culture, and educational innovation are interconnected within MTsN Tulungagung.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative case study design conducted at MTsN Tulungagung to examine the relationship between leadership, organizational culture, and educational innovation within a specific institutional context. A qualitative approach enables a deep exploration of meanings, experiences, and interactions that shape leadership practices and innovation processes in natural settings. This approach is appropriate for understanding complex social phenomena where variables are interconnected and influenced by context. The case study design focuses on a bounded



system, allowing detailed investigation of how leadership, teachers, and institutional structures interact in shaping organizational culture and innovation. Such a design provides rich and contextualized insights that reflect real conditions within the school environment (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The emphasis on context allows the study to capture the dynamics of leadership practices and their implications for educational innovation in an اسلامی school setting.

Participants in this study consist of the principal, teachers, and administrative staff selected through purposive sampling. This sampling strategy focuses on individuals who possess direct experience and knowledge related to leadership practices, cultural development, and instructional processes. The principal serves as a key informant who provides insights into leadership vision, decision-making processes, and strategies for fostering innovation. Teachers contribute perspectives related to classroom practices, professional interactions, and their experiences in implementing innovative teaching approaches. Administrative staff provide additional information concerning

institutional coordination, documentation systems, and operational support that influence organizational culture and innovation. The inclusion of multiple participant groups enables the study to capture diverse viewpoints and supports a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon. Purposeful selection of participants is widely used in qualitative research to ensure that data are information-rich and relevant to the research objectives (Etikan et al., 2016).

Data collection was conducted using multiple techniques to enhance depth and credibility. Semi-structured interviews were employed to explore participants' experiences and perceptions related to leadership, organizational culture, and innovation. This method allows flexibility in probing responses while maintaining alignment with the research focus. Observations of school activities were carried out to examine how leadership practices and cultural values are enacted in daily interactions, including teaching, meetings, and collaborative activities. Observational data provide direct evidence of behavior and



practices that may not be fully captured through interviews. Document analysis involved reviewing institutional plans, policy documents, and reports to understand formal structures and evidence of implementation. These documents provide insight into how leadership vision and innovation strategies are articulated and operationalized within the institution. The use of multiple data sources strengthens the comprehensiveness of the study and supports triangulation (Bowen, 2009).

Data analysis followed a thematic approach involving several systematic stages. The process began with data organization and reduction, where relevant information from interviews, observations, and documents was selected and prepared for analysis. Coding was then conducted to identify meaningful units related to leadership practices, organizational culture, and educational innovation. These codes were grouped into categories and developed into themes that represent recurring patterns across the dataset. Interpretation focused on explaining relationships among themes and linking them to the research questions. This approach

allows the researcher to maintain sensitivity to context while ensuring systematic analysis of qualitative data. Thematic analysis is recognized as a flexible and rigorous method for identifying patterns and constructing meaning in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Trustworthiness of the study was ensured through triangulation and member checking. Triangulation was achieved by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documents to identify consistent patterns and reduce bias. Member checking involved sharing findings with participants to confirm accuracy and ensure that interpretations reflect their experiences. These strategies enhance the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the research, providing a strong foundation for understanding the relationship between leadership, organizational culture, and educational innovation within MTsN Tulungagung.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Leadership and Organizational Culture



Leadership at MTsN Tulungagung demonstrates a significant role in shaping organizational culture through the articulation and consistent implementation of shared values that guide institutional practices. The principal establishes a clear direction by promoting values such as discipline, collaboration, responsibility, and commitment to learning, which are reflected in both formal policies and daily interactions. These values are not presented as abstract principles but are translated into observable behaviors that influence how teachers and staff perform their roles. Teachers describe that leadership behavior shows consistency between what is communicated and what is practiced, creating a sense of trust and credibility within the institution. This consistency strengthens organizational cohesion and encourages members to internalize institutional values as part of their professional identity. The development of trust through value-based leadership contributes to a stable organizational environment where individuals feel secure in their roles and responsibilities. Research indicates that leadership plays a central role

in shaping organizational culture by aligning values with practices and reinforcing shared norms within educational institutions (Deal & Peterson, 2016).

Leadership practices at the school are reflected in structured and relational activities that support the development of a positive organizational culture. Regular meetings provide a platform for communication, coordination, and reflection, allowing teachers and staff to engage in discussions related to instructional practices and institutional goals. These meetings are not limited to administrative purposes but function as spaces for professional dialogue where participants exchange ideas and experiences. Collaborative discussions enable teachers to address challenges collectively and develop shared solutions that enhance instructional effectiveness. Mentoring activities further strengthen this process by providing individualized support and guidance that helps teachers improve their professional competence. Teachers report that leadership engagement in these activities creates a supportive environment that encourages participation and openness.



