

The Implementation of School Cultural Values to Improve Students' Learning Achievement at SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri and MAN IC Palu

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role of school cultural values in enhancing students' academic achievement at SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri and MAN IC Palu. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation involving principals, teachers, and high-achieving students. The analysis was guided by Schein's organizational culture theory and Self-Determination Theory. The findings show that both schools integrate cultural values through religious programs, discipline habituation, achievement recognition, and supportive learning environments. SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu emphasizes community values and local traditions, while MAN IC Palu focuses on religiosity and academic excellence. Academic achievement data indicate that SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri recorded higher achievements in 2022, while the achievements of both schools were relatively comparable in 2023. In 2024, SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri showed increased national achievements and greater participation in international humanities competitions, whereas MAN IC Palu maintained consistent achievements in national science- and religion-based competitions. These findings suggest that integrating school cultural values with students' psychological needs can support motivation and achievement. Strengthening culturally grounded school programs is therefore important for fostering positive character and improving educational outcomes.

ARTICLE INFORMATION

School cultural values, academic achievement.

1. Introduction

The quality of education is strongly influenced by school culture, which plays an important role in shaping students' academic achievement. Previous studies have demonstrated a relationship between school culture and the ontological context of education, encompassing fundamental concepts of educational systems, including schools

and their structures. School culture reflects the conditions and climate that influence school activities, teacher performance, learning processes, and overall educational development. The cultivation of positive school cultural values can therefore support students' academic achievement while creating a more engaging and conducive learning environment (Rustina et al., 2026).

In addition to positive school culture, which reflects educational quality and school achievement, negative school culture may undermine the reputation and quality of education. Such negative practices include absenteeism and failure to fulfill responsibilities for various reasons, excessive tolerance of moral violations influenced by unhealthy social interactions outside the school environment, and conflicts that may lead to division among students or members of the school community. These conditions are often associated with the formation of opposing groups and other behaviors that undermine the cultural values expected to be developed within the school environment (Sukadari, 2020).

For example, student brawls continue to occur in several areas, along with cases of moral violations and drug distribution in Central Sulawesi. One reported incident involved a student brawl in Luwu that resulted in damage to school facilities and motor vehicles. Similarly, a student brawl in Luwuk Banggai caused traffic congestion and public concern after students threw stones at a high school building, which further escalated tensions among those involved (Kumala, 2022; Prasetya, 2022).

The phenomenon of deviant student behavior may be likened to an iceberg, in which only the visible surface represents a small portion of the underlying problem. Risky social behavior among adolescents and students is not a new phenomenon, particularly among those living away from their families or without adequate parental supervision. Several factors may contribute to the emergence of such behavior, including inadequate family

education, which may increase adolescents' vulnerability to negative peer influence; family dysfunction, which may encourage adolescents to leave home; economic hardship, which may disrupt educational continuity; unfavorable social environments; inappropriate use of the internet and unrestricted access to harmful content; limited self-control, which may make adolescents more susceptible to peer pressure; and insufficient awareness of the potential consequences of risky social behavior. These conditions may be further reinforced by adolescents' desire for pleasure, new experiences, and curiosity (Khairally, 2022; Ola, 2016).

The cultivation of positive and collaborative school cultural values plays an important role in enhancing school effectiveness. This reflects the importance of creating a supportive school environment that promotes collaboration and empowers all members of the school community to work toward shared goals. The quality of education is closely associated with school culture, which has a significant influence on students' academic achievement. The cultivation of school cultural values and a positive school climate is therefore intended to create an educational environment that continuously shapes the attitudes, behaviors, and learning experiences of both teachers and students (Ismail et al., 2022).

Key elements of a positive school culture that may enhance students' academic and non-academic achievement include a supportive environment, quality teaching, parental involvement, positive norms and values, diversity and inclusion, a sense of school

belonging, a strong focus on learning, and effective assessment and feedback systems. Such a culture can motivate students to reach their potential and improve their achievement. A study involving 213 teachers from 26 provinces in Indonesia also found that school culture and work motivation had both direct and indirect effects on students' learning achievement and teacher performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Role of School Cultural Values in Enhancing Students' Learning Achievement

Achievement is an essential component of a quality education process, encompassing academic performance, talent development, skill acquisition, and the cultivation of positive character. The government and educational institutions share responsibility for creating a supportive environment that enables students to develop their potential and achieve optimal outcomes across various fields (Pratama, Pettalongi, & Nurdin, 2022).

