



Transforming Organizational Culture in Islamic Educational Institutions: Cultivating a Quality-Oriented Learning Environment for Academic Excellence

Ainul Yakin*, Hefniy, Abu Hasan Agus, Hasan Baharun, Akmal Mundiri

Universitas Nurul Jadid, Indonesia

Email : anlykn192@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

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*Corresponding Author

This study explores the transformation of organizational culture in Islamic educational institutions, with a specific focus on developing a quality-oriented learning environment aimed at enhancing both academic performance and character formation. Employing a qualitative approach through an ethnographic case study design, the research was conducted between 2024 and 2025. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with eight key informants, six months of participatory observation, and analysis of institutional documents. Findings reveal that a tauhid-based cultural transformation successfully fostered a high-quality learning ecosystem through the synergy of three fundamental dimensions: the internalization of spiritual values as a foundation for strategic decision-making, transformational leadership that cultivates a shared vision and empowers stakeholders, and the integration of constructivist pedagogy through project- and inquiry-based learning models. Character development outcomes were equally notable, reflected in reduced disciplinary violations, improved consistency in religious practices, and heightened social empathy among students. This study contributes theoretically by introducing the concept of a Tauhid-Based Quality Learning Environment (TQLE)—a holistic framework that harmonizes academic excellence with Islamic character formation. Practically, it offers an implementable model for Islamic educational institutions seeking to embed spiritual values into sustainable quality education practices.

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INTRODUCTION

The transformation of organizational culture in Islamic educational institutions has become a strategic necessity in responding to the evolving dynamics of modern education. Today, these institutions face complex

challenges in maintaining their religious identity while adapting to the continuous demands for improved educational quality. This phenomenon reflects an urgent need to build learning environments that integrate Islamic values with high academic standards. Islamic educational institutions require an intrapreneurial leadership framework that effectively merges Islamic principles with modern management practices to achieve successful organizational transformation (Umar et al., 2025; Rosyidi et al., 2025).

This challenge is intensified by the global competition Islamic schools must navigate while retaining their unique religious character. Organizational culture plays a critical role in enhancing institutional performance both in the short and long term (Alateeg & Alhammadi, 2024; Panda, 2022). The urgency of this research lies in the need to understand the mechanisms of cultural transformation that can create synergy between Islamic values and contemporary educational practices, aiming to produce graduates who are both academically excellent and strongly grounded in Islamic character.

Previous studies on organizational culture transformation in Islamic education have identified several dimensions that affect institutional change. Nordin et al. (2024) highlighted the foundational role of a sustainable learning culture in achieving quality education through lifelong learning and collaborative environments. Bibliometric analyses indicate a significant increase in research focusing on digital transformation and academic quality improvement in Islamic education, marked by dynamic phases of growth, consolidation, and contemporary revitalization (Adedo & Deriwanto, 2024). Other studies show that digital transformation, such as the adoption of Learning Management Systems and administrative digitization, enhances both teaching effectiveness and institutional efficiency. Purnomo et al. (2024) revealed that digital transformation not only changes content delivery but also drives organizational cultural change toward greater transparency and accountability. Additionally, research has shown that Islamic organizational culture, work capability, and emotional intelligence significantly impact staff performance in Islamic educational institutions (Pasaribu et al., 2023; Abdelwahed et al., 2025).

However, a gap in the literature exists: few studies have comprehensively examined the holistic process of cultural transformation that integrates spiritual, pedagogical, and managerial dimensions—particularly in the context of secondary-level Islamic education in Indonesia. Existing studies tend to focus on isolated aspects such as transformational leadership, technology adoption, or curriculum implementation, without addressing the cultural transformation of values, norms, practices, and organizational structures as a unified whole. For instance, Omarov et al. (2024) found that traditional methods fail to engage

students accustomed to interactive and tech-based learning environments but did not explore how organizational culture transformation could address this issue. Similarly, challenges such as inadequate digital infrastructure, lack of trained educators, and limited access to credible Islamic digital resources have been noted (Rohman et al., 2024; Juhairiah et al., 2024), yet solutions through comprehensive cultural transformation remain unexplored. Thus, current literature lacks in-depth analysis on how cultural transformation can systematically create quality-oriented learning environments while preserving strong Islamic identity.

