



Implementing Organizational Strategies for Employee Loyalty in an Islamic School: A Case Study of SDIT Al Auliya Balikpapan

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Case Study Employee; Educational Institutions; Islamic; Loyalty; Strategic Implementation	Employee loyalty is important for the sustainability of Islamic educational institutions. This study analyzes organizational strategies for building employee loyalty at SDIT Al Auliya Balikpapan and identifies factors supporting and hindering their implementation. Using a qualitative case-study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis involving six purposively selected informants (n = 6): one foundation representative, one principal, one vice principal, one teacher, one school treasurer, and one administrative staff member. Data were analyzed through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings show that employee loyalty is fostered through open two-way communication, continuous human resource development, motivational strategies integrating spiritual and material appreciation, and leadership role modeling. These practices contribute to affective, normative, and continuance commitment. Their implementation is supported by consistent leadership, religious values, collaborative work culture, and a conducive work environment, while differences in policy perceptions and increased workloads remain key challenges. This study contributes to Islamic educational management by explaining how organizational strategies are translated into everyday managerial practices that strengthen employee loyalty, extending previous studies that mainly examined relationships among organizational variables.
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INTRODUCTION

The success of Islamic educational institutions is not only determined by the quality of the curriculum and learning processes but also by the institution's ability to manage human resources sustainably. Teachers and educational staff are strategic assets that play an important role in maintaining the quality of educational services, ensuring the continuity of school programs, and achieving the institution's vision and mission. Therefore, employee loyalty becomes an essential aspect of educational management because it is related to employees' commitment to remain within the organization, perform their duties professionally, and contribute to institutional development (A. Fatah Yasin, 2020).

From the perspective of educational management, employee loyalty is not formed naturally but develops through the implementation of organizational strategies that are systematically designed. These strategies include the processes of planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling various policies oriented toward human resource development. Effective strategy implementation not only directs the achievement of organizational goals but also creates a work environment that supports employee engagement, motivation, and commitment (Hakim et al., 2021). In Islamic educational institutions, the implementation of such strategies is also influenced by the internalization of religious values that characterize the organization.

Employee loyalty is closely related to organizational commitment. Meyer & Allen (1991) proposed that organizational commitment consists of three dimensions: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Affective commitment is reflected in

emotional attachment and a sense of belonging toward the organization; continuance commitment relates to individual considerations regarding the benefits and consequences of remaining a member of the organization; while normative commitment represents a moral obligation to continue contributing to the organization. In the context of educational institutions, these three dimensions are reflected through employees' willingness to maintain the school's reputation, perform their duties professionally, and actively participate in organizational development.

Various studies have shown that employee loyalty and commitment are influenced by several factors, including leadership, organizational culture, work motivation, job satisfaction, work environment, and professional development (Hakim et al., 2021 ; Rumra et al., 2025). Most of these studies employ quantitative approaches to examine relationships among variables, thereby providing information regarding factors that influence employee loyalty. Nevertheless, studies exploring how organizational strategies are implemented in practice to build employee loyalty, particularly in Islamic educational institutions, remain relatively limited. In fact, understanding the process of strategy implementation is necessary to explain how organizational policies are translated into managerial practices that can strengthen employee commitment.

On the other hand, Islamic educational institutions face challenges in maintaining employee loyalty, including differences in individual characteristics, variations in length of service, motivational dynamics, and increasing competition among private educational institutions. These conditions indicate that employee loyalty is not only influenced by individual factors but also by the organization's ability to implement consistent and sustainable strategies. Therefore, examining strategy implementation is important to provide a more comprehensive understanding of human resource management practices within Islamic educational institutions.

Based on the above discussion, recent studies in Islamic and private educational institutions have linked teacher commitment and retention to leadership and wellbeing, job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and turnover intention (Anog et al., 2024). Meanwhile, strategic management studies in Islamic educational institutions have mainly focused on educational quality and institutional effectiveness (Purnomo et al., 2024). However, limited attention has been given to how organizational strategies are translated into everyday managerial practices to build employee loyalty. This study addresses this gap by examining the implementation process, its supporting and inhibiting factors, and its relationship with employees' affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Through a qualitative case-study approach, this study contributes a context-specific understanding of how managerial practices and Islamic organizational values interact in fostering employee loyalty.

