



Organizational Culture in Realizing Higher Education Innovation in Private Universities in Jambi Province

Mawaddah Warahmah^{1*}, Kaspul Anwar Us², Badarusyamsi³

Sultan Thaha Saifuddin State Islamic University of Jambi, Indonesia¹⁻³

Email Korespondensi: mwaddh.mawar@gmail.com, kafulanwarus@uinjambi.co.id, badarusyamsi76@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The rapid transformation of the higher education landscape demands that universities develop adaptive and innovative organizational cultures to remain competitive and sustainable. This study aims to analyze the role of organizational culture in fostering innovation within private Islamic higher education institutions in Jambi Province. A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed, involving three institutions: IAI Muhammad Azim, IAI Yasni Muaro Bungo, and Nusantara Batanghari University. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and then analyzed descriptively. The findings reveal that a strong organizational culture – characterized by effective communication, team collaboration, visionary leadership, and the integration of Islamic values – significantly contributes to academic, managerial, and social innovation within universities. However, challenges such as limited human resources, inadequate facilities, and insufficient funding remain. The implications highlight the importance of systematically strengthening organizational culture as a foundation for sustainable innovation and institutional development in Islamic higher education.

Keywords: Organizational culture, islamic higher education, educational management

ABSTRAK

Perubahan cepat dalam lingkungan pendidikan tinggi menuntut perguruan tinggi untuk memiliki budaya organisasi yang adaptif dan inovatif agar dapat bertahan dan bersaing secara berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran budaya organisasi dalam mewujudkan inovasi di perguruan tinggi Islam swasta di Provinsi Jambi. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus yang dilakukan pada tiga perguruan tinggi Islam swasta, yaitu IAI Muhammad Azim, IAI Yasni Muaro Bungo, dan Universitas Nusantara Batanghari. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis secara deskriptif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan budaya organisasi yang kuat – meliputi komunikasi yang efektif, kolaborasi tim, kepemimpinan visioner, serta integrasi nilai-nilai Islam – berkontribusi signifikan terhadap terciptanya inovasi akademik, manajerial, dan sosial di perguruan tinggi. Kendala yang masih dihadapi antara lain keterbatasan sumber daya manusia, fasilitas, dan dukungan anggaran. Implikasi penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya strategi penguatan budaya organisasi secara sistematis sebagai fondasi inovasi berkelanjutan dalam pengembangan perguruan tinggi Islam.

Kata Kunci: Budaya Organisasi, Perguruan Tinggi Islam, Manajemen Pendidikan

INTRODUCTION

Rapid global transformations driven by technological, economic, and social developments have compelled organizations, including higher education institutions, to adapt dynamically. Within this context, organizational culture emerges as a fundamental factor that shapes institutional competitiveness and sustainability. It is not merely a set of shared values and norms but a comprehensive system of beliefs and practices that define identity, mindset, and behaviors. When aligned with the institution's vision, culture fosters an innovative and collaborative environment that supports strategic objectives (Schein, 2017; Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2020). Thus, understanding organizational culture is crucial for managing change and promoting sustainable growth in higher education.

Organizational culture serves not only as an internal behavioral guide but also as a strategic force influencing the institution's interaction with its external environment. Universities, as centers of knowledge, research, and community service, are expected to foster cultures that enable adaptation to social and technological transformations. In Islamic higher education, organizational culture plays a dual role: it drives innovation and academic quality while ensuring that spiritual and moral values are integrated into all institutional activities (Ahmad et al., 2023; Shah, 2022). Values such as discipline, collaboration, justice, and creativity serve as the foundation for creating an inclusive, forward-looking academic ecosystem.

The relationship between organizational culture and innovation has been the subject of extensive research over the past two decades. Studies reveal that institutions cultivating adaptive, change-oriented cultures are more successful in producing sustainable innovation (Martins & Terblanche, 2020; Cameron & Quinn, 2019). Conversely, rigid and hierarchical cultures often hinder organizational progress. In higher education, innovation extends beyond curriculum development or pedagogy; it encompasses institutional governance, strategic partnerships, administrative processes, and technology-driven services.

Private universities, particularly in Indonesia, face more complex challenges than public institutions in terms of funding, human resources, and infrastructure. These challenges necessitate strong and adaptive organizational cultures to ensure institutional competitiveness and sustainability. Cultures emphasizing collaboration, visionary leadership, and support for faculty and student development are increasingly essential (Tierney & Lanford, 2022). Moreover, the integration of Islamic values into institutional culture not only strengthens the identity of Islamic universities but also enhances public trust and relevance.