The novelty of this study lies in developing a tailored model of organizational culture transformation for Islamic educational institutions by integrating tauhid (Islamic monotheism) as the philosophical foundation of every organizational change process. This study introduces an innovative perspective by combining contemporary organizational transformation theories with Islamic management principles derived from the Qur'an and Hadith, resulting in an authentic and contextually relevant framework. Methodologically, this research employs a multi-dimensional analysis encompassing spiritual, pedagogical, and managerial aspects simultaneously – contrasting previous studies that treat these dimensions in isolation. A unique contribution of this study is the development of specific transformation indicators for the Islamic education context, which can serve as practical tools for institutional evaluation and development. Theoretical innovation is further reflected in the formulation of the concept of a Tauhid-Based Quality Learning Environment (TQLE) that holistically integrates academic excellence with Islamic character formation.

The study aims to analyze the process of organizational culture transformation in building a quality-oriented learning environment to enhance student achievement in Islamic schools. It identifies which cultural elements need transformation and assesses their impact on creating effective learning environments. The focus is on mechanisms that successfully integrate Islamic values with modern management practices to drive sustainable academic improvement. The study is critical for Islamic educational institutions striving to develop transformation models that preserve religious identity while meeting competitive quality standards. This research argues that a systematic implementation of tauhid-based organizational culture transformation will foster a quality learning environment that enhances both academic performance and character development. Integrating Islamic management principles with modern organizational transformation practices is expected to create synergy that reinforces religious identity while improving overall educational quality.

Islamic educational institutions adopting a holistic model of cultural transformation are projected to experience improvements in academic achievement, stakeholder engagement, and learner satisfaction—compared to those using conventional approaches. This aligns with findings by Hilton et al. (2023) and Nguyen et al. (2023), which demonstrate the positive impact of transformational leadership on organizational effectiveness. The study is expected to yield an implementable framework that can be adopted by other Islamic institutions to improve institutional competitiveness while maintaining their religious distinctiveness. Ultimately, the success of cultural transformation in Islamic education depends on strong transformational leadership, full stakeholder commitment, structured and gradual implementation, and a deep consideration of local socio-cultural contexts to ensure sustainable organizational change.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with an ethnographic case study design to explore the phenomenon of organizational culture transformation in the natural context of Islamic educational institutions. The choice of a qualitative approach is based on the complex and multidimensional nature of organizational culture transformation, requiring an in-depth understanding of processes, meanings, and contexts that cannot be measured quantitatively (Ozuem et al., 2022; Qamar, 2023). An ethnographic case study design was chosen because it allows researchers to intensively observe the process of organizational culture transformation in a natural setting, understand the perspectives of internal stakeholders, and analyze the dynamics of organizational change holistically (Lim, 2025). This approach is more relevant than quantitative methods, which tend to reduce the complexity of organizational culture phenomena to measurable variables, or mixed methods, which require greater resources and time without providing a depth of understanding commensurate with the objectives of this study. The interpretivist paradigm underlying this research aligns with the need to understand the subjective meanings and social constructions formed in the process of organizational culture transformation in Islamic educational institutions.

Data collection techniques were carried out through method triangulation, including in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and organizational document analysis. The research location was determined at Lubbul Labib Junior High School, which was selected based on purposive sampling criteria: the institution has demonstrated a commitment to organizational transformation in integrating Islamic values with modern

educational practices, has a track record of improving student academic achievement, and implements innovation in a quality-based learning system. In-depth interviews were conducted with 8 informants consisting of 1 principal, 2 vice principals for curriculum and student affairs, 4 senior teachers who also act as program coordinators, and 1 representative of the school committee who were selected based on their direct involvement in the organizational culture transformation process and have a minimum of 3 years of experience at Lubbul Labib Junior High School. The composition of informants was designed to represent all levels of the organization with the following coding system:

Table 1. Informant Code

Informant Code	Position	Description
KS-01	Principal	Highest leader with strategic transformation decision-making authority
WKS-01	Vice Principal for Curriculum	Responsible for curriculum development and implementation
WKS-02	Vice Principal for Student Affairs	Manages student character development programs and extracurricular activities
GS-01	Senior Teacher Coordinator of Academic Programs	Coordinates academic achievement improvement programs
GS-02	Senior Teacher Coordinator of Religious Programs	Manages religious and Islamic character development programs
GS-03	Senior Teacher Coordinator of Extracurricular Programs	Coordinates student interest and talent development activities
GS-04	Senior Teacher Coordinator of Evaluation Programs	Responsible for the learning evaluation and monitoring system
KOM-01	School Committee Representative	Represents external stakeholders in program oversight and support

