



[DOI: 10.6160/ajis.v3i1.1188](https://doi.org/10.6160/ajis.v3i1.1188)

ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Competency-Based Human Resource Development Strategy in Islamic Boarding Schools

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Article History: Received: 12 April 2025 • Revised: 05 May 2024 • Accepted: 15 May 2025 • Published: 30 June 2025

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze competency-based human resource (HR) development strategies in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). As the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, pesantren face significant challenges in developing the competencies of educators and administrators amidst demands for modernization, globalization, and digital transformation. Many pesantren, particularly salafiyah pesantren, have not yet implemented systematic and sustainable HR development systems, resulting in teacher and educational staff competencies that do not meet expected standards. This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study method in several pesantren in Lampung Province. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with pesantren leaders (kyai), administrators, and educators, participatory observation, and documentation of HR development programs. The findings reveal that competency-based HR development strategies in pesantren are implemented through four main pillars: (1) HR planning involving needs analysis and competency mapping; (2) recruitment and selection of educators based on pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competency criteria; (3) competency development through internal training, internships, advanced studies, and collaboration with external parties; and (4) continuous performance evaluation and career development. Supporting factors include visionary kyai leadership, strong pesantren organizational culture, and administrator commitment, while inhibiting factors include limited funding, facilities, information access, and resistance to change. This study concludes that planned, systematic, and sustainable competency-based HR development strategies are key to improving the quality of education in pesantren without neglecting Islamic values and local wisdom.

Keywords: HR Development, Teacher Competence, Pesantren, Management Strategy, Islamic Education



ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi pengembangan sumber daya manusia (SDM) berbasis kompetensi di pondok pesantren. Pesantren sebagai lembaga pendidikan Islam tertua di Indonesia menghadapi tantangan signifikan dalam mengembangkan kompetensi tenaga pendidik dan pengelola di tengah tuntutan modernisasi, globalisasi, dan transformasi digital. Banyak pesantren, terutama pesantren salafiyah, belum menerapkan sistem pengembangan SDM yang sistematis dan berkelanjutan, sehingga kompetensi guru dan staf pendidikan belum memenuhi standar yang diharapkan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus di beberapa pesantren di Provinsi Lampung. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan pengasuh pesantren (kyai), pengelola, dan tenaga pendidik, observasi partisipatif, serta dokumentasi program pengembangan SDM. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi pengembangan SDM berbasis kompetensi di pesantren diimplementasikan melalui empat pilar utama: (1) perencanaan SDM yang melibatkan analisis kebutuhan dan pemetaan kompetensi; (2) rekrutmen dan seleksi tenaga pendidik berdasarkan kriteria kompetensi pedagogik, kepribadian, sosial, dan profesional; (3) pengembangan kompetensi melalui pelatihan internal, magang, studi lanjut, dan kolaborasi dengan pihak eksternal; serta (4) evaluasi kinerja dan pengembangan karier secara berkelanjutan. Faktor pendukung meliputi kepemimpinan kyai yang visioner, budaya organisasi pesantren yang kuat, dan komitmen pengelola, sedangkan faktor penghambat meliputi keterbatasan dana, fasilitas, akses informasi, dan resistensi terhadap perubahan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa strategi pengembangan SDM berbasis kompetensi yang terencana, sistematis, dan berkelanjutan merupakan kunci peningkatan kualitas pendidikan di pesantren tanpa mengabaikan nilai-nilai Islam dan kearifan lokal.

Kata Kunci: Pengembangan SDM, Kompetensi Guru, Pesantren, Strategi Manajemen, Pendidikan Islam

How to cite: Taufik, A., Setiawan, A., & Mispani, M. (2026). Strategi Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia di Pesantren Berbasis Kompetensi. *Assyfa Journal of Islamic Studies*, 3(1). 159-171. Retrieved from <https://journal.assyfa.com/index.php/ajis/article/view/1188>

1. INTRODUCTION

Pondok pesantren are the oldest and most authentic Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, having played a significant role in shaping the nation's character and spreading Islamic values since the pre-independence era. As community-based educational institutions, pesantren possess unique characteristics that distinguish them from other formal educational institutions, particularly in terms of management systems centered around the figure of the kyai and strong traditional values. Historical evidence demonstrates that pesantren have played a major role in the development and human resource development of the nation's generation. Pesantren function not only as religious educational institutions but also as centers for character development, independence, and community empowerment.

