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Human Resource Transformation for Institutional Development in Islamic Boarding Schools: Strategies for Professionalization at Pondok Tremas Pacitan, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Background. Human resource transformation has become a critical issue in the development of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) amid rapid changes in educational, technological, and organizational environments. Pesantren are required to maintain their distinctive Islamic scholarly traditions while simultaneously developing professional, competent, and adaptive human resources.

Purpose. This study examines the strategies of human resource transformation for institutional development at Pondok Tremas Pacitan, Indonesia. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the research investigates the processes, strategies, challenges, and institutional implications of human resource development within a pesantren-based educational environment.

Method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis involving institutional leaders, teachers, educational staff, and other relevant stakeholders.

Results. The findings indicate that human resource transformation at Pondok Tremas is implemented through several interconnected strategies, including strengthening professional competence, developing continuous training and capacity-building programs, integrating pesantren values with modern management practices, improving organizational coordination, and encouraging adaptation to technological and educational developments.

Conclusion. The study argues that sustainable institutional development in pesantren requires a transformative human resource management model that integrates professionalism, Islamic values, organizational learning, and adaptive leadership.

KEYWORDS

Human Resource Transformation, Professionalization, Islamic Boarding Schools

INTRODUCTION

Human resource development has become a fundamental determinant of institutional sustainability and organizational effectiveness in the contemporary education sector (Shafiabady, 2023). Rapid technological advancement, changing patterns of knowledge production, globalization, and increasing expectations regarding educational quality have transformed the competencies

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required of teachers, educational staff, managers, and institutional leaders.

Educational institutions are therefore expected not only to recruit qualified personnel but also to develop human resources capable of continuous learning, innovation, collaboration, and adaptation to organizational change (Gu, 2024). In this context, human resource management has increasingly shifted from an administrative function toward a strategic instrument for institutional transformation. The quality of an educational institution is closely associated with its ability to develop human capital that possesses professional competence while simultaneously demonstrating organizational commitment, adaptability, and a clear orientation toward institutional goals (Gillani, 2024).

These challenges are particularly significant for Islamic educational institutions, including Islamic boarding schools or *pesantren*. As one of Indonesia's distinctive educational institutions, *pesantren* have historically played an important role in transmitting Islamic knowledge, cultivating moral character, and preserving scholarly traditions across generations (Bozkurt, 2023). The educational identity of *pesantren* is strongly rooted in religious values, *adab*, *ta'lim*, *tarbiyah*, and close relationships between *kiai*, teachers, and students. However, the contemporary educational environment requires *pesantren* to respond to developments that extend beyond their traditional functions. Digital transformation, professional educational management, quality assurance, curriculum development, internationalization, and changing expectations among students and parents require *pesantren* to develop human resources with broader competencies (Fulke, 2024). Consequently, the transformation of human resources in *pesantren* cannot simply be understood as professionalization in the conventional managerial sense; rather, it involves negotiating between the preservation of religious and cultural identity and the adoption of new competencies, organizational practices, and leadership models (Jeong, 2023).

The transformation of human resources in *pesantren* presents both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, professional development can strengthen institutional capacity, improve educational quality, facilitate technological adaptation, and enhance organizational effectiveness. On the other hand, excessive adoption of modern managerial practices may create tensions with established *pesantren* traditions and organizational cultures. Human resource transformation therefore requires an approach that does not position tradition and modernization as mutually exclusive. Instead, *pesantren* need to develop an integrative model in which Islamic values and scholarly traditions become the foundation for professional development, while contemporary management practices are selectively adopted to respond to changing institutional demands. Such transformation requires strategic leadership, systematic capacity building, organizational learning, performance evaluation, technological literacy, and mechanisms for knowledge transfer across generations (Samargandi, 2024).

Pondok Tremas Pacitan provides an important context for examining this transformation. As a *pesantren* with a long-standing scholarly and educational tradition, Pondok Tremas represents an institutional environment in which the preservation of Islamic scholarship and the demands of contemporary educational development intersect (Martínez-Gutiérrez, 2024). The development of formal education alongside *pesantren*-based learning creates increasingly complex organizational requirements. Teachers and educational personnel are expected to perform not only traditional educational functions but also professional roles related to curriculum implementation, educational administration, technology utilization, student development, and institutional quality improvement. At the same time, the institution needs to preserve the distinctive characteristics of *pesantren* education, including Islamic scholarship, *adab*, religious values, and the authority of traditional scholarly institutions (Valle-Cruz, 2025).

