

## Human Resource Management in Islamic Boarding Schools: The Leadership Roles of Tuan Guru, Ustaz, and Foundation Leaders in Achieving Sustainable Islamic Educational Governance

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### ABSTRACT

Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren) are vital institutions for religious and moral education in Indonesia, where leadership and human resource management (HRM) play a crucial role in sustaining educational quality. This study aims to conduct a systematic literature review on HRM practices in pesantren, focusing specifically on the leadership roles of Tuan Guru, Ustaz, and foundation leaders in promoting sustainable Islamic educational governance. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the research analyzed 25 peer-reviewed articles published between 2019 and 2024. Thematic content analysis was used to identify patterns in HRM components, leadership contributions, and governance outcomes. The findings reveal five core HRM components commonly applied in pesantren: value-based recruitment, performance appraisal aligned with Islamic ethics, continuous professional development, organizational culture grounded in trust and justice, and structured career pathways. Leadership from Tuan Guru, Ustaz, and foundation leaders significantly influences transparency, staff engagement, and quality assurance. However, challenges such as limited leadership training, resistance to change, and digital illiteracy persist. This study provides a comprehensive framework integrating Islamic leadership values with modern HRM practices and highlights the need for leadership development and digital capacity-building in pesantren. It offers theoretical and practical insights for scholars and stakeholders aiming to strengthen educational governance in Islamic institutions.

### INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren) play a pivotal role in the development of religious, moral, and academic values in Indonesia. These institutions are not only centers of Islamic learning but also embody indigenous educational governance rooted in leadership traditions passed down through generations. As pesantren continue to expand and modernize, the demand for effective and sustainable Human Resource Management (HRM) practices has become increasingly critical to ensure institutional resilience and educational quality.

In the context of pesantren, HRM is closely intertwined with Islamic values and leadership models unique to these institutions. Syadiyah and Rindaningsih (2024) emphasize that effective HRM strategies in Islamic boarding schools include recruitment planning, professional development, performance evaluation, and the cultivation of an organizational culture based on Islamic ethics. Similarly, Munir et al. (2023) argue that HRM in pesantren must reflect the

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principles of *maqāsid al-syarī'ah*, prioritizing the protection of religion, life, intellect, wealth, and dignity as foundational to human resource policies.

Moreover, the evolution of HRM in pesantren has increasingly adopted performance-based approaches. Naufal and Ghazali (2025), using Bassi & McMurrer's model, showed that strategic focus on career development and performance appraisal significantly improves staff loyalty and educational effectiveness in Pondok Pesantren Annida. Complementing this, Alkaf et al. (2023) observed how pesantren in the digital era have begun to integrate recruitment technology and selection innovations to enhance efficiency and reduce bias.

However, implementing HRM in pesantren is not solely a matter of policy or administration—it is deeply connected to leadership ethics and values. Suryana (n.d.) stresses the importance of ethical transparency, welfare consideration, and adaptability in leadership behavior to meet contemporary HR demands. These aspects become increasingly relevant as pesantren leaders must navigate between preserving traditional Islamic values and embracing modern managerial competencies.

The leadership structures in pesantren are traditionally centered around the Tuan Guru (or Kyai), Ustaz, and the foundation (*yayasan*) board. Each figure holds strategic responsibility in managing personnel and preserving the spiritual and educational mission of the institution. Naufal and Ghazali (2025) highlight the importance of performance appraisal, leadership development, and career paths in transforming HRM at Pondok Pesantren Annida. Meanwhile, Suryana (n.d.) underlines that HRM practices in modern pesantren must be transparent, ethical, and adaptive to contemporary challenges, including technology and resource limitations.

Leadership in pesantren is not only managerial but also deeply moral and symbolic. As Sary et al. (2024) assert, a nurturing environment and collaborative culture promoted by Kyai significantly influence teachers' job satisfaction and confidence. This leadership ethos echoes what Faj et al. (2023) describe as "total leadership"—a concept wherein pesantren leaders are expected to prioritize the institution above personal interests and dedicate themselves wholly to its sustainability.