In Jambi Province, several private Islamic universities encounter internal challenges such as ineffective communication, limited infrastructure, and resistance to innovation. These issues highlight a gap between the desired organizational values and actual practices, resulting in underutilized innovation potential and a culture that fails to fully drive transformation (Hofstede et al., 2021). This situation underscores the need for a comprehensive study on how

organizational culture influences innovation outcomes in private Islamic higher education institutions.

This study aims to analyze the role of organizational culture in fostering innovation within private Islamic higher education institutions in Jambi Province. It seeks to identify the current state of organizational culture, evaluate the dynamics of innovation, and uncover key drivers and barriers. The findings are expected to provide strategic recommendations for institutional development, enabling Islamic higher education institutions to become more adaptive, innovative, and responsive to contemporary demands

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design aimed at exploring in-depth the role of organizational culture in driving innovation within private Islamic higher education institutions in Jambi Province. This approach was chosen for its ability to reveal meanings, values, and social dynamics contextually and holistically within the institutional environment. The research was conducted purposively at three sites: IAI Muhammad Azim, IAI Yasni Muaro Bungo, and Nusantara Batanghari University. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with university leaders, heads of quality assurance units, heads of administrative divisions, and documentation of relevant institutional records. The data were analyzed descriptively through a continuous process of reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The validity and reliability of the findings were ensured through source and methodological triangulation to guarantee data accuracy and the credibility of the research results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Organizational Culture in Shaping Institutional Innovation

Organizational culture is widely recognized as a foundational element in shaping the innovation capacity of higher education institutions. It is the shared set of beliefs, values, norms, and practices that guide how members of an organization think, behave, and respond to changes in their environment (Schein, 2017). In the context of Islamic higher education institutions such as IAI Muhammad Azim, IAI Yasni Muaro Bungo, and Nusantara Batanghari University, culture not only reflects the institution's historical legacy and mission but also acts as a catalyst for strategic transformation. A strong culture fosters creativity, encourages collaboration, and provides a collective sense of direction that aligns academic practices with institutional goals (Hofstede et al., 2021). Without such a cultural foundation, innovation efforts often remain fragmented and unsustainable, failing to permeate the organization's daily operations.

A crucial dimension of organizational culture influencing innovation is leadership style. The leadership of IAI Muhammad Azim, for instance, has institutionalized a participatory governance model that encourages faculty and administrative staff to contribute ideas for curriculum redesign, community engagement, and digital transformation initiatives. This inclusive approach

nurtures psychological safety—a critical factor for innovation as it empowers individuals to propose novel solutions without fear of failure (Edmondson, 2019). Similarly, at IAI Yasni Muaro Bungo, leadership actively supports experimentation in teaching and research, fostering a culture of continuous learning and adaptability. These leadership practices resonate with Cameron and Quinn's (2019) Competing Values Framework, which highlights the "adhocracy culture" as a primary driver of institutional innovation.

The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of knowledge, collaboration, and continuous improvement as foundational principles in societal development. In Surah Al-Hasyr [59]:18, believers are urged to "consider what they have sent ahead for tomorrow," a verse that underscores the necessity of foresight, planning, and proactive action. This divine principle aligns with the modern understanding of organizational culture as a forward-looking framework that shapes strategic decisions. By integrating Islamic values into institutional culture, these universities cultivate a unique innovation ethos that balances scientific inquiry with ethical and spiritual considerations (Shah, 2022). This blend enhances institutional legitimacy and fosters trust among stakeholders, which is crucial for sustaining innovation.

Communication patterns within an organization also play a decisive role in fostering innovation. In IAI Yasni Muaro Bungo, the establishment of regular inter-departmental meetings, collaborative research forums, and academic seminars has significantly enhanced information sharing and cross-disciplinary collaboration. Such practices break down silos and facilitate the exchange of ideas, which is essential for developing creative solutions (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2019). By contrast, the absence of transparent communication channels—observed in certain departments at Nusantara Batanghari University—has been linked to slower decision-making processes and resistance to change. This disparity demonstrates how communication culture directly influences the pace and depth of innovation adoption.