Participatory observation was conducted over a six-month period at each research location to observe the implementation of organizational culture in learning activities, coordination meetings, and internal stakeholder interactions. Document analysis included the institution's vision and mission, code of conduct, school self-evaluation reports, and transformation policy documents implemented during the 2021-2025 period to obtain secondary data to support the primary findings.

The data analysis technique used the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Mustaqhfirin, 2025; Pirade & Prasojo, 2024). The data condensation process involved coding interview transcripts to identify key themes related to organizational culture transformation, then grouping these codes into categories relevant to the research focus. Data

presentation was carried out through a table categorizing findings, a flowchart of the organizational culture transformation process, and a descriptive narrative depicting the dynamics of change at SMP Lubbul Labib. Conclusions were drawn in stages through interpretation of emerging patterns from the data, then verified through cross-checking with the raw data and confirmation with key informants. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation by comparing interview, observation, and document data, as well as member checking to ensure the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations. Research reliability was strengthened by systematic documentation of the data collection and analysis process, as well as consistency in the application of analytical procedures throughout the study to ensure objectivity and methodological accountability.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

The Spiritual Dimension as the Foundation of Organizational Culture Transformation

The organizational culture transformation at Lubbul Labib Middle School positions the spiritual dimension as a fundamental element that distinguishes Islamic educational institutions from conventional ones. Internalization of the values of monotheism (tauhid) is not merely a symbolic decoration, but is integrated throughout the organizational structure and becomes a paradigm for strategic decision-making. The process of repositioning the institution's spiritual identity is a crucial step that precedes all organizational change initiatives. The principal expressed the fundamental philosophy of the transformation: "Every policy we formulate must pass through the filter of a fundamental question: does this bring students closer to Allah and strengthen their understanding of monotheism?" (KS-01, Interview, March 15, 2025). This statement indicates that the spiritual dimension serves as a filter for evaluating every strategic policy formulation. This approach reflects a comprehensive paradigm in Islamic education management, where institutional success is measured not only by academic achievement but also by the extent to which the institution successfully integrates faith development into all learning activities and student character development. Formulated strategic policies must be directly relevant to strengthening students' understanding of monotheism, thus creating alignment between the spiritual vision and program implementation.

The vice principal for curriculum explained the concrete operationalization: "We integrate the spiritual dimension into our curriculum by developing 'tawhid learning.' When teaching mathematics, we don't just focus on formulas, but also encourage students to reflect on the order of the

universe as evidence of God's greatness" (WKS-01, Interview, March 20, 2025). This narrative demonstrates a systematic effort to transform the learning approach from a secular-positivistic one to one that integrates the divine dimension. The developed tawhid learning shifts the perspective of knowledge, viewing all fields of knowledge as manifestations of the kauniyah verses that lead students to recognize the greatness of the Creator. This approach has a significant learning impact, transforming learning into a process of developing a comprehensive Islamic worldview, rather than simply a value-free transfer of knowledge.

The researcher's observations from September 2024 to February 2025 confirmed that the spiritual dimension has been deeply internalized in the institution's daily culture. Every morning, all students and teachers engage in a fifteen-minute Quran recitation together before class begins, an activity carried out with sincerity and not merely a formal routine. Each classroom has an aesthetically designed spiritual corner, containing a Quranic manuscript and posters of motivational verses that are periodically changed according to the learning theme. Interactions between students and teachers reflect strong Islamic etiquette, evident in the use of greetings, respect for teachers, and consistent politeness in speaking. This spiritual atmosphere does not feel forced, but rather grows naturally as part of the institution's internalized identity.

As stated in the school's 2021 vision and mission document, the commitment to "forming a Qur'anic generation with noble character and achievement" is a primary reference in every strategic policy formulation. The spiritual guidance program developed is personalized, with each student receiving spiritual guidance tailored to their individual circumstances and development. This approach has significant implications because true spiritual transformation requires a process of deep personal reflection, not simply adherence to external rules. The spiritual journal program serves as a self-monitoring tool that helps students develop a reflective awareness of their spiritual journey, an ability to become aware of one's own way of thinking that is essential to the formation of a mature, non-ritualistic religiosity.