Several recent studies support this notion. Arraniri et al. (2021) affirm that HRM in Islamic educational institutions must be grounded in the values of *amanah* (trust), *'adalah* (justice), and *ihsan* (excellence). Asmuni (2020) notes that Islamic leadership requires Tuan Guru and Ustaz to serve as moral exemplars and organizational moderators. Similarly, Basirun and Turimah (2022) underscore the significance of transformational leadership that promotes renewal and leadership regeneration. Fadilah and Hamami (2021) further argue that such leadership enhances communication management and career development, contributing to professional and sustainable governance. Dwi Susmawati et al. (2023) highlight the positive impact of value-based leadership by Kyai and foundation boards on organizational transparency and accountability.

Despite the growing volume of HRM research in pesantren contexts, prior works often approach the topic from a single lens—either focusing solely on administrative HR functions or limiting the analysis to the role of the Kyai. For instance, Arifin et al. (2023) emphasize the role of the Kyai in developing pesantren organizational culture, while Amiruddin and Kurniawati (2024) highlight transformational leadership as a key to staff engagement and organizational commitment. However, these studies rarely offer an integrated view of how multiple leadership actors collaborate in shaping sustainable governance models.

Kurniawan et al. (2022) provide a broad categorization of Kyai leadership models, ranging from charismatic to bureaucratic styles, but they do not fully address how these styles intersect with modern HRM demands or with the role of Ustaz and foundation leaders. Thus, although

various strands of literature shed light on specific leadership or HR components, there is a lack of comprehensive synthesis that binds these dimensions into a cohesive understanding of pesantren governance.

This research seeks to fill that gap by offering a literature-based analysis of the intersection between leadership and HRM in pesantren. Specifically, it explores how Tuan Guru, Ustaz, and foundation leaders work collectively or complementarily to promote sustainable Islamic educational governance. This focus addresses the pressing need for strategic HRM leadership in pesantren, especially amid growing challenges such as globalization, digitalization, and generational transition within the pesantren ecosystem.

Therefore, this study aims to conduct a systematic literature review on Human Resource Management in Islamic boarding schools, with a particular emphasis on the leadership roles of Tuan Guru, Ustaz, and Foundation Leaders in achieving sustainable Islamic educational governance. The research addresses the following key questions: (1) How is HRM conceptualized and implemented in pesantren according to recent literature? (2) What are the leadership roles of Tuan Guru, Ustaz, and Foundation Leaders in HRM processes? (3) In what ways do these leadership roles contribute to sustainable governance in Islamic education?

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to Islamic education management by offering an integrative and contextual understanding of leadership-based HRM. It provides theoretical and practical insights for pesantren leaders, education policymakers, and Islamic educational researchers seeking to enhance governance quality rooted in Islamic leadership traditions.

## **METHOD**

This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach using a systematic literature review (SLR) design. The review aimed to synthesize and critically analyze recent scholarly works related to human resource management (HRM) in Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren), with a particular focus on the leadership roles of Tuan Guru, Ustaz, and foundation leaders in supporting sustainable Islamic educational governance.

### **1. Research Design**

The study adopted the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method to gather, analyze, and interpret relevant peer-reviewed literature. The review followed the general guidelines of SLR, which include planning the review, conducting the review, and reporting the results systematically (Snyder, 2019).

### **2. Data Sources and Search Strategy**

Data were obtained from international and national journal databases including Google Scholar, DOAJ, Garuda, Sinta, and Scopus-indexed repositories. The keywords used in both English and Bahasa Indonesia included: “Human Resource Management,” “Pondok Pesantren,” “Islamic Boarding School Leadership,” “Tuan Guru,” “Ustaz,” “Foundation Leader,” and “Educational Governance.”

### **3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

Articles were selected based on the following inclusion criteria:

- a. Published within the last five years (2019–2024).
- b. Written in English or Bahasa Indonesia.
- c. Focused on HRM, leadership, or governance in Islamic boarding schools.
- d. Published in peer-reviewed academic journals.
- e. Accessible in full text.

Exclusion criteria included articles not related to pesantren context, opinion pieces, non-scholarly blogs, and duplicate entries.

#### 4. Sampling and Selection Procedure

From an initial search result of 136 articles, a purposive sampling technique was used to narrow down the results. After abstract and full-text screening, 25 relevant articles were selected for full analysis. Of these, 15 were national (Indonesian) studies and 10 were international publications.

