

School Culture: A Study at SMAN 1 and SMAN 15 Padang

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ABSTRACT

This study was motivated by observed differences in school culture characteristics between SMAN 1 Padang and SMAN 15 Padang. SMAN 1 Padang demonstrated a stronger culture of achievement, whereas SMAN 15 Padang, while characterized by a conducive atmosphere and effective communication, did not exhibit an academic culture as strong as that of SMAN 1 Padang. The study aims to describe school culture at SMAN 1 Padang and SMAN 15 Padang from the perspectives of teachers and students and to analyze differences in school culture within and between the two schools. A quantitative approach with a descriptive-comparative design was employed. The population comprised 2,380 students and 123 teachers across SMAN 1 Padang and SMAN 15 Padang. The sample consisted of 342 students and 94 teachers, selected using accidental sampling with a proportional quota approach. Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire that had undergone validity and reliability testing. Data were analyzed using mean scores, the Respondent Achievement Level (TCR), and the Independent Sample t-Test. The results indicate that school culture at SMAN 1 Padang falls into the “strong” category according to both teachers and students, whereas at SMAN 15 Padang, it falls into the “moderately strong” category. The mean school culture scores were 4.22 for students and 3.92 for teachers at SMAN 1 Padang, and 3.99 for students and 3.73 for teachers at SMAN 15 Padang. Independent Sample t-test results at the 0.05 significance level indicate significant differences between teachers and students at SMAN 1 Padang ($p = 0.000$) and SMAN 15 Padang ($p = 0.022$), as well as between teachers at the two schools ($p = 0.047$) and students at the two schools ($p = 0.000$). Among teachers, significant differences were found in academic efficacy and optimism and communication openness, while among students, significant differences appeared in achievement and appreciation culture, collaboration culture, and communication openness.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a fundamental role in developing human resources and improving the quality of a nation. As one of the primary institutions responsible for preparing individuals to face social, economic, and technological challenges, schools are expected not only to deliver academic knowledge but also to cultivate positive values, attitudes, and behaviors among students. In Indonesia, the importance of education is emphasized in Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which states that education aims to develop learners who are knowledgeable, competent, creative, responsible, and possess good character. Achieving these objectives requires not only a well-designed curriculum and competent teachers but also a supportive organizational environment that enables all

members of the school community to perform effectively. Consequently, educational quality is influenced not only by instructional practices but also by organizational factors, among which school culture has received increasing scholarly attention (Nafsani & Salito, 2025; Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 20 Tahun 2003).

School culture has long been recognized as one of the most influential determinants of school effectiveness. It represents the shared values, beliefs, norms, traditions, rituals, and behavioral expectations that develop over time through interactions among school leaders, teachers, students, and other members of the school community. These shared values shape how decisions are made, how problems are addressed, and how individuals interact in their daily educational activities. Hoy and Miskel (2013) argue that school culture reflects the collective assumptions that guide organizational behavior and influence educational outcomes. Similarly, Deal and Peterson (2009) describe school culture as the invisible force that shapes everyday practices, strengthens organizational commitment, and influences the willingness of school members to pursue continuous improvement. From an organizational perspective, Schein (2010) explains that culture consists of deeply embedded assumptions developed through shared experiences, while Stolp and Smith (1995) emphasize that symbols, traditions, and shared values distinguish one school from another. Therefore, school culture is not merely an organizational characteristic but a strategic resource that influences school effectiveness, organizational sustainability, and educational quality.

A positive school culture creates an environment in which teachers and students feel valued, motivated, and committed to achieving common educational goals. Schools characterized by strong cultures tend to demonstrate higher levels of trust, collaboration, innovation, and organizational commitment than schools with weaker cultures. Such conditions encourage teachers to improve instructional quality, facilitate students' academic engagement, and strengthen cooperation among members of the school community. Sukadari (2020) explains that school culture functions as the foundation of school management because it directs organizational behavior and supports the implementation of educational programs. Likewise, Ridho (2019) argues that effective school leadership contributes significantly to the development of a positive school culture by fostering shared values and encouraging active participation from all school members. Organizational behavior theory also suggests that supportive organizational cultures promote motivation, commitment, and job satisfaction, which ultimately improve institutional performance (Robbins & Judge, 2017).