Amidst the currents of globalization, technological advancement, and societal expectations for the quality of Islamic education, pesantren are required to transform and adapt without losing their identity and traditional values. This demand necessitates pesantren to develop competent human resources, both in terms of mastery of religious knowledge and modern managerial and pedagogical skills. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has issued regulations governing the ideal competency development for pesantren educators, covering aspects of personality, social,

pedagogical, and professional competence. Pesantren educators are expected to possess the ability to develop and implement active, innovative, creative, enjoyable, and child-friendly learning methods.

However, the reality in the field shows that many pesantren still face significant challenges in developing the competencies of educators and administrators. Based on initial observations at several pesantren in Lampung Province, it was found that HR development systems in pesantren remain sporadic, unplanned, and lacking sustainability. Salafiyah pesantren, in particular, have not yet implemented modern management systems, including in the management of human resource development for their teachers. Consequently, teachers who should serve as guides for students do not yet possess satisfactory competencies. This situation impacts the quality of the learning process and ultimately affects the quality of pesantren graduates.

Previous research has examined various aspects of HR development in pesantren. Hantoro (2024), in his study on competency-based human resource development for salafiyah pesantren teachers in the Riau Islands, found that salafiyah pesantren lack systematic and sustainable teacher competency development systems. The study developed a teacher competency development product deemed suitable for use by salafiyah pesantren. Wahyudi (2025) examined pesantren HR transformation through management strategies to improve competency amidst limitations, finding that strategies such as strengthening organizational culture, internal training, collaboration with external parties, and enhancing the role of kyai leadership can serve as effective solutions.

Research on HR management in pesantren has also been conducted by various scholars. Research on the implementation of human resource management in improving the competence of educators at Pondok Pesantren Imam Muslim found that HR planning involves educator needs analysis, strict selection, and development through structured training programs. Research on HR development management at Pondok Pesantren Bustanul Ulum examined how HR development management is implemented in that pesantren. Research on pesantren strategies in human resource development in various regions has also been conducted, showing that HR development strategies in pesantren vary according to the context and characteristics of each pesantren.

The research gap lies in the limited comprehensive studies that examine competency-based HR development strategies in pesantren by involving all components of HR management—planning, recruitment, development, and evaluation—in an integrated manner. Most previous research has focused on specific aspects of HR development or only examined one component separately. In addition, there is limited research that specifically examines how competency-based HR development strategies can be implemented in pesantren while considering the unique characteristics of pesantren as Islamic educational institutions that integrate traditional values with modern demands. Research on supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of competency-based HR development strategies in pesantren is also limited.

The novelty of this research lies in the development of an integrated and contextual competency-based HR development strategy model for pesantren. Unlike previous research that tends to be partial, this study holistically examines four pillars of HR development strategies—planning, recruitment and selection, competency development, and evaluation and career development—and their relationship to improving the quality of education in pesantren. This research also identifies

supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of competency-based HR development strategies in pesantren, and formulates strategies to overcome these obstacles. This research provides empirical evidence from the context of pesantren in Lampung Province, offering relevant insights for other pesantren facing similar challenges in HR development.

The theoretical framework of this research is based on the integration of Human Resource Management Theory and Competency Theory. HR management in the pesantren context includes planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating the development of educators and administrators. The competency-based approach emphasizes the importance of identifying, developing, and evaluating the competencies needed to achieve organizational goals. In the pesantren context, educator competencies encompass four main aspects: pedagogical, personality, social, and professional. The synergy of these two theories enables a comprehensive analysis of how competency-based HR development strategies can be optimized to improve the quality of education in pesantren.

Based on the above description, this research aims to: (1) analyze competency-based HR planning in pesantren; (2) examine competency-based recruitment and selection of educators in pesantren; (3) evaluate competency development programs for educators in pesantren; and (4) identify supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of competency-based HR development strategies in pesantren. The results of this research are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of Islamic education management and practical recommendations for pesantren administrators in improving HR quality through competency-based development strategies.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore competency-based human resource development strategies in pesantren (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of the HR development phenomenon in its natural setting, capturing participant perspectives and contextual factors that influence implementation (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The case study design is appropriate for examining contemporary phenomena in real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2018). This design enables researchers to capture the "how" and "why" of the implementation of competency-based HR development strategies in pesantren.