#### 5. Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted through thematic content analysis. Articles were categorized based on recurring themes such as: (1) HRM policies and practices in pesantren; (2) leadership roles of *Tuan Guru*, *Ustaz*, and foundation leaders; (3) governance implications; and (4) integration of Islamic values in HRM strategies.

Themes were identified through coding using open coding and axial coding strategies as proposed by Corbin and Strauss (2015). Analysis was conducted manually and supported by citation management software for documentation and organization.

## RESULTS

This section presents the main findings of the systematic literature review on Human Resource Management (HRM) in Islamic boarding schools (*pondok pesantren*), particularly regarding the leadership roles of *Tuan Guru*, *Ustaz*, and foundation leaders in achieving sustainable Islamic educational governance. The analysis is organized into four major themes, as derived from the reviewed literature.

### 1. HRM Components in Pesantren: Islamic and Professional Integration

Based on the thematic analysis of 25 selected studies, five primary components of HRM emerged as dominant. These include recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, professional development, organizational culture, and staff retention strategies. The frequency of these components across the reviewed literature is presented in the following table 1 and Figure 1.

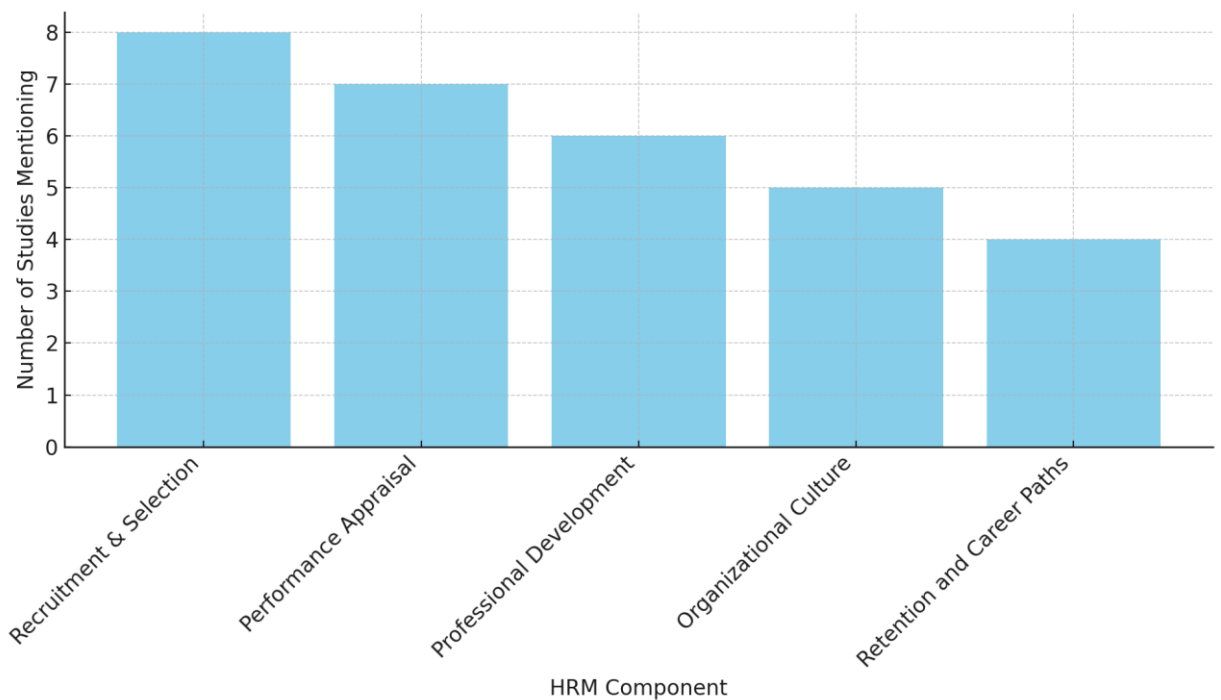
Most reviewed studies highlight that HRM practices in pesantren integrate Islamic values with conventional HR strategies. Table 1 summarizes the dominant HR components emphasized in the literature.