School culture is a multidimensional concept that encompasses various organizational characteristics affecting educational effectiveness. In this study, school culture is examined through four major dimensions: academic efficacy and optimism, achievement and appreciation culture, collaborative culture, and communication openness. Academic efficacy and optimism reflect the confidence of teachers and students in achieving educational goals despite existing challenges. According to Hoy and Miskel (2013), academic optimism strengthens teachers' expectations regarding students' ability to succeed and encourages schools to maintain high academic standards. Recent studies have also shown that individuals with stronger academic efficacy demonstrate greater persistence, confidence, and motivation in accomplishing academic tasks (Wahyukencana & Utami, 2024).

The second dimension, achievement and appreciation culture, emphasizes the extent to which schools recognize academic and non-academic accomplishments while encouraging continuous improvement. Recognition and appreciation play an essential role in motivating individuals because acknowledgment of achievement reinforces positive behavior and encourages sustained performance. Educational institutions that consistently appreciate students' and teachers' achievements are more likely to foster higher motivation and stronger organizational commitment (Pratiwi & Roesminingsih, 2021). Likewise, appreciation has been identified as an important component of character development because it encourages responsibility, discipline, and continuous self-improvement (Amir et al., 2025). Although the concept of appreciation is also widely discussed within organizational settings (Noviana & Santoso, 2024), its implementation in educational institutions serves broader purposes by supporting both academic development and character education.

The third dimension, collaborative culture, reflects the degree to which members of the school community cooperate in solving problems, sharing knowledge, and achieving common objectives. Collaboration has become increasingly important as schools encounter more complex educational challenges that require collective decision-making and professional learning among teachers. A collaborative culture strengthens teamwork, enhances creativity, and improves instructional quality by encouraging teachers to exchange ideas and support one another (Andriastuti, 2024). Research by Gistituati and Ananda (2019) further highlights that trust between educational leaders and academic staff serves as a foundation for effective collaboration. Similarly, Dahlan et al. (2020) and Setiyadi (2024)

demonstrate that collaboration contributes positively to teacher performance, professional development, and school effectiveness.

The fourth dimension, communication openness, concerns the transparency, freedom, and effectiveness of communication among school members. Open communication enables teachers, students, and school leaders to exchange ideas, express opinions, resolve conflicts, and build mutual trust. Effective communication supports participatory decision-making and strengthens organizational relationships, thereby creating a more positive educational environment. Hendra and Saputri (2020) explain that communication is fundamental to educational processes because it facilitates cooperation and mutual understanding among individuals. Likewise, Robbins and Judge (2017) argue that organizations characterized by open communication generally experience stronger organizational commitment and more effective teamwork.

Numerous empirical studies have confirmed the importance of school culture in improving educational outcomes. Octaviani et al. (2020) found that positive school culture contributes to a conducive learning environment by strengthening collaboration, discipline, and organizational effectiveness. Waluyati et al. (2022) similarly reported that supportive school cultures encourage active participation among teachers and students while promoting positive interpersonal relationships. Lawolo et al. (2024) further demonstrated that school culture plays a significant role in strengthening students' character development, whereas Rustamto et al. (2026) emphasized that quality culture contributes to continuous school improvement. At the local level, Pranata and Gistituati (2024) also found variations in school culture across vocational schools in Padang, indicating that organizational culture may differ substantially even among schools operating under similar educational policies.

Despite the increasing number of studies on school culture, several research gaps remain. Most previous studies have focused on examining school culture within individual schools or investigating its relationship with variables such as teacher performance, organizational commitment, leadership, or student achievement. Comparative studies involving two public senior high schools while simultaneously considering both teachers' and students' perspectives remain relatively limited, particularly within the Indonesian educational context. Consequently, empirical evidence regarding differences in school culture between schools operating under the same national education system is still insufficient. Such comparisons are important because they provide valuable insights into how organizational values, leadership practices, collaboration, communication, and appreciation systems shape educational environments differently across schools.