Organizational culture further shapes innovation through the cultivation of shared vision and mission. Institutions like IAI Muhammad Azim have successfully embedded innovation into their strategic plans by explicitly linking it to their core values and long-term objectives. This alignment ensures that innovation is not treated as an isolated initiative but as an integral part of institutional identity (Tierney & Lanford, 2022). Faculty members and administrative staff are more likely to embrace change when they understand how innovation contributes to the university's overarching mission, such as advancing Islamic scholarship, improving societal welfare, or enhancing global competitiveness.

Moreover, human resource development strategies reflect how organizational culture shapes innovation. At Nusantara Batanghari University, faculty are encouraged to pursue doctoral studies, participate in international conferences, and engage in collaborative research projects. These initiatives not only build individual competencies but also foster a learning-oriented culture that values intellectual growth and innovation (Martins & Terblanche, 2020). The presence of mentorship programs and internal training workshops has further

strengthened institutional capacity to adapt to emerging educational trends, such as digitalization, sustainability, and interdisciplinary research.

The integration of Islamic ethics into organizational culture is another distinctive feature that influences innovation in these institutions. By embedding values such as justice (*'adl*), consultation (*shura*), and trust (*amanah*) into organizational practices, universities create a moral framework that guides innovation processes. This approach ensures that technological and pedagogical advancements are aligned with ethical principles and societal needs (Ahmad et al., 2023). For example, IAI Yasni Muaro Bungo's emphasis on *shura*-based decision-making has facilitated the adoption of inclusive governance models that enhance innovation outcomes.

In summary, the role of organizational culture in shaping institutional innovation is multifaceted and deeply embedded in the structural, social, and ethical dimensions of higher education institutions. The experiences of IAI Muhammad Azim, IAI Yasni Muaro Bungo, and Nusantara Batanghari University illustrate that leadership vision, communication patterns, shared values, and Islamic ethics collectively foster an environment conducive to innovation. However, this cultural transformation requires intentional strategies, continuous reinforcement, and alignment with both institutional goals and societal expectations. As higher education faces increasing pressure to adapt to technological change and global competition, cultivating a robust organizational culture emerges as a strategic imperative for sustainable innovation.

Strategies and Practices of Innovation in Islamic Higher Education Institutions

Innovation in higher education is not merely the introduction of new technologies or pedagogical tools but a comprehensive process that involves strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and cultural transformation. The institutions under study IAI Muhammad Azim, IAI Yasni Muaro Bungo, and Nusantara Batanghari University have each developed distinct innovation strategies tailored to their institutional missions and resource capacities. These strategies are closely linked to their organizational cultures, which foster creativity, collaboration, and responsiveness to emerging challenges. As Drucker (2015) argues, innovation is a systematic discipline that must be intentionally embedded into institutional structures rather than left to chance. Within Islamic higher education, innovation also entails aligning educational transformation with the ethical and spiritual objectives of the institution.

One of the central strategies observed at IAI Muhammad Azim is the development of curriculum innovation that integrates Islamic values with contemporary knowledge fields. This approach aims to produce graduates who are not only competent in their disciplines but also grounded in ethical principles. The curriculum design process actively involves lecturers, students, alumni, and industry stakeholders through consultative workshops and collaborative forums. Such participatory curriculum development ensures relevance and responsiveness to societal needs while preserving the institution's Islamic identity (Alam & Sultana, 2022). This strategy echoes the Qur'anic call in Surah Al-'Alaq [96]:1-5 to

“read in the name of your Lord,” emphasizing the pursuit of knowledge as a sacred duty and continuous process.

Research innovation is another vital dimension in these institutions. At IAI Yasni Muaro Bungo, significant emphasis has been placed on fostering interdisciplinary research and encouraging faculty to publish in reputable journals. The university has established internal research grants and collaborative projects with governmental and non-governmental organizations to stimulate scholarly output. These initiatives not only enhance the institution’s academic reputation but also strengthen its role as a contributor to societal development (Altbach & de Wit, 2020). By cultivating a research-driven culture, the university aligns with Schein’s (2017) principle that organizations must continuously learn and adapt to maintain relevance in a dynamic environment.

Innovation practices at Nusantara Batanghari University have focused heavily on digital transformation and the adoption of educational technologies. The institution has implemented learning management systems (LMS), virtual classrooms, and digital libraries to expand access to knowledge and improve pedagogical effectiveness. These initiatives were particularly significant during the COVID-19 pandemic, where remote learning became a necessity rather than an option. The strategic integration of technology has not only enhanced teaching and learning experiences but also increased operational efficiency (Garrison & Vaughan, 2018). Moreover, digital literacy programs for faculty and students have been crucial in building a culture of technological competence and innovation readiness.