This environment reduces professional isolation and fosters a sense of belonging among teachers, which contributes to the development of a collaborative culture. Studies highlight that leadership practices that emphasize collaboration and professional interaction contribute to the strengthening of organizational culture and collective efficacy in schools (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015).

The presence of open communication within the institution reflects the influence of leadership in creating a culture based on mutual respect and trust. Teachers and staff feel encouraged to express their ideas, share concerns, and participate in decision-making processes. This openness supports the development of positive relationships among members of the institution and enhances their willingness to engage in collaborative activities. Leadership facilitates this communication by maintaining accessibility and responsiveness in interactions with teachers and staff. Teachers describe that such interactions create a sense of psychological safety, allowing them to take initiative and contribute actively to

institutional development. A culture characterized by open communication and trust strengthens the capacity of the institution to respond to challenges and implement improvement strategies effectively. Research suggests that leadership that fosters trust and open communication enhances organizational commitment and supports the development of positive school culture (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

A supportive organizational culture also encourages teachers to engage in reflective practice and continuous learning as part of their professional responsibilities. Teachers regularly evaluate their instructional approaches, analyze student responses, and consider alternative strategies to improve learning outcomes. Leadership plays a key role in facilitating this process by providing feedback that is constructive and oriented toward improvement. Feedback is delivered through both formal supervision and informal interactions, enabling teachers to reflect on their practices in a meaningful way. Teachers describe that this feedback helps them identify strengths and areas for development, which supports their



professional growth. Opportunities for professional learning, including workshops and collaborative discussions, further enhance teachers' ability to adapt their instructional strategies to changing educational demands. This emphasis on reflection and learning contributes to the development of a culture that values improvement and innovation. Evidence indicates that organizational culture that supports reflective practice enhances teacher effectiveness and promotes continuous development within educational settings (Kools & Stoll, 2016).

The integration of values, collaboration, communication, and reflective practice contributes to the development of a cohesive and stable organizational culture at MTsN Tulungagung. Teachers demonstrate a shared understanding of institutional goals and work collectively to achieve them, creating consistency in instructional practices and organizational processes. Leadership ensures that these cultural elements remain aligned with institutional values, maintaining coherence between vision and practice. This alignment strengthens the capacity of the

institution to sustain improvement and respond to emerging challenges. Organizational culture becomes a guiding framework that shapes behavior, decision-making, and professional interaction within the school. The findings indicate that leadership does not operate as a separate administrative function but becomes embedded in the development of organizational culture through continuous interaction with teachers and staff. This relationship highlights the importance of leadership in fostering a culture that supports both stability and growth, providing a foundation for educational innovation and institutional development.

## **2. Organizational Culture and Educational Innovation**

Organizational culture at MTsN Tulungagung demonstrates a strong influence on the development of educational innovation through the creation of an environment that supports creativity, adaptability, and professional engagement. The culture within the institution reflects shared values that emphasize openness to new ideas, willingness to collaborate, and



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commitment to continuous improvement. Teachers operate within a setting where innovation is not perceived as an external demand but as part of daily professional practice. This orientation shapes how teachers approach instructional design, classroom interaction, and student engagement. The presence of a supportive culture reduces resistance to change and encourages teachers to explore alternative strategies that respond to diverse learning needs. Innovation becomes a natural outcome of a culture that values learning and growth, rather than a separate initiative imposed from outside. Research indicates that organizational culture significantly affects innovation by shaping collective attitudes and fostering an environment where experimentation is encouraged (Zhu et al., 2019).

Educational innovation within the school is reflected in the implementation of varied instructional approaches that promote active learning and student participation. Teachers design lessons that involve discussion, inquiry, and collaborative activities, enabling students to engage with

content in meaningful ways. Contextual learning approaches are used to connect subject matter with students' real-life experiences, enhancing relevance and understanding. The integration of technology further supports innovation by providing access to diverse learning resources and facilitating interactive learning environments. Teachers describe that these practices enable them to address different learning styles and create more inclusive classrooms. Innovation in this context is not limited to the use of tools or methods but involves a shift in how learning is conceptualized and delivered. Instructional practices become more student-centered, focusing on engagement, interaction, and critical thinking. Studies highlight that innovative teaching practices are closely linked to school culture that supports autonomy and encourages experimentation among teachers (Runhaar et al., 2016).

Collaboration among teachers plays a crucial role in fostering and sustaining educational innovation within the institution. Teachers engage in regular discussions, peer observations, and joint planning activities



that provide opportunities to share ideas and reflect on instructional practices. These interactions enable teachers to learn from one another, identify effective strategies, and adapt their approaches to meet student needs. The exchange of knowledge and experience strengthens collective competence and supports the development of innovative practices across classrooms. Leadership facilitates this collaborative process by providing time, structure, and encouragement for professional interaction. Teachers report that collaboration helps them gain confidence in trying new approaches and reduces uncertainty associated with change. The presence of a collaborative culture transforms innovation into a shared responsibility, where teachers work together to improve instructional quality. Evidence suggests that professional collaboration enhances innovation by promoting collective learning and supporting the diffusion of new practices within educational organizations (Vangrieken et al., 2015).