Transformational Leadership as a Driver of Organizational Change

Leadership at Lubbul Labib Junior High School goes beyond conventional administrative and operational management functions, but also acts as an agent of transformation, actively shaping the vision and mobilizing stakeholder commitment in the organizational change process. The leadership philosophy implemented emphasizes building a shared vision and actively involving all stakeholders in the transformation process. The principal described his leadership philosophy: "My leadership philosophy is 'leading

from the middle,' not from the top. I focus on building a shared vision where every teacher, staff member, and student understands and feels ownership of the transformation vision we are promoting" (KS-01, Interview, March 15, 2025). The phrase "leading from the middle" indicates a shared and inclusive leadership orientation, where the leader positions themselves not as a sole decision-maker implementing decisions from the top down, but rather as a facilitator who builds consensus and a sense of shared ownership of the transformation vision. This approach reflects the principles of transformational leadership, which emphasize the internalization of values, rather than simply adherence to formal authority. The impact of this leadership philosophy is the creation of a more democratic and responsive organizational culture, where every stakeholder feels valued and has a voice in the decision-making process, which in turn increases commitment and ownership of the transformation agenda.

The vice principal for student affairs provided a perspective on leadership practices: "The principal gave me full trust to develop programs based on my expertise, but within the framework of Islamic values. What I appreciate is how he recognizes our achievements and provides constructive feedback that encourages us to continue growing" (WKS-02, Interview, March 21, 2025). This narrative reveals the practice of individualized attention, where leaders provide attention and support tailored to the individual needs and potential of their subordinates. Delegating authority with a high level of trust reflects genuine empowerment, not just management rhetoric. Consistently providing recognition and constructive feedback contributes to ongoing professional development and builds strong self-confidence among staff. The impact of these leadership practices is the creation of a supportive organizational learning culture, where individuals feel safe to take initiative, explore innovative approaches, and learn from mistakes without fear of crippling punishment.

Researchers' observations in October 2024 and January 2025 demonstrated consistency between stated values and daily leadership practices. The principal was present early in the morning, welcoming teachers and students at the school gate with a greeting and a smile, a symbolic practice that reflects an open and approachable leader. In observed coordination meetings, the principal demonstrated a dialogue-based, non-dominant communication style, actively soliciting the opinions of all participants, including junior teachers, and using in-depth questioning techniques to encourage critical and reflective thinking. There was no evidence of intimidation or rejection of differing opinions, but rather an appreciation for diverse perspectives and an effort to integrate diverse viewpoints in joint decision-making. The leadership

demonstrated was inclusive and built trust among both internal and external stakeholders.



Figure 1. Dimensions of Transformational Leadership

The transformational leadership implemented creates a participatory and collaborative organizational culture, where each member feels valued and empowered to contribute optimally according to their capacity and expertise. Ideal influence is reflected in the principal's exemplary practice of Islamic values and consistency between words and actions, which builds credibility and inspires the entire school community. Inspirational motivation is manifested in the ability to communicate the transformation vision with passion and optimism, thereby generating enthusiasm and a sense of ownership among stakeholders to actively participate in the change process. Intellectual stimulation is reflected in encouragement of critical thinking, questioning assumptions, and exploring innovative approaches to problem-solving, which creates a culture of innovation and continuous learning.

Pedagogical Integration in Learning Transformation

The transformation of organizational culture is manifested in a fundamental shift in the learning approach, from a teacher-centered learning paradigm to a student-centered one. This change is not merely technical and methodological, but involves a philosophical transformation in how learning is understood and implemented. The adopted constructivist approach positions students as active builders of knowledge, not passive recipients of information. The vice principal for curriculum explained the paradigm shift: "We are shifting the mindset of teachers from transmitters of knowledge to facilitators of learning. We adopt a constructivist learning approach where students actively construct knowledge through direct experience, exploration, and reflection" (WKS-01, Interview, March 20, 2025). This statement indicates a fundamental shift in perspective regarding how learning occurs. The constructivist paradigm reflects the understanding that knowledge must be actively constructed by students through a process of cognitive engagement with learning materials,

meaningful direct experiences, and critical reflection on those experiences. The shift in the teacher's role from transmitter to facilitator has profound learning impacts, shifting the focus from teaching to learning, from covering material to in-depth understanding, and from passive reception to active construction.