Within the context of Indonesia's National Education System Law, students' learning achievement constitutes one of the indicators of educational success. Although the term "achievement" is not always explicitly stated, the principles underlying the development of student achievement are reflected in several provisions concerning the objectives of education, students' rights, and educational management. The following points highlight key provisions related to student achievement under Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System (Republik Indonesia, 2003).

Teachers play a strategic role in fostering, developing, and assessing student achievement through instructional processes and systematic evaluation of learning outcomes. Regular assessment serves as an important indicator for monitoring students' competency development and educational progress. Maximizing student achievement also requires an educational system that accommodates students' talents, interests, and individual potential. Educational institutions that are responsive to students' needs can provide an environment that enables them to excel across diverse areas, including academics, the arts, sports, and other skills. Learning assessment is primarily conducted to measure students' attainment of competencies, which may subsequently be documented through learning outcome reports and/or certificates. In addition, recognition and awards provided by the government to students who demonstrate achievement at the school, regional, and national levels may serve not only as forms of appreciation but also as additional motivation for students to further develop their potential and pursue higher levels of achievement.

According to Lidia, several factors influence students' learning achievement, including biological inheritance (heredity), student motivation, individual learning styles, the learning environment, talents and interests, and instructional strategies (Susanti, 2018). Amri further argues that the achievement of optimal learning outcomes involves individual potential, personal willingness, and various external factors, or "X factors," such as

social support and the surrounding environment (Wibisono, 2019).

The internalization of school cultural values plays an important role in creating a learning environment that supports students' academic achievement. These values influence both internal factors, such as learning motivation, self-discipline, responsibility, and self-confidence, and external factors, including a supportive school environment, teacher involvement, peer support, family participation, and adequate learning facilities. Therefore, students' academic achievement is shaped not only by their academic abilities but also by the extent to which positive school cultural values are consistently cultivated to foster motivation, character, discipline, responsibility, and a conducive learning environment (Azmi et al., 2024; Trueba, 1988; Utami et al., 2023).

In carrying out their educational responsibilities, some teachers may find it easier to explain what they do than to articulate why they do it. This reflects difficulties in substantively communicating the rationale underlying their daily routines and practices. A fundamental distinction between school culture and school climate concerns the underlying reasons and meanings associated with organizational practices. This distinction may contribute to the failure of school initiatives before they are effectively implemented.

A negative school culture can have detrimental effects on students. Previous research indicates that a negative organizational culture may affect individuals' personal and professional lives, with factors such as epistemological assumptions, group

dynamics, and inadequate leadership contributing to problematic behaviors, including workplace bullying. These findings highlight the importance of cultivating a positive school culture characterized by constructive relationships, effective leadership, and shared values to support a healthy educational environment (Mannix Mcnamara et al., 2021).

The cultivation of school cultural values is grounded in the involvement of students, teachers, school administrators, and parents, whose shared values, attitudes, and long-standing practices contribute to the development of a strong school culture. From a religious perspective, education is not limited to intellectual development but also encompasses divine, social, behavioral, and individual values. Human beings possess an innate nature (*fitrah*) that may lead toward positive or negative behavior and therefore requires guidance through reason, religious teachings, and appropriate social environments. Accordingly, Islamic values and divine guidance provide an important foundation for shaping students' character, directing their behavior, and fostering a positive school culture (Nata, 2013; Pratama et al., 2026; Rahmi et al., 2025).

2.2. The Development of an Achievement-Oriented School Culture

a. Cultural Level

According to Schein, human nature is complex, adaptive, and subject to change in response to life development and social conditions. In the school context, school culture and climate are interrelated constructs that

can be analyzed through three levels of culture: *artifacts*, *espoused values*, and *basic underlying assumptions*. At the level of basic underlying assumptions, culture is reflected in the belief that students are expected to achieve both academic and non-academic accomplishments, while teachers are required not only to master instructional practices but also to develop their creativity, research, innovation, and leadership. At the level of espoused values, school culture is manifested through the values of religious devotion, humanity, nationalism, and environmental awareness. Meanwhile, at the artifact level, these values are reflected in the physical conditions and behaviors of school members, such as a clean and well-organized environment, various learning motivation media, and students' polite behavior (Kurnali, n.d.; Schein, 2004).

b. Self Determination Theory (SDT)

This theory explains how individuals are motivated to act based on either intrinsic motivation, which originates from within, or extrinsic motivation, which is driven by external factors. Autonomous forms of extrinsic motivation, as well as intrinsic motivation, are associated with positive student outcomes, while the underlying goals and regulations are also important in predicting educational outcomes. Intervention programs designed for teachers or parents that focus on fulfilling psychological needs generally tend to promote extrinsic motivation (Guay, 2022).