SMAN 1 Padang and SMAN 15 Padang represent two public senior high schools located in Padang City that operate under the same national educational regulations but demonstrate different academic characteristics and institutional achievements. Although both schools share similar administrative structures and educational objectives, differences in leadership practices, organizational interactions, recognition systems, and collaborative activities may influence the development of their respective school cultures. Examining these differences is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how school culture is manifested in different educational settings and identify organizational strengths that may serve as references for school improvement.

Therefore, this study aims to compare the school culture of SMAN 1 Padang and SMAN 15 Padang from the perspectives of teachers and students. Specifically, the study examines differences in four dimensions of school culture: academic efficacy and optimism, achievement and appreciation culture, collaborative culture, and communication openness. By providing empirical evidence regarding similarities and differences between the two schools, this study is expected to enrich the literature on educational management, contribute to the understanding of school culture in Indonesian public senior high schools, and provide practical recommendations for school leaders and policymakers seeking to strengthen positive school culture and improve educational quality.

2. METHOD, DATA, ANALYSIS

This study employed a quantitative approach using a descriptive comparative research design to examine differences in school culture between SMAN 1 Padang and SMAN 15 Padang from the perspectives of teachers and students. A quantitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to collect measurable data, quantify respondents' perceptions, and analyze differences objectively using statistical procedures (Sugiyono, 2023; Sumbodo et al., 2024). The descriptive comparative design was considered appropriate because the purpose of the study was to describe the characteristics of school culture in each school and compare the extent to which the two schools differed across several dimensions rather than to investigate causal relationships.

The study was conducted at two public senior high schools in Padang City, Indonesia, namely SMAN 1 Padang and SMAN 15 Padang. The target population consisted of all teachers and students from both schools, totaling 2,503 respondents, including 2,380 students and 123 teachers. The sampling technique employed was accidental (incidental) sampling with a proportional quota approach: the quota for each school was first set proportionally to its share of the population, while individual respondents were then recruited incidentally in the field, that is, whichever teachers and students the researcher encountered and who were willing to complete the questionnaire until each school's quota was fulfilled. This technique was considered appropriate because respondents needed to be available and willing to respond at the time data collection took place (Sugiyono, 2019). The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula with a margin of error of 5%, resulting in a sample of 342 students and 94 teachers. The student sample comprised 191 students from SMAN 1 Padang and 151 students from SMAN 15 Padang, whereas the teacher sample consisted of 52 teachers from SMAN 1 Padang and 42 teachers from SMAN 15 Padang.

Data were collected using structured questionnaires developed based on the concept of school culture proposed in educational management literature. Separate questionnaires were designed for teachers and students while maintaining the same conceptual framework to ensure comparability between respondent groups. The instruments adopted a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), allowing respondents to indicate the degree to which they agreed with each statement. According to Sugiyono (2019), the Likert scale is widely used in quantitative educational research because it effectively measures attitudes, perceptions, and opinions toward specific phenomena.

Initially, each questionnaire consisted of 42 items representing four dimensions of school culture: academic efficacy and optimism, achievement and appreciation culture, collaborative culture, and communication openness. Prior to the main data collection, the instruments underwent validity and reliability testing to ensure that each item accurately measured the intended construct and produced consistent results. Based on the instrument validation results, the teacher questionnaire retained 40 valid items, whereas the student questionnaire retained 38 valid items. Items that did not meet the validity criteria were excluded from the final instrument to improve measurement accuracy. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha indicated that both instruments were highly reliable, with coefficients of 0.938 for the teacher questionnaire and 0.959 for the student questionnaire, both well above the minimum r -table threshold.