The literacy coordinator explained the concrete implementation: "We implement project-based learning where students complete complex and authentic projects. For example, the 'Sustainable Environmental Solutions' project, where students identify environmental problems, conduct research, and develop solutions. This develops the 4C skills: critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication" (GS-06, Interview, March 27, 2025). This narrative reveals an effort to create authentic learning experiences relevant to real-world problems. Project-based learning requires students to synthesize knowledge from various disciplines, apply research methods, collaborate in teams, and communicate the developed solutions, so that learning is not siloed by subject matter but integrated holistically. The development of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication skills responds to the demands of 21st-century competencies essential for thriving in rapidly changing and complex contexts.

Researchers' observations from October to November 2024 confirmed the substantial implementation of innovative learning approaches. In science lessons, students were seen working in small groups conducting hands-on experiments, with teachers circulating, providing incremental support questions that encouraged students to think about the phenomena they observed, rather than simply providing direct answers. In Indonesian language lessons, students had the freedom to choose reading materials from a variety of genres according to their interests, then communicated their understanding through creative products such as video reviews, posters, or dramatizations. Classroom layouts were no longer rigid, with desks lined up facing the blackboard, but instead used flexible seating that could be reconfigured according to learning activities, facilitating collaborative work and student interaction. The use of learning technologies such as tablets and learning management systems, enabling blended learning and personalized learning paths, was also evident. The learning atmosphere felt energetic yet organized, with students demonstrating a sense of ownership over their learning process.

As stated in the 2022 school curriculum document, a constructivist learning approach is the underlying principle of the entire learning design. Inquiry-based learning is applied, particularly in science subjects, where students undergo the complete process of scientific inquiry, from formulating questions and designing experiments to collecting data and drawing conclusions. This approach is far more effective in developing scientific literacy

than simply memorizing facts. Science learning aims not only to transfer scientific knowledge but also to cultivate students in scientific practices and scientific ways of thinking, which are essential for developing scientifically literate citizens.

Table 2. Elements of Pedagogical Integration in Learning Transformation

Learning Approaches	Implementation Mechanisms	Implications for Learning
Constructivist Learning	Active learning strategies, hands-on activities	Deep understanding and long-term retention, construction of knowledge that can be transferred to other contexts, development of metacognitive awareness and higher-order thinking skills.
Inquiry-Based Learning	Questioning, investigating, discovering in science	Development of scientific thinking and problem-solving skills; the ability to formulate questions, design investigations, and draw conclusions; understanding of the nature of science.
Blended Learning	Combination of face-to-face and online learning	Learning flexibility and access to digital resources, personalized learning pathways, development of digital literacy, optimization of face-to-face time for higher-order activities.
Project-Based Learning	Original, collaborative, interdisciplinary projects	Development of 21st-century skills (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication), integration and application of cross-disciplinary knowledge in authentic contexts.
Assessment for Learning	Formative assessment and ongoing feedback	Improvement of learning outcomes through actionable feedback, development of self-regulation and a growth mindset, identification of gaps for targeted interventions.
Differentiated Learning	Adaptation to diverse learning needs	

Comprehensive learning integration creates an active, engaging, and meaningful learning environment, where students are no longer passive recipients of information but active builders of knowledge engaged in challenging and intellectually stimulating cognitive work. This transformation shifts the locus of control from the teacher to the student, fostering an active role for students and a sense of ownership in the learning process. Learning is no longer uniform for all but differentiated and tailored to individual needs, responsive to the diversity of students' needs, interests, and learning styles. The overall impact of this learning integration is that learning becomes more in-depth, engaging, and results in the development of holistic abilities relevant to the demands of the 21st century, rather than simply memorizing isolated and easily forgotten facts. More fundamentally, this learning transformation shapes learners equipped with the skills to learn how to learn, the adaptability for

lifelong learning, and attitudes such as curiosity, perseverance, and a love of learning that are essential for thriving in an era marked by rapid change and uncertainty.