This study aims to analyze the implementation of strategies in building employee loyalty at SDIT Al Auliya Balikpapan, identify the factors that support and hinder the implementation process, and explain how these strategies contribute to the formation of employee commitment within the context of Islamic educational institutions.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. This approach was selected because the study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of strategy implementation in building employee loyalty within the context of Islamic educational institutions. The case study design enabled the researcher to examine the phenomenon comprehensively in a real-life context, allowing the interrelationships among leadership, organizational culture, religious values, and human resource management to be understood holistically.

The research was conducted at SDIT Al Auliya Balikpapan for 60 days, from May to June 2026. The research site was selected purposively because the school is an integrated Islamic educational institution characterized by a religious organizational culture, a structured management system, and human resource development programs relevant to the focus of this study.

The data sources consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from six informants selected through purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria required informants to be directly involved in, responsible for, or affected by the formulation and implementation of organizational strategies and to represent key organizational roles relevant to the study. The six

informants represented the foundation, school leadership, teaching staff, financial administration, and general administration. The adequacy of six informants was assessed based on information power and role coverage rather than a numerical saturation threshold. The bounded focus of the case, the informants' direct knowledge of the phenomenon, and their complementary strategic and operational perspectives provided sufficient information to address the research objectives. Data adequacy was further strengthened through triangulation across informants, observations, and organizational documents. Secondary data included the school profile, vision and mission statements, work programs, internal policies, human resource development documents, and activity archives related to strategy implementation.

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Informants

Code	Position	Role in the Research
I1	Foundation Chairman	Provides information regarding the foundation's strategic policies in human resource management.
I2	Principal	Explains the implementation of strategies at the school operational level.
I3	Vice Principal	Explains program implementation and internal organizational coordination.
I4	Teacher	Provides experiences as an implementer of organizational policies.
I5	School Treasurer	Explains administrative support and policies related to employee welfare.
I6	Administrative Staff	Provides information regarding administrative implementation and organizational work culture.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis. A semi-structured interview protocol was used to explore the strategies implemented to build employee loyalty, their implementation process, and the factors supporting and hindering their execution. Interviews were conducted with six informants and lasted approximately 30–40 minutes each. All interviews were audio-recorded with the informants' consent and subsequently transcribed for analysis. Non-participant observation was conducted once at the beginning of the study for a full school day, from 07:00 to 15:00, focusing on organizational activities, communication patterns, work culture, and interactions among employees. Documents were selected based on their relevance to organizational strategy, human resource management, and employee development, and included the school profile, vision and mission statements, work programs, internal policies, human resource development records, and activity archives. Prior to data collection, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the use of the data, and their participation rights. Participation and audio recording were conducted with informed consent, and informant identities were protected using codes I1–I6.

Data analysis employed the interactive model developed by Miles et al. (2014), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were coded, selected, and categorized according to the research themes. The data were then organized into narratives and thematic matrices to identify recurring patterns and relationships among themes. Conclusions were developed iteratively and continuously checked against the complete dataset to ensure consistency between the interpretations and the empirical evidence.

The trustworthiness of the findings was maintained through source and technique triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information from the foundation representative, principal, vice principal, teacher, school treasurer, and administrative staff, while technique triangulation compared evidence obtained from interviews, observation, and document analysis. Credibility was further supported through repeated comparison of emerging interpretations with the original transcripts, observation notes, and documents. Dependability was strengthened by maintaining systematic analytical documentation, including interview transcripts, coding records, thematic categorizations, observation notes, and thematic matrices, allowing the development of the findings to be traced back to the source data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data obtained from the six informants indicate that the implementation of strategies for building employee loyalty at SDIT Al Auliya Balikpapan does not stop at the establishment of policies at the foundation level but is manifested through relational practices in daily organizational activities. Four practices consistently identified from interviews, observations, and documentation are open communication, continuous employee development, motivational strategies that integrate spiritual and material dimensions, and leadership role modeling demonstrated through daily interactions. These four practices are described below along with their discussion, followed by an explanation of the supporting and inhibiting factors and their relationship with the formation of employee loyalty. The interrelationships among these themes are visualized in Figure 1.