School culture was operationalized as a multidimensional construct comprising four dimensions. The first dimension, academic efficacy and optimism, measured respondents' confidence in achieving educational goals and maintaining positive expectations regarding academic success despite existing challenges. The second dimension, achievement and appreciation culture, assessed the extent to which schools recognize and appreciate academic and non-academic accomplishments while encouraging continuous improvement among teachers and students. The third dimension, collaborative culture, evaluated cooperation, teamwork, knowledge sharing, and mutual support among members of the school community. The fourth dimension, communication openness, measured transparency, mutual respect, freedom to express opinions, and the effectiveness of communication among teachers, students, and school leaders. Together, these four dimensions represent key characteristics of a positive school culture that supports organizational effectiveness and educational quality.

Data analysis consisted of descriptive and comparative statistical analyses. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondents' perceptions of school culture by calculating the mean score and the Respondent Achievement Level (Tingkat Capaian Responden or TCR) for each dimension. The TCR was computed by dividing the observed mean score by the maximum possible score and multiplying the result by one hundred to obtain a percentage. Higher TCR values indicated stronger perceptions of school culture within each dimension. The percentage scores were subsequently interpreted according to predetermined classification criteria to describe the strength of school culture in each school.

Comparative analysis was conducted using the Independent Samples t-test to determine whether statistically significant differences existed between SMAN 1 Padang and SMAN 15 Padang. The Independent Samples t-test is appropriate for comparing the mean scores of two independent groups and determining whether observed differences are statistically significant (Putri et al., 2023). Separate analyses were performed for teachers and students as well as for each dimension of school culture and the overall school culture score. Statistical significance was established at the 0.05 level ($p < 0.05$). All statistical analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25 to ensure accurate computation and interpretation of the research findings.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results describe the level of school culture at SMAN 1 Padang and SMAN 15 Padang based on teachers' and students' responses. School culture was measured through four dimensions: academic efficacy and optimism, achievement and appreciation culture, collaborative culture, and communication openness. Descriptive statistics were calculated using the mean score and the Respondent Achievement Level (TCR), followed by Independent Samples *t*-tests to identify differences between the two schools.

Overall, respondents from both schools perceived school culture positively. However, SMAN 1 Padang consistently obtained higher mean scores than SMAN 15 Padang across all dimensions and respondent groups. Among students, collaborative culture achieved the highest mean score, whereas achievement and appreciation culture received the lowest score. Similarly, teachers reported the highest scores for academic efficacy and optimism, while communication openness showed comparatively lower values.

Table 1. Descriptive Results of School Culture in SMAN 1 Padang and SMAN 15 Padang

Dimension	SMAN 1 Padang				SMAN 15 Padang			
	Teachers		Students		Teachers		Students	
	TCR (%)	Category	TCR (%)	Category	TCR (%)	Category	TCR (%)	Category
Academic Efficacy and Optimism	83,2	Strong	87	Strong	77,8	Moderately Strong	86	Strong
Achievement and Appreciation Culture	74,7	Moderately Strong	81	Strong	72,5	Moderately Strong	77	Moderately Strong
Collaborative Culture	76,2	Moderately Strong	86,4	Strong	74,2	Moderately Strong	80	Strong
Communication Openness	78,8	Moderately Strong	83,2	Strong	73,2	Moderately Strong	76	Moderately Strong
Overall School Culture	78	Moderately Strong	84,4	Strong	75	Moderately Strong	79,9	Moderately Strong

Beyond comparing SMAN 1 Padang and SMAN 15 Padang, differences between teachers and students within each school were also examined using the Independent Samples *t*-test, as presented in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 1. Independent Samples *t*-Test Results Comparing Teachers and Students at SMAN 1 Padang

Dimension	Teacher Mean	Student Mean	t	df	p-value	Result
Academic Efficacy and Optimism	4,16	4,35	3,146	241	0,002	Significant difference
Achievement and Appreciation Culture	3,74	4,05	4,443	241	0,000	Significant difference
Collaborative Culture	3,81	4,32	7,786	241	0,000	Significant difference
Communication Openness	3,94	4,16	3,207	241	0,002	Significant difference
Overall School Culture	3,92	4,22	5,493	241	0,000	Significant difference

As shown in Table 2, the Independent Samples *t*-test revealed a significant difference between teachers and students at SMAN 1 Padang in overall school culture ($t = 5.493$, $df = 241$, $p = 0.000$), with students reporting higher scores than teachers. Significant differences between the two groups were also found in all four dimensions: academic efficacy and optimism, achievement and appreciation culture, collaborative culture, and communication openness. These results indicate that, although both teachers and students perceive school culture at SMAN 1 Padang positively, students consistently rate it more favorably than teachers across every dimension measured.