The culture of continuous learning within the school further contributes to the sustainability of educational innovation.

Teachers demonstrate a commitment to improving their professional competence through reflection, training, and engagement in professional development activities. Reflection becomes an integral part of teaching practice, enabling teachers to evaluate their instructional strategies and identify areas for improvement. Leadership supports this process by encouraging teachers to participate in learning activities and by providing feedback that guides professional growth. Teachers perceive innovation as a responsibility that is closely linked to their role as educators, rather than as an optional activity. This perception strengthens their motivation to seek new knowledge and adapt their practices to changing educational demands. Continuous learning ensures that innovation remains relevant and responsive to contextual needs, supporting long-term institutional development. Research indicates that schools that promote continuous professional learning are more likely to sustain innovation and improve instructional effectiveness over time (OECD, 2020).

The interaction between organizational culture and educational innovation reflects a



dynamic process in which values, practices, and outcomes influence one another. A culture that supports openness, collaboration, and learning creates conditions where innovation can emerge and develop. Teachers translate these cultural values into instructional practices that enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. Student responses and performance provide feedback that informs further refinement of teaching strategies and institutional practices. This process creates a cycle of improvement that strengthens both culture and innovation within the institution. Organizational culture serves as a foundation that supports the implementation and sustainability of innovation, ensuring that changes are integrated into daily practice rather than remaining isolated initiatives. The findings indicate that educational innovation at MTsN Tulungagung is not driven solely by individual effort but emerges from a collective culture that values growth, collaboration, and adaptability. This relationship highlights the importance of fostering a supportive organizational culture

as a key factor in promoting innovation within Islamic educational institutions.

### **3. Interconnection Between Leadership, Organizational Culture, and Educational Innovation**

The relationship between leadership, organizational culture, and educational innovation at MTsN Tulungagung reflects a continuous and interconnected process in which each element influences and reinforces the others within a dynamic institutional system. Leadership practices shape the development of organizational culture through the articulation of values, expectations, and norms that guide behavior. Organizational culture, in turn, determines how these values are interpreted and enacted in daily practices, including teaching, collaboration, and decision-making. Educational innovation emerges as a result of these interactions, as teachers translate cultural values into instructional strategies that respond to student needs. Innovation outcomes provide feedback that informs leadership strategies and supports further refinement of institutional practices. This interaction demonstrates that leadership,



culture, and innovation function as an integrated system rather than separate components. Research indicates that school improvement is sustained when leadership, culture, and instructional practices operate in alignment and support continuous learning within the organization (MacNeil et al., 2009).

Leadership vision becomes operational when it is translated into concrete actions through cultural practices and instructional activities within the institution. At MTsN Tulungagung, the principal communicates a vision that integrates academic excellence with Islamic values, which serves as a guiding framework for teachers and staff. Teachers interpret this vision by aligning their instructional strategies with institutional expectations, ensuring that classroom practices reflect shared values. Instructional activities such as interactive learning, collaborative tasks, and reflective assessment represent practical manifestations of leadership direction. Administrative processes, including planning, supervision, and evaluation, also reflect the translation of vision into action, providing structure and

consistency in institutional operations. This alignment between leadership vision and daily practice creates coherence across different aspects of the institution, enabling innovation to be implemented effectively. Studies show that leadership contributes to organizational coherence by linking vision with practice and ensuring that institutional goals are reflected in operational activities (Day et al., 2016).

Students play an important role in this interconnected process through their responses to instructional practices and learning environments. Increased engagement, participation, and interaction in classroom activities indicate that innovation practices are effective in supporting learning. Teachers observe that students respond positively to instructional approaches that emphasize collaboration, inquiry, and contextual understanding. These responses serve as indicators of how well leadership and culture are translated into practice. Student outcomes provide valuable information that reflects the impact of innovation on learning experiences. This information contributes to the ongoing



development of both teaching practices and institutional strategies. Research suggests that student engagement functions as a key mediator in the relationship between instructional practices and school effectiveness, highlighting its importance in evaluating innovation (Fredricks et al., 2016).