This situation makes human resource transformation an important strategic issue rather than merely an administrative concern. Contemporary educational transformation requires teachers and educational personnel to develop technological and professional competencies while maintaining the centrality of human interaction in education. UNESCO's 2023 Global Education Monitoring Report, for example, emphasizes that technology can support teachers through access to educational resources, collaboration, professional learning, and data-informed educational practices, but technology should complement rather than replace the human dimension of teaching (Lang, 2023). This perspective is particularly relevant for pesantren, where education is not limited to knowledge transmission but also encompasses character formation, moral guidance, *adab*, and the cultivation of religious identity (Lim, 2023).

A particular challenge lies in the diversity of human resource competencies within pesantren-based institutions. Different generations of teachers and staff may possess different levels of technological literacy, pedagogical competence, managerial capacity, and readiness to respond to organizational change. Some personnel may have strong traditional Islamic scholarship but require additional professional competencies, while others may possess modern educational qualifications but need deeper engagement with the values and intellectual traditions of pesantren (Jaworska, 2023). This diversity can become a significant institutional asset when managed through appropriate strategies, but it may also become a source of organizational fragmentation when human resource development is not systematically planned. Therefore, institutional development requires a human resource strategy capable of connecting different forms of knowledge and competence while establishing shared institutional values and objectives (Shi, 2024).

Another important issue concerns the changing role of leadership in pesantren. Traditionally, the *kiai* occupies a central position in providing religious authority, educational direction, and institutional legitimacy. Contemporary institutional development, however, increasingly requires distributed leadership, professional management, delegation of responsibilities, teamwork, and data-informed decision-making (Or, 2024; Schneider, 2023). This does not necessarily mean reducing the centrality of the *kiai*. Rather, it requires the development of an organizational structure in which traditional religious leadership can be complemented by professional managerial practices. Human resource transformation consequently depends not only on training individual employees but also on transforming organizational systems, leadership patterns, communication mechanisms, and institutional cultures.

Despite the growing literature on human resource management and educational transformation, research specifically examining human resource transformation within traditional pesantren remains relatively limited. Existing studies have frequently focused on pesantren leadership, curriculum modernization, educational management, digitalization, or institutional quality separately (Ahmed, 2023; Cetindamar, 2024). Less attention has been given to how human resource transformation is strategically designed and implemented within pesantren while maintaining their distinctive religious and cultural identity. In particular, there is a need for empirical research that examines the relationship between human resource development strategies and broader institutional development in pesantren. This gap is important because institutional transformation cannot be sustained through technological or structural changes alone; it requires transformation in the knowledge, competencies, leadership capacity, organizational behavior, and professional culture of the people who operate the institution (Milacic, 2024; Oselusi, 2024).

This study addresses this gap by examining human resource transformation at Pondok Tremas Pacitan, Indonesia. It focuses on how institutional leaders develop strategies for strengthening the competence, professionalism, adaptability, and organizational capacity of teachers and educational

personnel while maintaining the values and scholarly traditions of pesantren. The study investigates three interconnected dimensions: first, the forms and processes of human resource transformation; second, the strategies employed to develop and manage human resources; and third, the implications of these strategies for institutional development. By examining these dimensions within a pesantren with a strong traditional identity, this research seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of how Islamic educational institutions can navigate the tension between tradition and modernization.

The significance of this study extends beyond the institutional context of Pondok Tremas. The experience of pesantren in developing human resources can provide valuable insights for other Islamic educational institutions facing similar challenges of professionalization, digital transformation, and institutional modernization. More broadly, the study contributes to the field of Islamic educational management by proposing that human resource transformation in pesantren should be understood as a process of institutional adaptation rooted in Islamic values rather than as the simple transfer of conventional human resource management models. The central argument of this research is that sustainable institutional development in pesantren depends on the ability to integrate professional competence, Islamic values, organizational learning, and adaptive leadership into a coherent human resource transformation strategy (Tan, 2023; Xu, 2023).