Manifestation of Transformation in Academic Achievement and Student Character Building

The transformation of organizational culture is clearly manifested in the improvement in academic achievement and the strengthening of students' Islamic character, indicating that the changes are not merely superficial or rhetorical, but rather fundamental and impactful. The improvements are comprehensive, encompassing the cognitive-academic dimension, as well as the affective-spiritual and behavioral-character dimensions. The vice principal for curriculum stated: "Since the transformation, we have seen significant changes in academic achievement. More importantly, there is a change in the quality of learning—students are learning with deep understanding, being able to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information" (WKS-01, Interview, March 20, 2025). This statement reveals that the improvement in academic achievement is not merely reflected in numerical scores, but more fundamentally in the transformation of students' cognitive quality from lower-order thinking to higher-order thinking skills. The developed ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information represents a higher-order cognitive ability in Bloom's taxonomy, which is essential for deep understanding and transfer of learning. The impact of this achievement is that the learning that occurs is meaningful and sustainable, not merely superficial learning that is temporary and easily forgotten after exams. The even distribution of improvement across all subjects indicates that the implemented learning transformation is systematic and comprehensive.

The vice principal for student affairs described the character transformation: "The level of discipline has increased dramatically, as evidenced by the significant decrease in the number of violations of rules. More importantly, this discipline is not driven by fear of punishment, but by an internal awareness of discipline as an Islamic morality" (WKS-02, Interview, March 21, 2025). This narrative indicates that the character development that occurred was genuine and internalized, not merely superficial behavioral compliance driven by external reinforcement. Discipline born of internal awareness and understanding of Islamic values represents a much more sustainable internalization of values than discipline imposed through fear of punishment. The survey showed a significant increase in the consistency of the five daily prayers, indicating that spiritual development has successfully transformed students' religious awareness from a formality to one that is deeply personal and spiritually meaningful.

The researcher's observations from November 2024 to January 2025 confirmed substantial changes in students' behavior and character development. Students demonstrated high self-discipline, arriving on time and beginning lessons without requiring repeated reminders from teachers. They demonstrated excellent manners in their interactions with teachers and fellow students, using polite language, and demonstrating respect for diversity. Many students voluntarily performed the Dhuha prayer in the prayer room (musholla) before class began, a non-mandatory religious practice driven purely by personal spiritual commitment. In peer interactions, spontaneous peer mentoring was observed, with more academically advanced students assisting struggling peers, reflecting empathy and a spirit of cooperation.

The school's 2021-2025 self-evaluation report noted improvements in all learning indicators, providing empirical evidence for the claimed transformation. Testimonials from parents through the School Committee provided external confirmation of the effectiveness of the institution's transformation. Behavioral changes observed at home indicate that the learning and character development undertaken at school have been successfully transferred and generalized beyond the school context. Students' active involvement in social activities and high levels of empathy demonstrate that character education focuses not only on personal piety but also on social responsibility and community involvement, essential dimensions of a comprehensive Islamic education.

Table 3. Transformation Manifestation: Comparison of Before and After Conditions

Indicators	Conditions Before Transformation (2021)	Conditions After Transformation (2025)	Data Sources
Academic Achievement	Moderate average grades	Average grades increased substantially and evenly across all subjects	2021-2025 Academic Evaluation Report
Academic Competition	No achievements yet	Winning various medals at the district and provincial levels	2021-2025 Student Achievement Archives
Graduation to Favorite High School	A small number of students were accepted	The majority of students were accepted into top high schools	2021-2025 Graduation Data
Discipline	High level of discipline violations	The violation rate decreased drastically	2021-2025 Student Development Report
Religious Practice	Some students consistently prayed	The majority of students consistently performed the five daily prayers	
Social Concern	Limited social activities	Social activities increased significantly	2021 & 2025 Student Spirituality Survey

Indicators	Conditions Before Transformation (2021)	Conditions After Transformation (2025)	Data Sources
Parental Satisfaction	Moderate satisfaction	Satisfaction increased significantly	2021-2025 Social Care Program Report