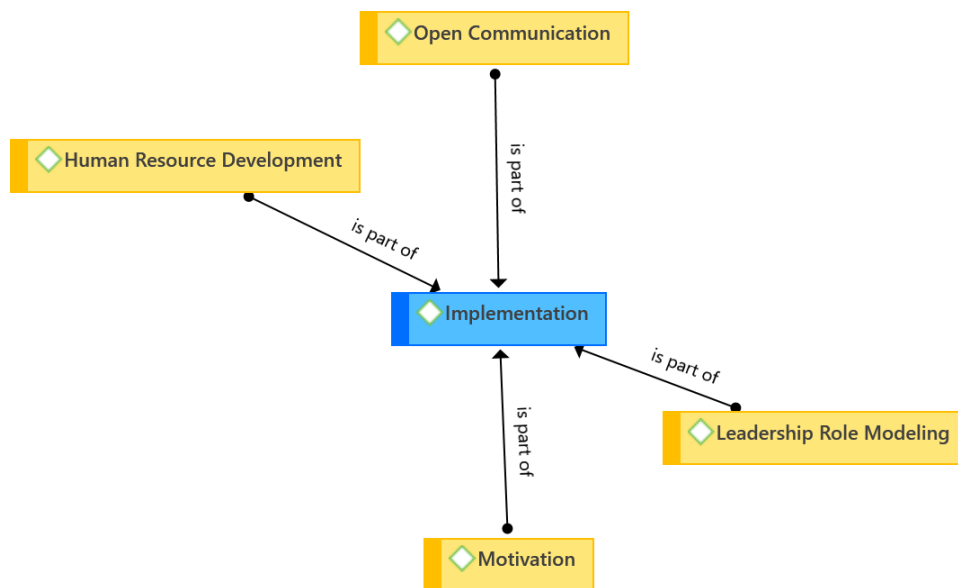


Figure 1. Concept Map of Strategy Implementation Findings

Two-Way Communication as a Means of Employee Participation

The principal emphasized that employees' access to express ideas and concerns is maintained openly, both through formal forums and informal conversations outside regular meetings. *"Regarding communication, I open communication as widely as possible."* (Interview I2). Teachers and the school treasurer confirmed this communication pattern. Both acknowledged that they were frequently asked to provide input before a policy was implemented, and that the leadership tended to encourage collective problem-solving when issues emerged rather than making unilateral decisions. This communication pattern aligns with the perspective of Detert & Burris (2007), who argued that employees' willingness to voice their opinions is strongly influenced by leaders' responses to their input, rather than merely by the existence of communication channels. In other words, an "open-door policy" only contributes to employee loyalty when it is accompanied by leadership attitudes that genuinely follow up on the feedback provided.

Nevertheless, the field findings also identified complaints regarding miscommunication in several activities, indicating that open access alone does not automatically guarantee the clarity and effectiveness of information dissemination among all employees. This condition provides an important consideration for strategy implementation: open communication needs to be complemented by confirmation mechanisms and clear information responsibilities, ensuring that the leadership's intention to create a space for dialogue is not hindered by technical issues in message delivery.

Human Resource Development as a Form of Organizational Support

In addition to communication, opportunities to participate in training programs represent a tangible form of the institution's commitment to supporting employees' professional growth. The

principal explained that employees are facilitated to participate in internal foundation training programs, Teacher Working Group (Kelompok Kerja Guru/KKG) activities, in-house training, as well as paid external training programs funded by the school as a form of appreciation and an opportunity for professional development. *"Since we are under the foundation, there are training programs specifically organized by the foundation, and there are also external training programs."* (Interview I2)

This finding is relevant to the concept of perceived organizational support proposed by Rhoades & Eisenberger (2002), which states that employees interpret organizational investment in their personal development as a form of organizational care and reciprocal support, thereby strengthening their attachment to the institution. In this study, the need for training generally emerged from meetings and work evaluations, indicating that employee development was responsive to actual challenges encountered in practice rather than merely being an administrative routine.

However, this study has not yet examined the extent to which the outcomes of these training programs are actually applied in employees' daily performance. Therefore, the conclusions that can be drawn at this stage are limited to the availability of development opportunities rather than their impact on actual employee performance.