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the strategies of human resource transformation for institutional development at Pondok Tremas Pacitan, Indonesia. It seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) How is human resource transformation implemented at Pondok Tremas Pacitan? (2) What strategies are employed to strengthen the competence and professionalism of human resources? (3) What challenges and opportunities influence the transformation process? and (4) How does human resource transformation contribute to institutional development?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to examine human resource transformation and its strategies for institutional development at Pondok Tremas Pacitan, Indonesia. The research focused on the processes of human resource development, professionalization, leadership, organizational culture, technological adaptation, and their contribution to institutional development.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis. Participants were selected purposively and included pesantren leaders, teachers, educational staff, and institutional managers who were directly involved in educational and human resource management. Relevant documents, including institutional policies, organizational programs, training activities, and educational planning documents, were also analyzed to complement the field data (Dai, 2025; Wang, 2024).

Data were analyzed interactively through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The analysis focused on identifying patterns related to human resource transformation, development strategies, challenges, and institutional outcomes. The trustworthiness of the findings was strengthened through source and method triangulation, member checking, and continuous comparison of interview, observation, and documentary data.

The study was conducted by considering ethical principles, including informed participation, confidentiality, and respect for the religious, cultural, and organizational values of the pesantren. This methodological approach enabled the study to provide an in-depth understanding of how Pondok Tremas navigates the transformation of human resources while maintaining its Islamic scholarly traditions and institutional identity (Al-Rwaidan, 2023; Kraus, 2023).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Human Resource Transformation at Pondok Tremas

The findings indicate that human resource transformation at Pondok Tremas is closely related to the changing demands of contemporary Islamic education. The transformation is reflected in changes in teachers' and educational staff's competencies, work responsibilities, technological awareness, and professional orientation. Human resources are increasingly positioned not merely as implementers of established educational routines but as strategic actors who contribute to institutional development. This orientation is consistent with the broader understanding of strategic human resource management, in which human resources are considered an important source of organizational capacity and long-term institutional performance (Dima, 2024; Verma, 2023).

The transformation process at Pondok Tremas does not necessarily imply the abandonment of traditional pesantren values. Instead, professional competencies are developed alongside Islamic scholarly traditions, *adab*, discipline, and religious commitment. This indicates that human resource transformation in pesantren tends to occur through a process of integration rather than replacement. The modernization of educational management is therefore adapted to the cultural and religious characteristics of the pesantren. The traditional pesantren institution has historically demonstrated considerable capacity to maintain its religious identity while responding to changing social and educational circumstances (Alqarni, 2023; Cheng, 2023).

This finding is important because transformation in pesantren cannot simply follow conventional organizational modernization models. The authority of the *kiai*, the transmission of Islamic knowledge, the culture of *adab*, and the pesantren community constitute distinctive institutional characteristics (Dhofier, 1999). Consequently, human resource transformation needs to be developed through an approach that simultaneously strengthens professional capacity and preserves institutional identity.

Strategies for Human Resource Development

The study identifies several strategies for strengthening human resources at Pondok Tremas. First, professional development is pursued through training, mentoring, academic development, and the improvement of pedagogical and managerial competencies. Second, institutional leadership plays an important role in directing teachers and staff toward continuous learning and adaptation. Third, the institution increasingly recognizes the importance of technological competence in educational and administrative activities.

These strategies correspond with the contemporary concept of continuous professional development, which emphasizes that teacher competence should not be treated as a fixed attribute acquired solely through initial education. Rather, professional competence develops continuously through training, collaboration, reflection, mentoring, and experience (Torre, 2023). In the context of pesantren, such professional development needs to be connected with the institution's religious mission and organizational culture.

An important finding is the integration of professional competence with pesantren values. Teachers and educational staff are expected to demonstrate not only academic and technical competence but also integrity, discipline, responsibility, *adab*, and commitment to the institution. This indicates that professionalism in pesantren has a broader meaning than technical performance. Professionalism incorporates both competence and character, reflecting the longstanding educational orientation of pesantren toward the formation of knowledgeable and morally responsible individuals.