c. Trend Analysis

Trend analysis using the time series method is a statistical approach used to identify patterns or trends in

data collected sequentially over time. In the context of students' non-academic achievements, this analysis can help understand how students' performance in extracurricular activities or competitions develops over time. The application of time series analysis to non-academic achievement involves several stages. First, historical data on students' non-academic achievements are collected, such as the number of awards received and participation in non-academic activities over a specific period. Second, patterns are identified by analyzing the data to determine particular trends, such as increases or decreases in students' participation in non-academic activities over a given period. Third, forecasting is conducted based on the identified patterns, enabling schools to predict students' future non-academic performance and develop strategies to increase their participation and achievements (Kharimah et al., 2023; Mustopa et al., 2025).

d. Assumptions Regarding School Environment Indicators

The school environment plays an important role in influencing students' academic achievement, particularly in relation to the physical aspects of the school (Askar, Nurdin, Pettalangi, Pettalangi, & Basire, 2025). Several indicators that describe the school environment include teacher-student relationships, social interactions among students, the condition of students' learning spaces, classroom facilities, the availability of learning resources, the school library, classroom ventilation, and classroom lighting (Basri, 2021).

3. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach using a multi-case study design with ethnographic and cultural studies perspectives to explore the implementation of school cultural values in improving students' academic and non-academic achievement (Maleong, 2018; Nurdin, 2017). The research was conducted at SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu and MAN Insan Cendekia (MAN IC) Palu, Central Sulawesi, selected based on their notable academic achievements and active participation in various competitions. Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation involving principals, teachers, educational staff, and students. The collected data focused on school cultural practices, social interactions, learning activities, and the processes through which cultural values are implemented to support students' achievement. The data were analyzed descriptively and interpretively to identify patterns, meanings, and factors related to the role of school culture in enhancing student achievement across the two cases.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Implementation of School Cultural Values

The findings indicate that the implementation of school cultural values at SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu is integrated into daily routines, learning activities, school regulations, and extracurricular programs to support students' academic and non-academic achievement. The values include religiosity, honesty, tolerance, discipline,

hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, nationalism, appreciation of achievement, communication, peace, reading interest, environmental and social awareness, responsibility, cooperation, motivation, and diversity. These values are reinforced through religious practices, character-based learning, student organizations, competitions, literacy programs, collaborative projects, environmental activities, and structured school regulations. Overall, the findings show that school culture is implemented as a comprehensive character-building process that encourages students to develop positive attitudes, social skills, learning motivation, and responsibility while supporting their academic and non-academic development.

Meanwhile, the findings indicate that the implementation of school cultural values at MAN IC Palu is systematically embedded in daily routines, classroom learning, boarding-school activities, student organizations, extracurricular programs, and school regulations to support students' academic and non-academic achievement. The values include religiosity, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, national spirit, patriotism, appreciation of achievement, communication, peace, reading habits, environmental and social care, responsibility, cooperation, motivation, and diversity. These values are cultivated through religious practices such as congregational prayer, Qur'an recitation and memorization, Islamic studies, and character

education, as well as through structured academic programs, independent study, research activities, competitions, literacy programs, student organizations, environmental initiatives, social service, and collaborative projects. The boarding-school system further strengthens students' discipline, independence, responsibility, and social interaction by organizing their academic and daily activities within a structured environment. Overall, the findings show that MAN IC Palu implements school cultural values as an integrated process of character formation that encourages students to develop religious and moral character, academic commitment, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, social awareness, and motivation to achieve in both academic and non-academic domains.

4.2 Student Learning Achievement

The findings indicate that students at SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu have demonstrated strong academic and non-academic achievements at provincial, national, and international levels, particularly in science, technology, debate, sports, and arts competitions. Documented achievements include medals in national and international science olympiads, the National Science Madrasah Competition (KSM), national science competitions, English debate, and international programs, with several students receiving gold, silver, and bronze medals. These achievements are supported by both internal and external factors. Internal factors include students' learning motivation, physical and psychological condition, intelligence,

cognition, metacognition, interests and talents, discipline, learning habits, and confidence. The school develops these factors through learning-style assessments, portfolio development, intensive competition coaching, extracurricular activities, additional tutoring, project-based learning, sports facilities, counseling, and programs for science, languages, arts, and Qur'anic memorization. External factors include a supportive learning environment, qualified teachers, inclusive and equitable school policies, opportunities for self-expression and innovation, learning quality, parental involvement, positive norms and values, students' sense of belonging, recognition and rewards, relevant curriculum, and additional educational resources. These findings show that student achievement at SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu is supported by an integrated educational ecosystem in which school culture, instructional practices, student development programs, teacher support, parental involvement, and adequate learning resources work together to facilitate students' academic and non-academic development.