The transformation in student academic achievement and character demonstrates that the organizational culture change has yielded comprehensive and sustainable results. Improvements have occurred not only in the cognitive-academic dimension but also in the affective-spiritual and behavioral-character dimensions, indicating the success of a truly integrative and balanced education. Data over time comparing conditions at the beginning of 2021 with current conditions in 2025 provides strong empirical evidence of consistent improvement across various indicators. Achieving academic excellence integrated with spiritual integrity creates unique added value for Islamic educational institutions, demonstrating that academic rigor and spiritual depth are not mutually exclusive but rather mutually reinforcing when thoughtfully and systematically integrated. This transformation creates a sustainable competitive advantage for the institution, as it is difficult to replicate by other institutions lacking in spiritual integration or learning innovation. More fundamentally, this comprehensive transformation contributes to the realization of the highest mission of Islamic education: the formation of perfect human beings who are academically superior, spiritually strong, and morally noble, capable of making positive contributions to society and fulfilling their role as caliphs on earth with integrative excellence and integrity.

DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates that the spiritual dimension, particularly the principle of tauhid (Islamic monotheism), functions not merely as a symbolic or complementary aspect but as the foundational framework guiding organizational culture transformation in Islamic educational institutions. At SMP Lubbul Labib, strategic decisions are consistently evaluated through a spiritual lens that examines their relevance to the reinforcement of students' tauhid-based understanding. The integration of tauhid-centric learning across disciplines represents a fundamental epistemological shift from a secular-positivist paradigm to a holistic Islamic worldview, in which all knowledge is viewed as a manifestation of divine signs. This spiritual framework is not merely declarative but operationalized through personalized spiritual mentoring programs and reflective spiritual journals, emphasizing that genuine transformation must be grounded in internalized personal reflection rather than

formal compliance alone.

These findings reinforce and extend previous research. While Umar et al. (2025) argue that Islamic institutions require an intrapreneurial leadership model to integrate Islamic principles with modern management practices, this study advances that proposition by showing that integration must occur not only at the leadership level but also throughout the entire organizational ecosystem—curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation. Chotimah et al. (2025) similarly contend that authentic transformation in Islamic education must be rooted in genuine Islamic principles, not superficial religious symbolism devoid of transformative substance. These claims are substantiated by consistent academic improvement and the strengthened character of students, aligning with the assertion by Imran et al. (2022) and Alateeg & Alhammadi (2024) that organizational culture plays a critical role in driving both short- and long-term institutional effectiveness.

The study further highlights the role of transformational leadership as a catalyst in facilitating cultural change. At SMP Lubbul Labib, leadership is characterized by a “leading from the center” philosophy, reflecting a collaborative and inclusive approach in which the principal acts as a facilitator who builds consensus and cultivates collective ownership of the institutional vision. Rather than imposing top-down decisions, the leadership style empowers stakeholders, encourages shared responsibility, and provides tailored support based on the individual needs and potential of each member of the school community. Practices such as trust-based delegation, consistent recognition of achievements, and constructive feedback exemplify the individualized consideration that defines transformational leadership.

These findings resonate with Zhong et al. (2022), who argue that transformational leadership in education creates a cascading impact, shaping not only leader-subordinate relationships but also influencing organizational culture and student outcomes. Abdelwahed et al. (2025) support this view by highlighting the importance of emotional intelligence in Islamic organizational settings, particularly the leader’s ability to cultivate interpersonal trust and a positive emotional climate. Observations at SMP Lubbul Labib confirm this cascading mechanism: the principal's leadership not only enhances teacher motivation and commitment but also fosters a culture of collaboration, where teachers actively share best practices and engage in collective pedagogical reflection. This balance between managerial competence and Islamic values—such as justice, trust (*amanah*), and mutual consultation (*shura*)—forms a hybrid leadership model that builds authentic credibility and strengthens stakeholder engagement.

The transformation also extends to pedagogy, where the shift from teacher-centered knowledge transmission to student-centered, constructivist learning signifies not just a methodological adjustment but a philosophical reorientation. Project-based learning initiatives that integrate interdisciplinary knowledge to address real-world problems reflect an institutional effort to develop critical competencies such as analytical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication. The adoption of blended learning, combining face-to-face instruction with digital platforms, illustrates the school's responsiveness to technological change while preserving the interpersonal values central to Islamic education.