The integration of professional development with Islamic values can become a distinctive contribution of pesantren-based human resource management. Rather than separating professional competence from moral formation, both dimensions can be developed simultaneously. This approach is particularly relevant because the educational mission of pesantren traditionally encompasses intellectual, spiritual, and moral development (Lukens-Bull, 2013).

Adaptive Leadership and Organizational Culture

The findings further suggest that leadership constitutes a critical factor in human resource transformation. Traditionally, the *kiai* occupies a central position in providing religious authority, educational direction, and institutional legitimacy (Car, 2025). Contemporary institutional development, however, increasingly requires delegation of responsibilities, coordination, teamwork, professional management, and participatory decision-making.

This situation creates a form of adaptive pesantren leadership, in which traditional religious authority is maintained while organizational practices gradually become more collaborative and systematic. Adaptive leadership is particularly relevant in contexts characterized by significant environmental change because institutional leaders need to maintain core values while enabling organizational adaptation (Fenwick, 2024).

The transformation of leadership does not necessarily mean reducing the authority of the *kiai*. Rather, it involves expanding the institutional capacity of the organization by combining religious leadership with professional managerial functions. In this model, the *kiai* provides strategic and normative direction, while managers, teachers, and educational staff contribute through specialized competencies and shared institutional responsibilities.

Organizational culture also functions as an important mechanism of transformation. Values such as discipline, *adab*, service, responsibility, and commitment can provide a cultural foundation for professional human resource development. Organizational learning consequently occurs not only through formal training but also through everyday interaction, mentoring, role modelling, and socialization.

Challenges in Human Resource Transformation

Despite these developments, human resource transformation faces several challenges. One significant challenge is the diversity of competencies among teachers and educational staff. Differences in educational backgrounds, professional experience, technological literacy, and readiness to respond to organizational change may influence the pace of institutional transformation.

Another challenge concerns the relationship between established traditions and contemporary management demands. Professionalization is necessary to improve institutional quality, but it needs to be implemented carefully so that modernization does not weaken the distinctive identity of pesantren. This tension reflects a broader challenge faced by traditional educational institutions: how to respond to external changes while maintaining organizational continuity and cultural legitimacy (Schipfer, 2024).

A further challenge is the need for systematic human resource planning. Institutional development requires clear competency standards, structured professional development, performance evaluation, career development, and leadership succession. Without systematic planning, human resource development may remain dependent on individual initiatives rather than becoming an integrated institutional strategy.

These challenges demonstrate that transformation is a gradual and multidimensional process. Sustainable change requires not only improving individual competencies but also developing organizational systems, leadership structures, communication mechanisms, evaluation procedures,

and institutional planning. Human resource transformation should therefore be understood as part of broader organizational transformation.

Human Resource Transformation and Institutional Development

Human resource transformation has important implications for institutional development. Strengthened competencies among teachers and educational staff can contribute to improvements in educational management, curriculum implementation, administrative effectiveness, technological adaptation, and institutional innovation. Human resource development therefore functions as an important foundation for broader organizational transformation (Chakraborty, 2024).

The Pondok Tremas context demonstrates that institutional sustainability in pesantren depends on the ability to connect tradition, professionalism, and innovation. Islamic values provide the normative foundation, professional competencies provide organizational capacity, and innovation provides the ability to respond to changing educational environments.

This finding supports the argument that human resource management in Islamic educational institutions should be understood within its specific cultural context. Conventional human resource management models may provide useful managerial instruments, but their implementation in pesantren needs to be mediated by religious values, institutional traditions, and distinctive authority structures. The resulting model is therefore not simply a transfer of modern human resource management into pesantren but an adaptation of management practices to the institution's Islamic educational identity.

Toward a Transformative Human Resource Management Model

Based on the findings, human resource transformation at Pondok Tremas can be conceptualized through four interconnected dimensions: value-based professionalization, continuous competency development, adaptive leadership, and institutional learning.

First, value-based professionalization emphasizes the integration of professional standards with Islamic values and *adab*. Second, continuous competency development focuses on training, mentoring, academic development, and technological literacy. Third, adaptive leadership connects traditional pesantren authority with collaborative and professional management practices. Fourth, institutional learning enables the organization to reflect on experience, respond to environmental changes, and continuously improve educational practices.