**Table 1. Core HRM Practices Identified in Reviewed Studies**

No	HRM Component	Description
1	Recruitment & Selection	Value-based recruitment considering moral-spiritual character (Syadiyah & Rindaningsih, 2024)
2	Performance Appraisal	Regular evaluation based on competence and akhlaq (Naufal & Ghazali, 2025)
3	Professional Development	Continuous training and Islamic ethics training for ustaz (Munir et al., 2023)
4	Organizational Culture	Built upon trust ( <i>amanah</i> ), justice ( <i>'adalah</i> ), and excellence ( <i>ihsan</i> ) (Arraniri et al., 2021)
5	Retention and Career Paths	Strategic promotion and clarity in career roles (Fadilah & Hamami, 2021)

Table 1 outlines five key HRM practices in Islamic boarding schools: value-based recruitment (Syadiyah & Rindaningsih, 2024), ethical performance appraisal (Naufal & Ghazali, 2025), continuous professional development (Munir et al., 2023), an Islamic values-driven organizational culture (Arraniri et al., 2021), and clear career paths to support staff retention (Fadilah & Hamami, 2021). These practices reflect the integration of Islamic principles into HRM

for sustainable governance. These findings show that pesantren are beginning to align HRM with institutional performance goals while preserving traditional Islamic ethical roots.



**Figure 1. Frequency of Core HRM Components Mentioned in Reviewed Studies**

Figure 1 illustrates the frequency with which core Human Resource Management (HRM) components were discussed across the 25 reviewed articles. The five most prominent themes include recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, professional development, organizational culture, and retention and career paths. Among these, recruitment and selection was the most frequently highlighted (mentioned in 8 studies), followed by performance appraisal (7 studies), indicating a strong emphasis on the selection process and performance management of teaching staff in Islamic boarding schools.

**2. The Central Role of Leadership Actors in HRM Execution**

The leadership roles of *Tuan Guru*, *Ustaz*, and *foundation leaders* are distinctly described in the selected studies. Each figure contributes differently, but collaboratively, to the HRM process. This is illustrated in the following Table 2, and figure 2

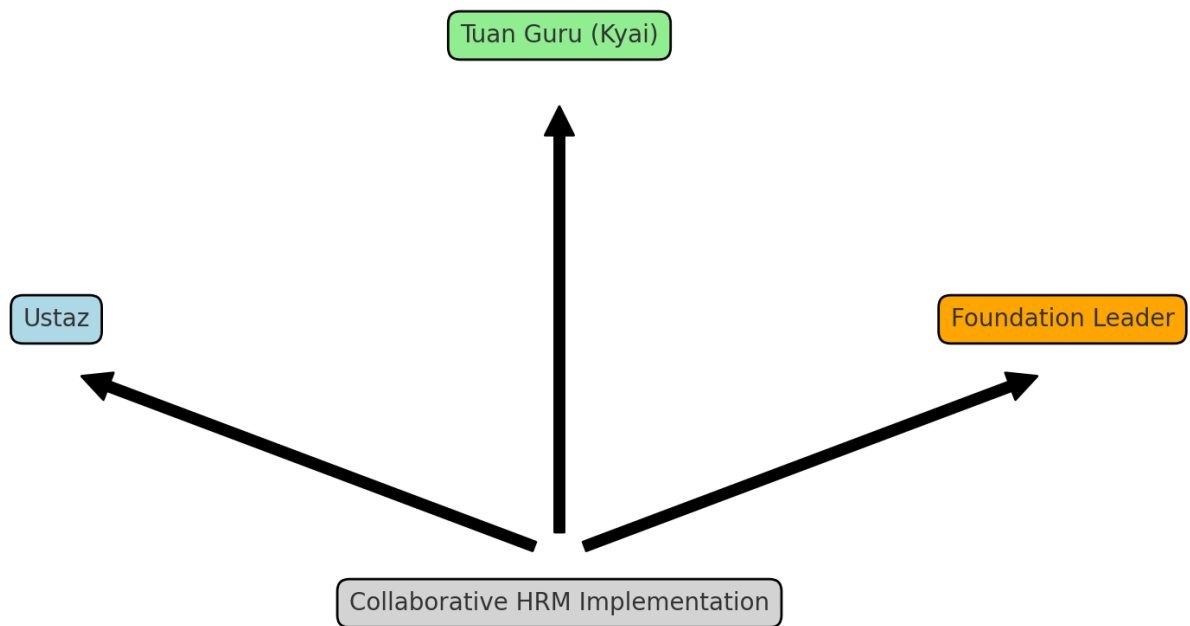
**Table 2. Role Distribution Among Leadership Figures in Pesantren HRM**