These pedagogical changes align with findings from Purnomo et al. (2024), who argue that digital transformation in Islamic education leads to greater transparency and efficiency, but their effectiveness hinges on teacher capacity more than technological access. This view is reinforced by Masnawati et al. (2022), who identify key barriers such as infrastructure limitations and insufficient digital training for educators. The importance of professional development and shifts in teacher beliefs, as emphasized by Hertz et al. (2022) and Fernandes et al. (2023), is evident in this study. At SMP Lubbul Labib, the success of pedagogical transformation is rooted in sustained teacher capacity building and collective commitment, rather than reliance on digital tools alone.

This research contributes a nuanced understanding of how effective pedagogical integration in Islamic schools necessitates a balance between methodological innovation and the preservation of Islamic pedagogical values. These include modeling ethical behavior, nurturing character through meaningful teacher-student relationships, and fostering a learning environment grounded in compassion and mutual respect. The observed use of inquiry-based science learning, interdisciplinary project-based learning, and blended digital instruction confirms that pedagogical change is both systemic and strategic—not a fragmented adoption of isolated techniques.

The transformative impact of this cultural shift is evident in measurable academic achievements and character development. Student performance has improved not only in terms of higher average grades and increased success in academic competitions, but also in the consistency of religious practices and socially responsible behaviors. These multidimensional gains confirm that transformation is both cognitive and affective. Students demonstrate greater intrinsic motivation, stronger discipline, and deeper engagement with their spiritual identity. This aligns with the work of Nordin et al. (2024), who emphasize the role of sustainable learning cultures in cultivating lifelong learners within Islamic institutions. Moreover, the alignment between institutional and personal values fosters a sense of authentic engagement, as

supported by Rubio-Andrés & Abril (2024) and Pincus (2023), who argue that intrinsic motivation anchored in values is more sustainable than extrinsically driven incentives.

Observations indicate that SMP Lubbul Labib has successfully developed a learning ecosystem that is positive, dynamic, and deeply aligned with its Islamic mission. Teachers, students, and parents collectively experience higher levels of satisfaction, ownership, and meaningful participation. The success of this transformation confirms that a systematic, tauhid-based cultural change can enhance both academic quality and spiritual development.

Perhaps the most significant contribution of this research is the demonstration that integrating spiritual values, transformational leadership, and pedagogical innovation does not produce merely additive results. Instead, the synergy among these dimensions generates exponential, systemic impact that leads to sustainable improvements in academic performance and Islamic character formation. Longitudinal data from 2021 to 2025 offer compelling evidence of consistent progress: rising academic averages, increased competition success at regional and provincial levels, higher placement rates in preferred senior high schools, declining disciplinary infractions, more consistent daily prayers, intensified student-led social initiatives, and growing parental satisfaction with educational services. These findings affirm that a holistic, tauhid-centered cultural transformation is not only conceptually sound but practically effective in producing meaningful and measurable outcomes within Islamic education.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that systematically implementing a transformation of organizational culture based on monotheistic values successfully creates a quality learning environment that improves academic achievement while strengthening students' Islamic character. Key findings indicate that successful transformation relies on the synergy of three dimensions: internalization of spiritual values as the foundation for strategic decision-making, transformational leadership that builds a shared vision and empowers stakeholders, and pedagogical innovation that shifts learning from knowledge transmission to active construction by students. The most important lesson is that academic excellence and spiritual depth can be harmoniously integrated to produce graduates who are intellectually superior and spiritually strong. The practical lesson learned is that organizational culture transformation in Islamic education requires a holistic approach that addresses the values, beliefs, and daily practices of the entire school community, with authentic leadership and long-term commitment from all stakeholders as prerequisites for success.

The strength of this study lies in the development of a transformation model that integrates Islamic management principles from the Quran and Hadith with contemporary organizational transformation theory, resulting in an authentic framework for faith-based educational institutions. The research's theoretical contribution enriches the literature by introducing the concept of a monotheistic, quality-oriented learning environment that integrates academic excellence with holistic Islamic character formation—a perspective that has not received adequate attention in previous studies. This study also provides longitudinal empirical evidence over four years demonstrating the concrete impact of the transformation on student academic achievement and character. However, the study's limitations lie in its limited scope at a single junior high school level, requiring caution in generalizing the findings. Further research is needed to explore the transformation at various levels of Islamic education, from elementary to higher education, taking into account variations in local geographic, socioeconomic, and cultural contexts.

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