Community engagement and social innovation are also key strategies employed by these institutions to enhance their societal impact. IAI Muhammad Azim, for example, has launched community-based education programs and service-learning projects that link academic activities with real-world challenges. Such initiatives foster experiential learning, strengthen university-community relations, and address local socio-economic issues (Etzkowitz & Zhou, 2017). Similarly, IAI Yasni Muaro Bungo has partnered with local businesses and government agencies to develop entrepreneurship training programs for students, demonstrating how innovation can extend beyond the classroom to support regional development.

Leadership practices across all three institutions demonstrate a strategic commitment to innovation. University leaders play a pivotal role in setting the vision, mobilizing resources, and fostering an environment conducive to experimentation and risk-taking. The leadership at IAI Muhammad Azim, for instance, actively promotes a culture of “learning by doing,” where faculty are encouraged to pilot new teaching methods and assessment models. Such practices are consistent with transformational leadership theories, which emphasize the role of leaders in inspiring and empowering followers to achieve shared goals (Bass & Riggio, 2019). Moreover, these leadership strategies resonate with the Islamic principle of *shura* (consultation), as referenced in Surah Ash-Shura [42]:38, which advocates collaborative decision-making as a pathway to collective progress.

Strategic partnerships and international collaborations are additional practices that have significantly contributed to innovation. Nusantara Batanghari University has signed memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with foreign universities to facilitate faculty exchanges, joint research, and dual-degree programs. These collaborations expose faculty and students to global academic standards, foster cross-cultural competencies, and broaden research opportunities (Knight, 2020). The presence of such networks enhances the institution's capacity for innovation by facilitating knowledge transfer and benchmarking against best practices in higher education.

In conclusion, the strategies and practices implemented by IAI Muhammad Azim, IAI Yasni Muaro Bungo, and Nusantara Batanghari University demonstrate a holistic approach to innovation that encompasses curriculum reform, research enhancement, digital transformation, community engagement, leadership development, and global collaboration. These initiatives reflect a deliberate effort to align institutional missions with contemporary challenges while preserving Islamic values. They also highlight the importance of strategic planning, stakeholder involvement, and leadership vision in fostering an innovation-friendly environment. As higher education continues to evolve, such integrated strategies will be essential for ensuring the relevance, competitiveness, and societal contribution of Islamic universities in Indonesia and beyond.

Challenges and Strategic Efforts in Strengthening Innovation Culture

Despite the various strategies implemented to foster innovation, Islamic higher education institutions often face significant challenges that can undermine their cultural transformation processes. One of the most pressing issues is the limited human resource capacity, particularly in terms of faculty qualifications, research competencies, and technological literacy. At IAI Muhammad Azim and IAI Yasni Muaro Bungo, for example, the scarcity of doctoral-level faculty members has constrained the development of high-quality research and advanced academic programs. This limitation echoes the findings of Marginson (2019), who argues that innovation in higher education is heavily dependent on the intellectual capital embedded within the academic workforce. Without a critical mass of highly qualified personnel, institutions struggle to sustain innovation initiatives over the long term.

Another major obstacle is financial constraints, which significantly impact the ability of institutions to invest in infrastructure, research facilities, and professional development programs. At Nusantara Batanghari University, budget limitations have delayed the implementation of digital platforms and restricted opportunities for international collaboration. This situation is consistent with global patterns observed in developing countries, where higher education institutions often rely on limited government funding and face difficulties attracting external investments (Altbach et al., 2022). Financial limitations not only hinder the acquisition of cutting-edge technologies but also affect the recruitment and retention of talented faculty and staff, thereby slowing down the pace of innovation.

Resistance to change among faculty and staff represents another significant barrier to cultivating an innovation-oriented culture. Traditional pedagogical approaches and hierarchical decision-making structures often create inertia that resists the adoption of new practices. At IAI Yasni Muaro Bungo, for instance, some senior faculty members have expressed reluctance to integrate digital tools into their teaching, citing concerns about effectiveness and workload. This resistance is not uncommon; as Rogers (2003) notes in his diffusion of innovation theory, organizational change frequently encounters skepticism and opposition, particularly in environments where long-standing practices are deeply entrenched. Overcoming such resistance requires targeted change management strategies and continuous capacity-building efforts.