Leadership Figure	Primary HRM Role	Supporting Literature
Tuan Guru (Kyai)	Visionary and spiritual leadership; decision-making	Faj et al. (2023); Sary et al. (2024)
Ustaz	Daily instructional and mentoring roles	Asmuni (2020); Dwi Susmawati et al. (2023)
Foundation Leader	Administrative management; policy and compliance	Basirun & Turimah (2022); Alkaf et al. (2023)

The data in Table 2 suggest that effective HRM in pesantren is not possible without synergistic collaboration among these roles, particularly in the recruitment and development of teaching staff.

The synthesis also highlights the complementary and interdependent leadership roles of the Tuan Guru, Ustaz, and Foundation Leaders. Their coordinated involvement is central to the

implementation of sustainable HRM practices in pesantren. Figure 2 illustrates this collaborative leadership framework.



**Figure 2. Leadership Roles Collaborating in Pesantren HRM**

Figure 2 presents the collaborative leadership structure in pesantren HRM. The **Tuan Guru (Kyai)**, **Ustaz**, and **Foundation Leader** work interdependently to implement sustainable HRM policies. The Tuan Guru serves as the spiritual and ethical leader, shaping the institutional vision and values. The Ustaz plays a key role in the professional and educational development of staff, while the foundation leader is responsible for governance, policy formulation, and institutional accountability. This synergistic leadership model forms the foundation for professional and sustainable Islamic educational governance.

### 3. HRM and Its Impact on Educational Governance

The integration of HRM into governance was evident in nearly all reviewed articles. Leadership-based HRM practices led to measurable improvements in transparency, staff motivation, and institutional accountability.

**Table 3. HRM Influence on Governance Outcomes**

<b>Governance Outcome</b>	<b>Associated HRM Practices</b>	<b>Supporting Sources</b>
Institutional Transparency	Ethical leadership and value-based communication	Dwi Susmawati et al. (2023)
Staff Engagement	Participatory leadership and regular feedback	Amiruddin & Kurniawati (2024)
Quality Assurance	Performance appraisal and training	Naufal & Ghazali (2025); Suryana (2025)

Table 3 highlights how HRM practices impact governance in Islamic boarding schools. Ethical leadership supports institutional transparency (Dwi Susmawati et al., 2023); participatory leadership enhances staff engagement (Amiruddin & Kurniawati, 2024); and performance appraisals with ongoing training improve quality assurance (Naufal & Ghazali, 2025; Suryana, 2025). These links show HRM's strategic role in strengthening educational governance. These outcomes affirm that the alignment of HRM with leadership values contributes to long-term governance sustainability in Islamic boarding schools.

### 4. Challenges in HRM Implementation

Despite positive developments, the literature highlights several recurring challenges in pesantren HRM:

Limited managerial training for religious leaders (Faj et al., 2023)

Resistance to modern HR practices due to traditional norms (Kurniawan et al., 2022)

Digital literacy and resource limitations for implementing HR technology (Alkaf et al., 2023)