Work Motivation Integrating the Meaning of Worship and Appreciation

The third practice identified in this study is the provision of motivation through various approaches: material rewards such as length-of-service allowances, salary increases, the 14th-month salary, and opportunities for Umrah; non-material rewards such as collective activities (rihlah and cooking together); as well as the interpretation of work as part of worship and *dakwah* (religious outreach). The foundation chairman described a work orientation that goes beyond merely seeking financial benefits. *"I do not only work to receive a salary, but I also work, I worship, and I have the desire to engage in dakwah."* (Interview I1)

This combination can be explained through self-determination theory, which emphasizes the fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness as essential conditions for high-quality work motivation (Deci et al., 2017). Employee involvement in decision-making fulfills the need for autonomy, training opportunities fulfill the need for competence, while a family-oriented culture and collective activities fulfill the need for social relatedness. In line with this perspective, workplace spirituality that fosters meaning and a sense of togetherness has been shown to contribute to positive work attitudes (Milliman et al., 2003). Therefore, perceiving work as a form of responsibility (*amanah*) and worship within Islamic educational institutions provides a contextual dimension to the application of this theory.

However, material rewards do not automatically strengthen loyalty if they are not managed fairly. One informant specifically expressed the expectation that rewards should be provided equally and transparently. This reinforces the perspective of Colquitt et al. (2001), who argued that organizational justice influences whether a reward system is perceived as a source of commitment reinforcement or instead creates feelings of inequality and jealousy among employees.

Leadership Role Modeling and Active Presence

The fourth practice identified is the direct involvement of the principal in providing guidance, encouragement, and examples of work behavior, not only during formal meetings but also through routine daily activities. *"The principal often provides guidance, input, and encouragement to us as teachers, not only during meetings but also during the morning opening sessions."* (Interview I4)

This pattern of daily interaction allows leadership to become more closely connected with employees' everyday experiences and reduces the gap between the organizational vision and its implementation in practice. This pattern supports the findings of Alhabsyi et al. (2022), who highlighted the important role of school leadership in improving teacher performance, and with Sucitra & Hariri (2023), who found that principal instructional leadership positively influenced teachers' organizational commitment.

In this study, leadership role modeling was primarily reflected through communicative presence and the provision of direction. However, other dimensions of behavioral role modeling,

such as leaders' punctuality and administrative discipline, were not specifically observed in this research.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Strategy Implementation

In addition to the four practices described above, this study also identified factors that strengthen or hinder the implementation of these strategies. Consistent leadership, religious values, a collaborative work culture, and a conducive work environment were the most frequently mentioned supporting factors across informants. Religious values, for instance, were explicitly associated with attitudes of trustworthiness (*amanah*), discipline, and sincerity in carrying out work responsibilities. *"Islamic values greatly influence our work loyalty because Islam itself teaches that when we work, we must be trustworthy, disciplined, responsible, and most importantly, sincere."* (Interview I4)

This condition strengthens the perspective of Hakim et al. (2021), who emphasized that strategic management in Islamic educational institutions is closely related to the internalization of Islamic values in organizational practices. Collaborative culture was also reflected in the practice of senior employees assisting newer employees without rigid seniority boundaries, creating an informal mechanism of intergenerational learning within the school.

On the other hand, two major challenges strongly supported by the data were differences in perceptions regarding organizational policies (which potentially lead to miscommunication) and increased workloads during certain periods. Different sources of information reported similar concerns regarding these two issues, indicating that they represent actual operational challenges rather than merely individual perceptions. This finding is consistent with De Nobile & Bilgin (2022), who demonstrated that clarity in policy communication contributes to teacher performance and commitment.

Meanwhile, competition with other private educational institutions and the attractiveness of ASN/P3K recruitment pathways were identified as external risks that require attention, although the available data are insufficient to confirm that these factors are the primary causes of employees leaving the institution. Similarly, variations in length of service and differences in employee motivation are more appropriately understood as natural characteristics of the workforce that require effective management rather than as proven obstacles to loyalty.

Personnel records were used to corroborate and contextualize the qualitative findings. These documentary data provide additional information regarding employee tenure, attendance, and employment status, but are not treated as independent indicators of employee loyalty. The qualitative and documentary evidence is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Triangulation of Qualitative Findings and Quantitative Evidence of Strategy Implementation

Evaluation Aspect	Qualitative Findings (Interviews)	Quantitative Evidence (Documents)	Verification Status
Commitment Orientation and Form	Employees remain in the institution due to comfort, family-like relationships, alignment with the institutional vision, the meaning of worship, and <i>amanah</i> (responsibility and trustworthiness), reflecting affective and normative commitment.	21 out of 42 employees (50.0%) have served for ≥15 years; 64.3% are permanent foundation teachers (GTY).	Confirmed as Valid
Daily Discipline and Performance	Implementers and leaders reported a high sense of belonging and daily responsibility among employees.	Attendance records for May 2026, obtained during the fieldwork period, showed 99.2% attendance (387 of 390 attendance entries).	Confirmed as Valid