Institutional governance and bureaucratic rigidity further complicate efforts to embed innovation into organizational culture. Complex administrative procedures, unclear lines of authority, and slow decision-making processes can stifle creativity and responsiveness. For example, at IAI Muhammad Azim, bureaucratic bottlenecks have delayed the approval of new academic programs and research proposals. Such inefficiencies reduce organizational agility—a critical factor for innovation in rapidly evolving educational landscapes (Gibbons et al., 2018). Addressing governance challenges requires structural reforms that decentralize decision-making and empower academic units to experiment with new approaches.

Cultural misalignment between institutional values and the broader socio-political environment also poses challenges to innovation. Islamic higher education institutions must balance their religious missions with societal expectations for modern, globally competitive education. This tension can create conflicting priorities and hinder the development of a coherent innovation agenda (Shah, 2022). The Qur'an, however, provides guidance on navigating such complexities. In Surah Ar-Ra'd [13]:11, it is stated that "Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves." This verse highlights the necessity of internal transformation as a prerequisite for external progress, reinforcing the idea that cultural renewal within institutions is essential for innovation to flourish.

In response to these challenges, institutions have implemented a variety of strategic efforts aimed at strengthening their innovation cultures. Capacity-building initiatives, such as faculty development programs, mentorship schemes, and international training workshops, have been introduced at IAI Muhammad Azim to enhance research capabilities and pedagogical skills. Similarly, IAI Yasni Muaro Bungo has established incentive systems to reward innovative teaching practices and research achievements. These strategies align with the recommendations of Knight (2020), who emphasizes that human resource development is a cornerstone of sustainable innovation in higher education.

Financial sustainability strategies are also being pursued to overcome funding limitations. Nusantara Batanghari University, for instance, has diversified its revenue streams by expanding continuing education programs, launching fee-based professional certifications, and strengthening partnerships with industry. Such initiatives not only generate additional income but also enhance the

institution's relevance to labor market demands (Etzkowitz & Zhou, 2017). Moreover, collaborative funding arrangements with local governments and international donors have provided essential financial support for infrastructure development and research projects, enabling institutions to pursue innovation agendas more aggressively.

Finally, efforts to transform organizational culture are increasingly centered on leadership and governance reforms. At all three institutions, leadership teams have prioritized transparent decision-making, collaborative governance, and participatory strategic planning. These initiatives aim to foster trust, reduce resistance, and encourage broader stakeholder involvement in innovation processes. They also reflect the Islamic principle of *islah* (reform), which emphasizes continuous improvement and renewal. By combining cultural, structural, and strategic interventions, Islamic higher education institutions can overcome entrenched challenges and build resilient innovation cultures that support long-term growth and societal impact. As Drucker (2015) notes, innovation is not a one-time event but an ongoing process—one that requires unwavering commitment, strategic foresight, and a culture that embraces change.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that organizational culture plays a fundamental and multidimensional role in shaping innovation within Islamic higher education institutions. The experiences of IAI Muhammad Azim, IAI Yasni Muaro Bungo, and Nusantara Batanghari University reveal that leadership vision, shared values, communication dynamics, and the integration of Islamic ethics are critical components in cultivating a culture that encourages creativity, adaptability, and continuous improvement. Innovation is most effectively achieved when it is deeply embedded in institutional identity—reflected in curriculum design, research development, community engagement, and technological transformation. Moreover, the strategic alignment between cultural values and institutional goals ensures that innovation not only enhances competitiveness but also fulfills the broader mission of Islamic education: to develop knowledge that is ethically grounded, socially relevant, and spiritually meaningful.

However, the path toward building a sustainable innovation culture is neither linear nor without obstacles. Limited human resource capacity, financial constraints, resistance to change, and bureaucratic rigidity remain persistent challenges that must be strategically addressed through capacity building, governance reform, and diversified funding mechanisms. Overcoming these barriers requires visionary leadership, collaborative governance, and a continuous commitment to institutional transformation rooted in Islamic principles such as *shura*, *'adl*, and *islah*. As higher education continues to evolve in the face of rapid technological, social, and economic change, Islamic universities must embrace innovation not as a singular project but as an enduring process—one that transforms institutional structures, empowers human potential, and contributes meaningfully to the advancement of society and the global ummah.

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