Figure 3. Common Challenges in Pesantren HRM

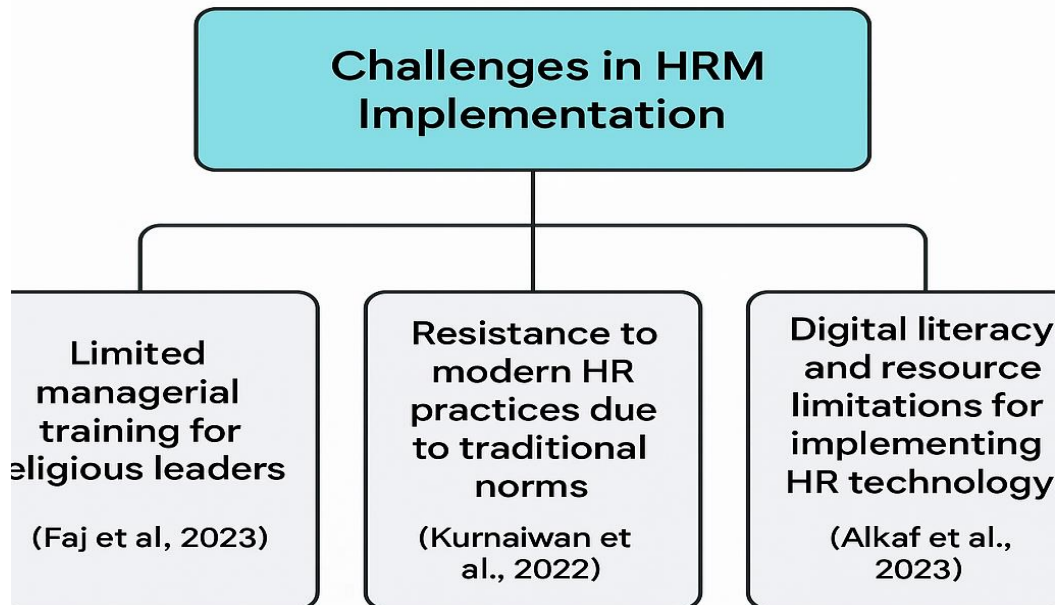


Figure 3. Common Challenges in Pesantren HRM – Explanation

Figure 3 presents three key challenges in implementing HRM within Islamic boarding schools. These include: limited managerial training for religious leaders (Faj et al., 2023), resistance to modern HR practices due to traditional norms (Kurniawan et al., 2022), and low digital literacy and resource constraints affecting HR technology adoption (Alkaf et al., 2023). These obstacles highlight the need for leadership development and technological adaptation in pesantren HRM.

In summary, this study found that: (a) HRM practices in pesantren are deeply influenced by Islamic ethical foundations; (b) Leadership roles among Tuan Guru, Ustaz, and foundation leaders are interdependent in achieving HR objectives; (c) Effective HRM strategies positively influence governance quality; (d) Pesantren face contextual challenges in balancing tradition and modernity in HRM systems.

## DISCUSSION

### 1. Analysis of Results

The findings of this literature review reveal that Human Resource Management (HRM) practices in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are significantly shaped by the integration of Islamic ethical values and leadership structures unique to these institutions. The analysis aligns with the first research question regarding how HRM is conceptualized and implemented. Core HRM components identified across the literature—such as value-based recruitment, performance appraisal, professional development, organizational culture, and career retention—reflect a model deeply rooted in akhlaq (ethics), amanah (trust), and maqāṣid al-syarī'ah (the higher objectives of Islamic law), as emphasized by Syadiyah & Rindaningsih (2024) and Munir et al. (2023).

With regard to the second research question, the leadership roles of Tuan Guru, Ustaz, and Foundation Leaders are shown to be complementary and essential to successful HRM

implementation. As noted in Figure 2, the Tuan Guru provides spiritual direction and ethical leadership, the Ustaz manages day-to-day educational functions and supports staff development, while the Foundation Leader oversees institutional governance and resources. This triadic leadership model ensures a holistic approach to managing human capital that aligns both with Islamic teachings and institutional sustainability goals.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that HRM practices significantly influence governance outcomes—answering the third research question. As detailed in Table 3, ethical and participatory leadership enhances institutional transparency (Dwi Susmawati et al., 2023) and staff engagement (Amiruddin & Kurniawati, 2024), while structured training and performance evaluation contribute to quality assurance (Naufal & Ghazali, 2025; Suryana, 2025). This evidence reinforces the idea that leadership-driven HRM is pivotal for sustaining educational excellence in pesantren.

Nonetheless, the analysis also uncovers several recurring challenges (Figure 3), including insufficient managerial training among pesantren leaders (Faj et al., 2023), resistance to modern HR practices (Kurniawan et al., 2022), and low digital literacy that limits technological adoption (Alkaf et al., 2023). These findings point to a critical need for capacity-building programs, leadership innovation, and infrastructural support to advance HRM implementation in traditional Islamic educational settings.

The results confirm that HRM in pesantren is not merely administrative but is deeply embedded in Islamic leadership and values. Addressing HRM challenges while reinforcing the strengths of Islamic-based leadership models will be key to ensuring sustainable and accountable governance in pesantren going forward.