Feedback mechanisms play a central role in sustaining the interaction between leadership, organizational culture, and educational innovation. Feedback is generated from multiple sources, including classroom observations, teacher reflections, and student performance data. Teachers engage in reflective practice by analyzing their instructional approaches and identifying areas for improvement. Reflection allows teachers to adjust their strategies, experiment with new methods, and enhance the quality of learning experiences. Leadership uses feedback to evaluate the effectiveness of policies and practices, making adjustments that support institutional development. This feedback loop creates a cycle of continuous improvement in which both leadership and teaching practices evolve in response to evidence from implementation. The presence

of structured and ongoing feedback processes strengthens accountability and supports adaptive decision-making within the institution. Evidence indicates that feedback-informed leadership enhances school improvement by promoting reflective practice and data-driven development (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Teacher practices function as a key link that connects leadership and organizational culture with educational innovation. Leadership influences teacher behavior through guidance, support, and expectations, while teachers translate this influence into instructional strategies that shape student learning experiences. At MTsN Tulungagung, teachers engage in collaborative planning, peer discussion, and continuous refinement of their teaching methods. These practices reflect the integration of cultural values into instructional activities, ensuring that innovation remains aligned with institutional goals. Teacher capacity becomes a determining factor in the effectiveness of innovation, as it influences how learning activities are designed and implemented. The



development of teacher competence through professional learning and collaboration strengthens the connection between leadership and innovation outcomes. Research highlights that teacher capacity mediates the relationship between leadership and student outcomes, emphasizing the importance of focusing on instructional practices in school improvement efforts (Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

Organizational processes within the institution further reinforce the interconnected relationship between leadership, culture, and innovation. Activities such as strategic planning, supervision, evaluation, and professional development provide a structured framework that supports the implementation of leadership vision and cultural values. Leadership ensures that these processes are aligned with institutional goals and that all stakeholders understand their roles and responsibilities. Teachers and staff participate actively in these processes, contributing to a shared understanding of expectations and strengthening collective responsibility. This structured yet flexible system enables the institution to maintain

consistency while adapting to changing educational demands. The integration of organizational processes with cultural values ensures that innovation is not isolated but embedded in institutional routines. Studies indicate that alignment between organizational processes and cultural practices enhances institutional effectiveness and supports sustainable innovation (Brezicha et al., 2015).

Alignment among leadership, organizational culture, and educational innovation emerges as a central factor in sustaining institutional development. Leadership provides direction and establishes values, organizational culture shapes behavior and interaction, and educational innovation reflects the effectiveness of implementation. When alignment is achieved, the institution operates as a coherent system in which all components contribute to shared objectives. Teachers demonstrate a common understanding of institutional goals, which strengthens collaboration and enhances performance. Students benefit from consistent and engaging learning experiences that support



their academic and personal development. This alignment ensures that innovation remains sustainable and responsive to contextual needs. The findings indicate that leadership acts as a driving force that connects culture and innovation, ensuring that institutional practices remain consistent with values and goals. This interconnected process highlights the importance of integrated leadership approaches in fostering adaptive and innovative educational environments within Islamic schools.

## CONCLUSION

Leadership at MTsN Tulungagung demonstrates a central role in shaping organizational culture through the articulation and consistent implementation of shared values. These values guide institutional practices and influence how teachers and staff engage in their professional responsibilities. A leadership approach that reflects alignment between values and actions strengthens trust and creates a stable organizational environment. This condition supports collaboration and encourages

individuals to internalize institutional goals as part of their professional identity.

Organizational culture emerges as a key factor that supports educational innovation within the institution. A culture characterized by openness, collaboration, and commitment to learning creates conditions where teachers feel confident to explore new instructional strategies. Teachers engage in reflective practice, evaluate their approaches, and adapt their teaching to improve student learning experiences. Innovation develops as part of daily professional activity, supported by shared values and collective responsibility among teachers and staff.

Educational innovation at MTsN Tulungagung is reflected in the implementation of interactive learning methods, contextual approaches, and collaborative activities that enhance student engagement. Students participate actively in classroom processes, demonstrating increased interest and involvement in learning. These outcomes indicate that innovation practices are effective in supporting meaningful learning experiences. The integration of innovation into routine



practice ensures that instructional improvement is sustained over time.

The relationship between leadership, organizational culture, and educational innovation forms a continuous and interconnected process within the institution. Leadership provides direction through vision and values, organizational culture shapes how these values are enacted, and innovation reflects the effectiveness of implementation. Feedback from instructional practices and student outcomes informs further development of leadership strategies and institutional practices. This interaction creates a cycle of improvement that strengthens institutional capacity.

Sustaining educational innovation requires alignment between leadership, culture, and practice. Leadership must maintain consistency in guiding institutional direction, while organizational culture needs to support collaboration and continuous learning. Innovation becomes sustainable when it is embedded in institutional routines and supported by shared commitment among stakeholders. These findings highlight that the integration of leadership and

organizational culture is essential in developing adaptive and innovative Islamic educational institutions.

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