Table 2. Independent Samples t-Test Results Comparing Teachers and Students at SMAN 15 Padang

Dimension	Teacher Mean	Student Mean	t	df	p-value	Result
Academic Efficacy and Optimism	3,89	4,30	4,017	49,578	0,000	Significant difference
Achievement and Appreciation Culture	3,63	3,85	2,168	55,730	0,034	Significant difference
Collaborative Culture	3,71	4,00	3,061	191	0,003	Significant difference
Communication Openness	3,66	3,80	1,201	52,372	0,235	No significant difference
Overall School Culture	3,73	3,99	2,303	191	0,022	Significant difference

Table 3 presents the results of the same comparison at SMAN 15 Padang. A significant difference was also found between teachers and students in overall school culture ($t = 2.303$, $df = 191$, $p = 0.022$), again with students scoring higher than teachers. Significant differences between teachers and students were found in academic efficacy and optimism, achievement and appreciation culture, and collaborative culture, whereas no significant difference was found in communication openness ($p = 0.235$). This suggests that, unlike the other three dimensions, teachers and students at SMAN 15 Padang share a relatively similar perception of how openly members of the school community communicate with one another.

Beyond the within-school comparisons, Independent Samples t-tests were also used to compare SMAN 1 Padang and SMAN 15 Padang directly, separately for teachers and for students, as presented in Table 4 and Table 5.

Table 3. Independent Samples t-Test Results Comparing Teachers between SMAN 1 Padang and SMAN 15 Padang

Dimension	Mean SMAN 1 Padang Teachers	Mean SMAN 15 Padang Teachers	t	df	p-value	Result
Academic Efficacy and Optimism	4,16	3,89	2,464	64,348	0,016	Significant difference
Achievement and Appreciation Culture	3,74	3,63	0,993	67,027	0,324	No Significant difference
Collaborative Culture	3,81	3,71	1,002	92	0,319	No Significant difference
Communication Openness	3,94	3,66	2,297	66,195	0,025	Significant difference
Overall School Culture	3,92	3,73	2,026	64,552	0,047	Significant difference

Table 4. Independent Samples t-Test Results Comparing Students between SMAN 1 Padang and SMAN 15 Padang

Dimension	Mean SMAN 1 Padang Students	Mean SMAN 15 Padang Students	t	df	p-value	Result
Academic Efficacy and Optimism	4,35	4,30	1,226	322,758	0,221	No Significant difference
Achievement and Appreciation Culture	4,05	3,85	3,922	340	0,000	Significant difference
Collaborative Culture	4,32	4,00	6,241	340	0,000	Significant difference

Communication Openness	4,16	3,80	7,349	340	0,000	Significant difference
Overall School Culture	4,22	3,99	5,558	340	0,000	Significant difference

The comparative analysis using Independent Samples *t*-tests indicated that significant differences were identified in several dimensions of school culture between the two schools. Among students, significant differences were found in academic efficacy and optimism, achievement and appreciation culture, collaborative culture, communication openness, and overall school culture. Students of SMAN 1 Padang consistently reported higher perceptions than those of SMAN 15 Padang.

Similarly, teachers from the two schools demonstrated significant differences in several dimensions of school culture. Teachers from SMAN 1 Padang generally reported higher scores than teachers from SMAN 15 Padang, indicating stronger perceptions of school culture across the measured dimensions.