2.2 Subject and Research Location

The research was conducted at several pesantren in Lampung Province purposively selected based on several considerations: (1) pesantren have varied characteristics (salafiyah, modern, and integrated); (2) pesantren have implemented HR development programs; and (3) pesantren face challenges in developing educator competencies. The research subjects consisted of 15 key

informants: pesantren leaders/kyai (3), pesantren administrators (4), and educators/teachers (8). Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure representation across types of pesantren, levels of experience, and roles in HR management.

Table 1. Research Subjects and Informant Profiles

Informant Code	Position/Role	Type of Pesantren	Experience
KY-01	Leader/Kyai	Salafiyah	25 years
KY-02	Leader/Kyai	Modern	18 years
KY-03	Leader/Kyai	Integrated	20 years
PL-01	Administrator	Salafiyah	12 years
PL-02	Administrator	Modern	10 years
PL-03	Administrator	Integrated	8 years
PL-04	Administrator	Salafiyah	6 years
GR-01	Educator	Salafiyah	15 years
GR-02	Educator	Modern	7 years
GR-03	Educator	Integrated	5 years
GR-04	Educator	Salafiyah	10 years
GR-05	Educator	Modern	8 years
GR-06	Educator	Integrated	6 years
GR-07	Educator	Salafiyah	4 years
GR-08	Educator	Modern	3 years

2.3 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted over a four-month period from January to April 2025 using three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with pesantren leaders, administrators, and educators to explore their experiences, perceptions, and challenges in implementing competency-based HR development strategies. Each interview lasted between 45 to 90 minutes and was recorded with participant consent. Participatory observation was conducted during HR development activities, including training, evaluation meetings, and learning processes, to observe actual HR development practices. Documentation included analysis of HR planning documents, training programs, performance evaluation records, and other relevant documents. This multi-method approach ensures that the data is not only deep but also verified across different sources, reducing the risk of subjective bias in the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

2.4 Research Instruments

The primary instrument in this qualitative research is the researcher themselves, supported by secondary instruments such as interview protocols, observation checklists, and documentation grids. The interview protocol consisted of 25 open-ended questions designed to explore planning, recruitment, development, and evaluation of competency-based HR, as well as supporting and inhibiting factors. Questions were organized into five themes: (1) understanding and perceptions of competency-based HR development; (2) HR planning processes; (3) recruitment and selection practices; (4) competency development programs; and (5) performance evaluation and career development. The observation checklist was structured to monitor training activities, learning

processes, and interactions between administrators and educators. These instruments were validated by experts in educational management to ensure accurate measurement of the intended indicators.

2.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which involves data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. During condensation, raw data from interviews and observations were coded according to themes such as "HR planning," "recruitment and selection," "competency development," "performance evaluation," "supporting factors," and "inhibiting factors." Data display was achieved through the creation of matrices, diagrams, and narrative descriptions to visualize relationships between variables and themes. Finally, conclusions were drawn by triangulating empirical findings with theoretical frameworks and previous research, ensuring a robust theoretical synthesis. Member checking was conducted with participants to verify the accuracy of interpretations and findings.

2.6 Validity and Reliability

Data validity was maintained through source and methodological triangulation, as well as member checking with pesantren leaders, administrators, and educators. Source triangulation was achieved by comparing data from various informants (kyai, administrators, and teachers) to identify convergent and divergent perspectives. Methodological triangulation was achieved by comparing findings from interviews, observations, and documentation. Reliability was ensured by creating a clear "audit trail" of all raw data, transcripts, and analysis notes, allowing for procedural consistency (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By comparing the perspectives of various stakeholders, the researcher ensured that the findings on competency-based HR development strategies were not one-sided but reflected the reality of the entire pesantren ecosystem.

3. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

3.1 Competency-Based HR Planning

The findings reveal that competency-based HR planning in pesantren is conducted through a process of needs identification, competency mapping, and structured program development. The pesantren leader (KY-01) explained:

"We start each year by evaluating the needs of educators. We look at how many teachers are needed, what competencies they must have, and what development programs need to be implemented. This becomes the basis for us in planning HR development systematically."

The HR planning process involves several main activities: (1) educator needs analysis based on workload and number of students; (2) mapping of competencies required for each subject and task; (3) identification of competency gaps between ideal and actual conditions; (4) development of targeted development programs; and (5) resource allocation for program implementation.

A pesantren administrator (PL-01) added:

"We conduct periodic competency mapping of teachers. We identify teachers who already have adequate competencies and those who still need development. This helps us design training programs that suit the needs of each teacher."

Based on the needs analysis, pesantren develop several flagship HR development programs: (1) pedagogical training programs to improve teaching methods; (2) professional competency development programs through further study and certification; (3) personality and social competency strengthening programs through regular coaching; and (4) internship and collaboration programs with other pesantren or external institutions. These programs are integrated into the annual HR development plan.

An educator (GR-01) explained his experience in competency development planning:

"I feel helped by the existence of a planned development program. I can know what competency targets I must achieve and what programs I can participate in to develop them. This makes me more motivated to continue learning and improving my abilities."

Table 2. Components of Competency-Based HR Planning

Component	Activities	Success Indicators
Needs Analysis	Identification of teacher quantity and qualifications	Availability of educators according to needs
Competency Mapping	Identification of required competencies	Clear educator competency profile
Gap Identification	Comparison of actual and ideal competencies	Targeted development programs
Program Development	Planning development programs	Annual HR development plan
Resource Allocation	Determination of budget and facilities	Availability of funds and supporting facilities

3.2 Competency-Based Recruitment and Selection of Educators

The implementation of recruitment and selection of educators in pesantren is conducted through a selective and structured process based on competency criteria. The pesantren leader (KY-02) explained:

"We do not accept teachers carelessly. We conduct strict selection, not only looking at educational background but also pedagogical competence, personality, and commitment to pesantren values."

The recruitment and selection process involves several stages: (1) job announcement with clear criteria; (2) administrative selection to verify educational qualifications and experience; (3) pedagogical and professional competency tests; (4) interviews to assess personality, commitment, and suitability with pesantren culture; (5) micro-teaching to assess teaching ability; and (6) a probationary period for initial performance evaluation.

A pesantren administrator (PL-02) added:

"We look for teachers who are not only academically intelligent but also have good morals, commitment to Islamic education, and the ability to work in a team. We also consider their suitability with the culture and values of the pesantren."

The competency criteria used in recruitment encompass four main aspects: (1) pedagogical competence, namely the ability to plan, implement, and evaluate learning; (2) personality competence, namely morals, integrity, and role modeling; (3) social competence, namely communication and collaboration skills; and (4) professional competence, namely mastery of subject matter and scholarly development.

An educator (GR-02) shared his experience:

"The selection process at this pesantren is quite rigorous. I had to go through written tests, micro-teaching, and interviews with the kyai. This makes me feel that the pesantren truly pays attention to teacher quality."

3.3 Educator Competency Development

Educator competency development in pesantren is conducted through various sustainable and structured programs. The pesantren leader (KY-03) explained:

"We have a sustainable competency development program. We not only recruit competent teachers but also continuously develop their competencies through training, internships, and further study."

Competency development programs include several forms of activities: (1) internal training held regularly by the pesantren; (2) internships or comparative studies to other pesantren; (3) further study to higher education levels; (4) professional certification; (5) workshops and seminars; and (6) regular coaching by kyai or senior administrators.

A pesantren administrator (PL-03) added:

"We hold pedagogical training regularly to improve teaching methods. We also encourage teachers to continue their studies to the master's level or participate in certification programs. We also hold workshops on the use of technology in learning."