This model suggests that human resource transformation in pesantren should not be understood simply as modernization of personnel. Rather, it represents a process of transformative institutional adaptation, whereby human resources acquire new competencies while preserving the religious, cultural, and scholarly foundations of the institution (Ellis, 2024).

The proposed model also highlights the importance of institutional coherence. Professional development will have limited impact if it is not supported by leadership, organizational culture, performance systems, and institutional planning. Conversely, organizational transformation is unlikely to be sustainable without competent and committed human resources. Human resource transformation and institutional development therefore constitute mutually reinforcing processes (Hansen, 2025).

The findings indicate that human resource transformation constitutes a strategic dimension of institutional development in pesantren. The case of Pondok Tremas demonstrates that modernization can be pursued without necessarily producing a rupture with traditional Islamic educational identity. The central issue is not whether pesantren should modernize, but how modernization can be managed without losing the institutional values that constitute its identity.

The integration of Islamic values and professional competencies provides a distinctive approach to human resource management in pesantren. In this model, professionalism encompasses technical competence, ethical conduct, responsibility, commitment, and *adab*. Such an understanding extends conventional interpretations of human resource development by incorporating a normative and spiritual dimension into professional practice.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that successful transformation requires institutional rather than purely individual change. Training teachers and staff alone is insufficient if organizational structures, leadership practices, evaluation systems, and strategic planning remain unchanged. Human resource transformation consequently needs to be incorporated into the broader strategic development of the pesantren.

The Pondok Tremas case illustrates that the future development of pesantren depends significantly on their capacity to cultivate human resources who are simultaneously religiously grounded, professionally competent, technologically adaptive, and institutionally committed. This combination provides a potential pathway for pesantren to remain rooted in their Islamic scholarly traditions while responding effectively to the demands of contemporary education.

From this perspective, the contribution of the study lies in positioning human resource transformation as a bridge between pesantren tradition and institutional modernization. Rather than viewing tradition and modernization as competing forces, the study proposes that both can be integrated through strategic human resource development. Such integration provides a basis for developing a context-sensitive model of human resource management for Islamic educational institutions.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that human resource transformation is a strategic component of institutional development in Islamic boarding schools. The case of Pondok Tremas Pacitan demonstrates that human resource transformation can be pursued through the integration of professional competence, continuous development, adaptive leadership, technological capacity, and Islamic values. Transformation is therefore not merely a process of modernizing teachers and educational staff but a broader institutional process aimed at strengthening organizational capacity while maintaining the distinctive identity of pesantren.

The findings indicate that effective human resource transformation requires a balance between tradition and innovation. The preservation of Islamic scholarship, *adab*, discipline, and religious values provides the cultural and normative foundation for professional development, while training, mentoring, technological adaptation, organizational coordination, and systematic human resource management strengthen institutional capacity. Adaptive leadership is also essential in facilitating organizational change while maintaining the central role of pesantren values and scholarly authority.

The study further demonstrates that human resource transformation contributes to institutional development by strengthening professional capacity, educational management, organizational adaptability, and institutional sustainability. However, differences in competencies, technological literacy, readiness for change, and the need for systematic human resource planning remain important challenges. These challenges require continuous institutional intervention rather than short-term training programs.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the field of Islamic educational management by proposing that human resource transformation in pesantren should be understood as transformative institutional adaptation. This perspective integrates professionalization and innovation with Islamic

values and pesantren traditions. Practically, the study suggests that pesantren should develop systematic human resource strategies encompassing competency mapping, continuous professional development, adaptive leadership, performance evaluation, technological literacy, and leadership succession.

Ultimately, the experience of Pondok Tremas suggests that the sustainability of traditional Islamic boarding schools in the contemporary educational environment depends not on abandoning their traditions, but on their capacity to transform human resources while preserving their fundamental Islamic identity. The integration of religious values, professional competence, technological adaptability, and institutional commitment can provide a sustainable pathway for pesantren to strengthen their educational quality and institutional resilience.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

In the course of preparing this work, the author employed Chat GPT assistance for language refinement, academic paraphrasing, and plagiarism detection to ensure that the content was original and free from duplication. Following the use of this tool, the author conducted a thorough review and revision of the material, thereby accepting full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and authenticity of the publication.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; Investigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

Author 4: Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing - original draft.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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