Meanwhile, the findings indicate that students at MAN IC Palu have demonstrated notable academic and non-academic achievements at city, provincial, national, and international levels, particularly in science, mathematics, research, technology, language, and religious education. Documented achievements include overall first place in the 2021 Madrasah Science Competition (KSM) at the city level, gold and silver medals in the 2022 National Science and Statistics Olympiad, overall first place in the

2023 Islamic Education Festival at UIN Datokarama Palu, a bronze medal in scientific writing in 2024, silver medals and the Best Research for Environmental Impact and Protection award in a national research and innovation competition, and finalist recognition in the Universitas Indonesia Science Olympiad. These achievements are supported by internal and external factors embedded in the school culture. Internal factors include learning motivation, physical condition, intellectual and linguistic abilities, cognitive development, interests and talents, and psychological well-being. These factors are strengthened through intensive olympiad coaching, academic mentoring, research programs, language and science clubs, extracurricular activities, counseling services, healthy routines, and opportunities for students to develop their individual potential. External factors include a supportive learning environment, qualified teachers, inclusive practices, opportunities for self-expression and innovation, high-quality and relevant learning, parental involvement, positive norms and values, students' sense of belonging, recognition and rewards, appropriate curriculum, and additional educational resources. The findings further show that MAN IC Palu integrates classroom learning, residential education, religious programs, research activities, technology-based learning, extracurricular programs, and external partnerships to provide continuous support for student development. Overall, student achievement at MAN IC Palu reflects an educational environment in which school cultural values, academic support, student development programs, teacher guidance, parental involvement, and institutional

resources collectively provide opportunities for students to develop their academic and non-academic potential.

The analysis of student achievement at SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu and MAN IC Palu was conducted in two areas: academic achievement, based on students' final examination scores from 2022 to 2024, and non-academic achievement, based on competition outcomes at regional, national, and international levels. Descriptive analysis showed different patterns across the two schools. At SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu, the reported mean scores were 86.0 in 2022, 85.6 in 2023, and 97.1 in 2024, while at MAN IC Palu they were 70.0, 84.0, and 86.0, respectively. Thus, both schools showed improvement over the three-year period, although the increase was more pronounced at MAN IC Palu between 2022 and 2023 and at SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu in 2024. The range of scores at SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu increased from 14.0 in 2022 to 17.6 in 2024, whereas the range at MAN IC Palu decreased from 22.0 to 8.0, indicating greater variation in the former and more homogeneous achievement in the latter by 2024. The reported independent-samples t-test further indicated significant differences between the schools in 2022 ($p = 0.0001$) and 2024 ($p = 0.00001$), while the difference in 2023 was not statistically significant ($p = 0.073$). For non-academic achievement, the trend analysis showed that SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu recorded a marked increase in national science competition achievements, particularly in 2023 when four students obtained gold medals, followed by participation in international

English debate and other global programs in 2024–2025. MAN IC Palu demonstrated a relatively consistent pattern in science, integrated science, religious education, and research competitions, including overall first place at the city level in the 2021 KSM, gold and silver medals in the 2022 OSSN, overall first place in the 2023 Islamic Education Festival, and silver medals with a research award in 2024. These findings suggest that the two schools developed different achievement profiles: SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu showed a substantial increase in national science achievements and broader participation in international activities, while MAN IC Palu maintained a consistent emphasis on integrated science, religious education, and research. Overall, the academic and non-academic data indicate that school achievement was reflected not only in examination scores but also in sustained participation and recognition across different fields and levels of competition.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings, the implementation of school cultural values plays an important role in supporting students' academic and non-academic achievement at SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu and MAN IC Palu. The two schools demonstrate distinct cultural approaches: SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu emphasizes discipline, independence, and academic development, while MAN IC Palu focuses more on character development grounded in Islamic values, togetherness, and students' potential. Academically, SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu recorded higher average scores in

several years, whereas MAN IC Palu showed notable improvement, particularly in 2023. In terms of non-academic achievement, SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu was more prominent in science olympiads and debate competitions, while MAN IC Palu demonstrated strong achievements in religious activities, research, and extracurricular competitions. These findings indicate that the synergy between school culture, learning strategies, and student motivation is important in supporting academic and non-academic achievement and promoting students' holistic development.

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