Overall, these findings suggest that although both schools demonstrated positive school cultures, SMAN 1 Padang exhibited consistently stronger school culture than SMAN 15 Padang from both teachers' and students' perspectives. The descriptive findings were further supported by the comparative statistical analysis, indicating meaningful differences between the two schools.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that both SMAN 1 Padang and SMAN 15 Padang have established positive school cultures, although SMAN 1 Padang consistently demonstrated stronger performance across most dimensions. The descriptive analysis revealed that respondents from both schools generally perceived school culture positively, particularly regarding academic efficacy, collaboration, and communication. Nevertheless, the Independent Samples *t*-test showed that several dimensions differed significantly between the two schools, suggesting that school culture develops differently despite both institutions operating under the same national education system. These findings reinforce the view that school culture is shaped not only by formal educational policies but also by organizational values, leadership practices, interpersonal relationships, and everyday interactions among school members (Deal & Peterson, 2009; Schein, 2010; Hoy & Miskel, 2013).

School culture represents more than a collection of organizational rules or routines. It reflects shared beliefs, norms, traditions, and expectations that gradually influence how teachers, students, and school leaders behave within the educational environment. According to Schein (2010), organizational culture develops through collective experiences that become deeply embedded in organizational life, while Deal and Peterson (2009) emphasize that a positive school culture encourages continuous improvement, commitment, and shared responsibility. Similarly, Sukadari (2020) argues that school culture functions as the foundation of school management because it directs organizational behavior and influences the implementation of educational programs. Therefore, differences in school culture between SMAN 1 Padang and SMAN 15 Padang may reflect differences in leadership approaches, organizational climate, and daily educational practices rather than differences in curriculum or educational regulations.

These findings are consistent with previous studies conducted in Indonesian schools. Octaviani et al. (2020) found that a positive school culture contributes to a supportive learning environment by strengthening discipline, collaboration, and organizational effectiveness. Likewise, Lawolo et al. (2024) concluded that school culture plays a crucial role in developing students' character and promoting positive educational outcomes. Rustamto et al. (2026) also demonstrated that schools with stronger quality cultures are more capable of sustaining continuous organizational improvement. Collectively, these studies support the present findings that variations in school culture may explain differences in school effectiveness even among institutions operating under similar educational policies.

The first dimension examined in this study was academic efficacy and optimism. The statistical analysis showed a significant difference between teachers from the two schools, whereas students did not differ significantly in their perceptions. Teachers at SMAN 1 Padang reported higher levels of academic efficacy and optimism than teachers at SMAN 15 Padang, suggesting stronger confidence in their ability to support students' learning and achieve educational objectives. In contrast, students from both schools demonstrated relatively similar perceptions of academic optimism, indicating that they experienced comparable expectations regarding academic achievement despite differences in teachers' perceptions.

This finding is closely related to the concept of academic optimism proposed by Hoy and Miskel (2013), who argue that teachers' collective confidence, trust, and emphasis on academic achievement contribute substantially to school effectiveness. Teachers who believe that students are capable of

achieving high academic standards are more likely to create learning environments characterized by high expectations, encouragement, and continuous support. Such optimism not only influences instructional practices but also affects students' motivation and confidence in learning. Therefore, the stronger academic optimism observed among teachers at SMAN 1 Padang may partly explain the school's more positive organizational climate.

The results also align with Wahyukenana and Utami (2024), who found that academic efficacy strengthens persistence, motivation, and confidence in overcoming academic challenges. Individuals with stronger academic efficacy are generally more resilient when facing difficulties because they believe that effort and appropriate strategies can improve learning outcomes. From an organizational perspective, Robbins and Judge (2017) further explain that collective confidence among organizational members enhances commitment, performance, and willingness to achieve shared objectives. Consequently, academic efficacy should be viewed not only as an individual psychological characteristic but also as an organizational resource that contributes to school improvement.

Interestingly, although teachers differed significantly in academic efficacy and optimism, students from both schools demonstrated relatively similar perceptions. One possible explanation is that both schools implement comparable academic standards and national curricula, enabling students to experience similar academic expectations regardless of organizational differences among teachers. This finding suggests that while teachers' organizational beliefs may differ across schools, students' perceptions are also influenced by broader educational policies and classroom learning experiences. Therefore, strengthening teachers' collective efficacy remains important because teachers serve as the primary agents responsible for creating supportive learning environments that foster students' academic success.