## **2. Comparison with Previous Studies**

The findings of this study are largely consistent with prior research on HRM and leadership in Islamic boarding schools. For example, Arifin et al. (2023) emphasized the transformative leadership of kyai in shaping pesantren's organizational culture, which aligns with this review's observation of the Tuan Guru's central role in moral and institutional leadership. Similarly, Amiruddin and Kurniawati (2024) highlighted the importance of transformational leadership in enhancing staff engagement, resonating with our findings in Table 3. However, unlike previous studies that tend to focus on a single leadership role (e.g., kyai only), this review integrates the collective contributions of Tuan Guru, Ustaz, and foundation leaders, offering a broader and more comprehensive framework for understanding HRM-based governance in pesantren.

In contrast to Kurniawan et al. (2022), who primarily classified kyai leadership into charismatic and bureaucratic types, this study adds depth by linking such leadership styles to specific HRM practices and their outcomes in institutional governance. Furthermore, while earlier research such as Suryana (2025) addressed HRM implementation in modern pesantren, this study highlights how ethical leadership and Islamic values across all leadership layers enhance HRM effectiveness in both traditional and modern contexts.

## **3. Implications of Findings**

The findings of this review contribute both theoretically and practically to the field of Islamic education management. Theoretically, this study offers an integrative HRM-leadership framework that connects traditional Islamic leadership values with contemporary HRM practices—bridging a gap between heritage-based governance and modern educational demands. It also reinforces the application of Islamic ethics (*amanah*, *'adalah*, *ihsan*) in shaping institutional culture, recruitment, and performance appraisal.

Practically, the study provides insights for pesantren administrators and policymakers on how leadership roles can be distributed and aligned to achieve sustainable governance. It suggests

that empowering Ustaz through professional development, equipping foundation leaders with digital and managerial skills, and ensuring the Tuan Guru maintains moral leadership are all necessary steps for advancing pesantren HRM in the 21st century. Additionally, it calls for the integration of leadership training and HR capacity-building programs into pesantren development agendas.

#### **4. Limitations of the Study**

While this review offers valuable insights, it is not without limitations. First, the scope of the literature analyzed is restricted to studies published between 2019 and 2024, which may exclude foundational works or earlier relevant findings. Second, although the review included both national and international literature, most sources were focused on Indonesian pesantren, limiting its generalizability to broader Islamic boarding school contexts globally. Third, this study relied solely on secondary data and did not include empirical fieldwork, which could have added depth and context to the findings.

Moreover, the SLR method is dependent on the quality and availability of published works, meaning that unpublished or inaccessible studies with potentially valuable perspectives were not included. The manual coding approach, while systematic, is also subject to interpretive bias, despite efforts to maintain objectivity.

Based on the findings and analysis, it can be partially concluded that successful HRM in Islamic boarding schools is contingent upon the synergistic leadership of Tuan Guru, Ustaz, and foundation leaders. These roles, when guided by Islamic values and supported by clear HR practices, contribute directly to institutional transparency, staff engagement, and educational quality assurance. However, challenges such as limited leadership training, resistance to change, and low digital literacy must be addressed to sustain long-term governance improvements.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study examined the intersection of Human Resource Management and leadership in Islamic boarding schools by conducting a systematic literature review of recent scholarly works. The findings indicate that effective HRM in pesantren encompasses key practices such as value-driven recruitment, Islamic-based performance appraisal, professional development, and ethical organizational culture. The roles of Tuan Guru, Ustaz, and foundation leaders are critical in ensuring that these HRM practices support transparent, participatory, and quality-oriented governance. Theoretically, this research contributes to the field of Islamic education by offering an integrative HRM-leadership model rooted in Islamic values such as amanah, 'adalah, and ihsan. Practically, the study underscores the importance of equipping pesantren leaders with modern managerial and digital skills while maintaining their spiritual and moral leadership responsibilities.

Future research should explore empirical case studies to validate the framework proposed in this review and investigate how digital transformation and generational shifts affect HRM strategies in pesantren. Additionally, studies could focus on leadership training models that are contextually aligned with the pesantren environment. In closing, this research highlights the urgent need to harmonize traditional Islamic leadership with modern HRM practices to enhance the sustainability and governance quality of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia and beyond.

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