Evaluation Aspect	Qualitative Findings (Interviews)	Quantitative Evidence (Documents)	Verification Status
Employee Retention Stability	Employees tend not to move to other institutions (<i>turnover</i>) due to a supportive working environment.	69.0% of employees have a tenure of ≥ 5 years; only 7.1% have worked for less than 1 year.	Confirmed as Valid
Welfare and Incentive Factors	Salary and incentives are important but are not the primary drivers for employees to remain (not merely based on continuous exchange or cost-benefit considerations).	The majority of employees have remained for a relatively long period (≥ 10 –15 years) across various employment statuses.	Confirmed as Valid

The Relationship Between Strategy Implementation and Employee Loyalty Dimensions

Employee loyalty and organizational commitment are conceptually related but are not treated as identical constructs in this study. Employee loyalty refers to employees' willingness to remain with and contribute to the institution, whereas organizational commitment is used as an interpretive framework to understand the psychological basis underlying that attachment.

Viewed through Meyer & Allen (1991) three-component model, the qualitative findings can be interpreted as showing associations with different dimensions of organizational commitment. Open communication, collective activities, and leadership role modeling were associated with employees' emotional attachment and sense of belonging, which are consistent with affective commitment. The interpretation of work as worship and *amanah* was associated with a sense of moral responsibility toward the institution, corresponding to normative commitment. Material rewards, length-of-service allowances, and welfare benefits may be related to continuance commitment; however, the available data do not establish that the perceived costs of leaving were the primary reasons employees remained in the institution.

Accordingly, the relationship between the identified organizational practices and the three dimensions of commitment is presented as an interpretive linkage grounded in the qualitative data, rather than as evidence that these practices causally produce affective, normative, or continuance commitment. As emphasized by Raharjo et al. (2025) and Anog et al. (2024), organizational commitment in educational institutions may develop through the interaction of multiple managerial practices rather than a single policy. This interpretation is also consistent with Putra (2024), who highlighted the relationship between teacher loyalty and the sustainability of private-school quality. In the present study, communication, employee development, leadership role modeling, religious values, and appreciation were experienced as interconnected elements of employees' everyday organizational environment.

Thus, the findings suggest that employee loyalty at SDIT Al Auliya Balikpapan is associated with an accumulation of everyday organizational experiences shaped through communication, professional development, appreciation, religious values, and leadership practices, rather than with a single organizational policy.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that strategies for building employee loyalty at SDIT Al Auliya Balikpapan are implemented through four main practices: open two-way communication, continuous human resource development, motivational approaches that integrate spiritual meaning with material and non-material appreciation, and leadership role modeling through leaders' active presence in daily work interactions. These practices operate interdependently and are associated with employees' affective, normative, and continuance commitment toward the institution.

The implementation of these strategies is supported by consistent leadership, the internalization of religious values, a collaborative work culture across generations of employees, and a conducive work environment. The main challenges include differences in perceptions of

organizational policies that may lead to miscommunication and increased workloads during certain periods. Competition among private educational institutions and the attractiveness of ASN/P3K career pathways were also identified as external risks, although the available evidence does not establish them as primary causes of employee departure.

Overall, the findings suggest that employee loyalty in Islamic educational institutions is supported by organizational practices that integrate managerial approaches with Islamic values rather than relying solely on financial incentives or administrative regulations. For institutional managers, the findings highlight the importance of strengthening information-confirmation mechanisms, maintaining open communication, and anticipating workload increases to sustain a supportive work environment. However, this study is limited by its single-site case-study design and small purposively selected sample of six informants. Therefore, the findings are context-specific and should not be generalized to all Islamic educational institutions, but may offer relevant insights for institutions with similar organizational and cultural characteristics. Future research should involve multiple institutions, larger and more diverse participant groups, and measurable indicators such as long-term employee retention to examine the transferability and broader applicability of these findings.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

SU, IM, and SK contributed to the conception and design of the study, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, and preparation of the manuscript. All authors reviewed the manuscript and approved the final version for publication.

AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The author used ChatGPT for language editing during the preparation of this manuscript. After utilizing the tool, the author reviewed and revised the manuscript as necessary and remains fully responsible for the content of the publication.

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