The second dimension, achievement and appreciation culture, revealed significant differences among students but not among teachers. Students at SMAN 1 Padang perceived stronger recognition and appreciation for academic and non-academic achievements than students at SMAN 15 Padang, whereas teachers from both schools expressed relatively similar perceptions. This finding indicates that students are more sensitive to how schools acknowledge achievements through rewards, recognition, and positive reinforcement than teachers, who may evaluate appreciation practices from a broader organizational perspective.

Recognition and appreciation constitute essential components of positive school culture because they reinforce desirable behaviors and encourage continuous improvement. Pratiwi and Roesminingsih (2021) explain that schools that consistently recognize achievement cultivate stronger learning motivation, academic responsibility, and a culture of excellence. Likewise, Amir et al. (2025) argue that appreciation serves not only as a reward mechanism but also as an important strategy for character development by encouraging discipline, responsibility, and positive behavior among students. When appreciation becomes part of the organizational culture, students are more likely to demonstrate higher engagement, confidence, and commitment to academic success.

The findings may also be interpreted from the perspective of organizational motivation. Robbins and Judge (2017) explain that recognition functions as an intrinsic motivational factor that strengthens organizational commitment and individual performance. Similarly, although conducted in a business context, Noviana and Santoso (2024) demonstrated that appreciation and recognition positively influence motivation and work performance. While educational institutions differ substantially from business organizations, both contexts suggest that individuals who perceive their efforts as valued are more likely to maintain high levels of motivation and participation. Therefore, establishing a culture that consistently appreciates achievement may contribute not only to improved academic performance but also to stronger commitment among members of the school community.

Overall, the findings regarding academic efficacy and optimism as well as achievement and appreciation culture demonstrate that positive school culture is built through the interaction of organizational beliefs, motivational practices, and supportive educational environments. Schools that successfully develop these dimensions are more likely to create conditions that encourage continuous improvement, strengthen organizational commitment, and enhance educational effectiveness. Nevertheless, maintaining these dimensions requires sustained leadership support, consistent organizational policies, and active participation from teachers, students, and other stakeholders.

The third dimension, collaborative culture, showed different patterns between the descriptive and comparative analyses. Descriptively, collaboration was perceived positively in both schools, with students in both SMAN 1 Padang and SMAN 15 Padang categorizing this dimension as strong. Although the statistical analysis indicated differences in students' mean scores, both schools demonstrated a culture that supports cooperation among teachers, students, and school leaders. This finding suggests that

collaborative practices have become an integral part of the educational process in both institutions, although their implementation may vary in intensity.

A collaborative culture is essential because it enables school members to exchange knowledge, solve problems collectively, and improve instructional practices. According to Andriastuti (2024), collaboration encourages teachers to develop creativity and share innovative teaching strategies, thereby improving educational quality. Similarly, Gistituati and Ananda (2019) argue that trust between school leaders and academic staff forms the basis for effective collaboration and organizational commitment. Dahlan et al. (2020) further found that a positive school culture, including collaboration, contributes significantly to teacher performance. These findings indicate that strengthening collaboration should remain a priority because continuous cooperation among school members supports sustainable school improvement. The present findings are also consistent with Setiyadi (2024), who emphasized that collaboration supported by effective school leadership promotes academic excellence and professional development.

The fourth dimension, communication openness, revealed significant differences both among teachers and among students, with SMAN 1 Padang obtaining higher average scores in both groups. Teachers and students from SMAN 1 Padang perceived communication within the school to be more open than their counterparts at SMAN 15 Padang. This suggests that opportunities to express opinions, receive information, and communicate with school leaders and fellow school members may differ between the two schools for both respondent groups.

Open communication is a fundamental characteristic of a healthy school culture because it promotes transparency, mutual trust, and active participation. Hendra and Saputri (2020) explain that effective communication strengthens educational relationships by facilitating cooperation and mutual understanding among members of the school community. Likewise, Robbins and Judge (2017) argue that organizations characterized by open communication generally experience stronger commitment, better teamwork, and more effective decision-making. From the perspective of educational administration, Hoy and Miskel (2013) emphasize that communication supports the development of trust and shared responsibility, both of which are essential for achieving school goals. Therefore, schools should continue to create communication channels that allow teachers and students to participate actively in school activities and decision-making processes.

Beyond the differences observed between SMAN 1 Padang and SMAN 15 Padang, the comparison between teachers and students within each school also revealed a consistent pattern: students rated school culture significantly higher than teachers, both overall and on nearly every dimension, at SMAN 1 Padang ($p = 0.000$) and at SMAN 15 Padang ($p = 0.022$). The only dimension where teachers and students did not differ significantly was communication openness at SMAN 15 Padang ($p = 0.235$). This gap between teachers' and students' perceptions may reflect differing vantage points within the school organization: teachers, as members responsible for maintaining academic standards, discipline, and institutional performance, may apply more critical standards when evaluating school culture, whereas students may experience daily interactions, encouragement, and classroom climate more directly and positively. A similar pattern has been reported in other Indonesian school culture studies, where students tend to rate their school environment more favorably than teachers do (Octaviani et al., 2020; Waluyati et al., 2022).

This consistent teacher-student gap, present at both schools, suggests that strengthening school culture should not rely solely on students' generally positive perceptions. School leaders need to pay closer attention to teachers' perspectives, particularly regarding recognition, appreciation, and collaboration, since teachers appear to experience these aspects of school culture less favorably than students do. At the same time, the fact that teachers and students at SMAN 15 Padang converge on communication openness indicates that open communication may be one dimension where the two groups already share a common experience, and could therefore serve as an entry point for building broader agreement on other aspects of school culture.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that school culture may vary even among schools operating within the same educational system. These differences are likely influenced by leadership practices, organizational values, communication patterns, and daily interactions among members of the school community rather than by curriculum differences alone. This interpretation supports the view of Deal and Peterson (2009) and Schein (2010), who argue that school culture develops through shared experiences and organizational practices that gradually shape members' beliefs and behaviors. Similar conclusions were reported by Waluyati et al. (2022) and Pranata and Gistituati (2024), who found that each school develops distinctive cultural characteristics despite being subject to similar educational policies.

The findings of this study have several practical implications. School leaders should continue to strengthen academic optimism, provide consistent appreciation for achievement, encourage collaboration, and promote open communication as integral components of school improvement. Developing these dimensions can foster a more supportive learning environment and enhance organizational effectiveness. These efforts are also aligned with the objectives of the Indonesian National Education System, which emphasizes the development of high-quality education through the active participation of all stakeholders (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 20 Tahun 2003). Therefore, strengthening school culture should be regarded as a long-term strategy for improving both educational quality and student development.

4. CONCLUSION

This study compared the school culture of SMAN 1 Padang and SMAN 15 Padang from the perspectives of teachers and students across four dimensions: academic efficacy and optimism, achievement and appreciation culture, collaborative culture, and communication openness. The findings indicate that both schools have developed positive school cultures, although SMAN 1 Padang generally demonstrated stronger school culture than SMAN 15 Padang. Significant differences were identified in several dimensions, while other dimensions showed relatively similar characteristics between the two schools. In addition, within each school, students consistently rated school culture significantly higher than teachers did, both overall and on nearly every dimension, with communication openness at SMAN 15 Padang being the only exception. These findings suggest that school culture is shaped not only by educational policies but also by leadership practices, organizational values, collaboration, and communication within the school community, and that teachers' and students' experiences of that culture can differ meaningfully even within the same school.

The results imply that school leaders should continuously strengthen academic optimism, establish fair systems for recognizing achievement, encourage collaborative practices, and maintain open communication among teachers and students. These efforts are expected to foster a more supportive school environment and improve overall educational quality. Future researchers are encouraged to examine school culture in different educational contexts and explore additional factors that may influence its development, such as school leadership, organizational climate, and teacher commitment.

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