Table 3. Educator Competency Development Programs

Program	Activity Form	Competency Target
Internal Training	Pedagogical training, learning methodology	Pedagogical competence
Internship/Comparative Study	Visits to other pesantren, observation	Professional and social competence
Further Study	Master's, doctoral programs, certification	Professional competence
Workshops/Seminars	Workshops on learning technology	Pedagogical and professional competence
Regular Coaching	Guidance by kyai, mentoring	Personality and social competence

Competency development programs also include the integration of technology in learning. Pesantren recognize the importance of digitalization and provide digital literacy training for educators in response to the challenges of the Society 5.0 era. An educator (GR-03) explained:

"We receive training on the use of technology in learning. We learn to use digital platforms to deliver material, create interactive learning media, and conduct evaluations online. This is very helpful in improving the quality of learning."

3.4 Performance Evaluation and Career Development

Performance evaluation and career development of educators in pesantren are conducted periodically and continuously. The pesantren leader (KY-01) explained:

"We conduct regular performance evaluations of teachers, both formally and informally. We look not only at teaching outcomes but also commitment, dedication, and competency development. This becomes the basis for us in providing rewards and career development opportunities."

The performance evaluation process includes: (1) daily evaluation through observation and monitoring; (2) mid-semester and end-semester evaluations; (3) annual evaluation that is more comprehensive; (4) assessment by kyai, administrators, and peers; and (5) feedback from students.

A pesantren administrator (PL-04) added:

"We use evaluation results to determine further development programs, provide awards for outstanding teachers, and plan career development. Teachers who show good performance and significant competency development are given opportunities to attend advanced training or occupy more strategic positions."

Career development of educators is conducted through: (1) promotion to higher positions; (2) assignment as mentors or trainers for new teachers; (3) opportunities to attend training and further study; and (4) provision of additional responsibilities in pesantren management.

An educator (GR-04) expressed:

"I feel appreciated with the existence of transparent performance evaluation and career development opportunities. I can see my progress and know what I need to improve. This makes me more motivated to work better."

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this research demonstrate that competency-based human resource development strategies in pesantren are implemented through four main pillars—planning, recruitment and selection, competency development, and performance evaluation and career development—which are interrelated and sustainable. This discussion examines these findings in relation to existing theoretical frameworks and empirical research, highlighting implications for HR management in pesantren.

The HR planning process identified in this research—involving needs analysis, competency mapping, gap identification, and development program formulation—reflects a systematic approach to HR management consistent with HR management theory. Research by Hantoro (2024) on competency-based human resource development for salafiyah pesantren teachers in the Riau Islands found that salafiyah pesantren have not yet implemented systematic and sustainable teacher competency development systems. The findings of this research indicate that systematic planning is an important foundation in competency-based HR development. Needs analysis and competency mapping conducted at the outset enable pesantren to design development programs that suit actual needs, making HR development more targeted and effective.

Competency-based recruitment and selection of educators in pesantren are conducted through a selective and structured process, involving various stages from administrative selection to probationary periods. This finding aligns with research on HR management in pesantren which shows that strict recruitment and selection are important steps in ensuring the quality of educators. Research on the implementation of HR management at Pondok Pesantren Imam Muslim found that HR planning involves educator needs analysis, strict selection, and development through structured training programs. The competency criteria used—pedagogical, personality, social, and professional—are in accordance with Ministry of Religious Affairs regulations governing ideal competency development for pesantren educators.

Educator competency development in pesantren is conducted through various sustainable and structured programs, including internal training, internships, further study, and workshops. This finding aligns with research by Wahyudi (2025) on pesantren HR transformation which found that strategies such as strengthening organizational culture, internal training, collaboration with external parties, and enhancing the role of kyai leadership can serve as effective solutions. Research on pesantren strategies in HR development also shows that competency development through training and scholarship provision for pesantren teachers has been initiated. The integration of technology in learning is also an important part of competency development, in line with research findings on HR management in facing the Society 5.0 education transformation which emphasizes the importance of digital literacy training for educators.

Performance evaluation and career development of educators in pesantren are conducted periodically and continuously. This finding aligns with research on HR management in pesantren which shows that performance evaluation is conducted periodically through weekly, mid-semester, and end-semester evaluations. Transparent and continuous performance evaluation serves as the basis for providing rewards, career development, and competency improvement. Research on pesantren strategies in HR development also emphasizes the importance of periodic evaluation and monitoring as an integral part of HR development strategies.

The theoretical contribution of this research lies in the development of an integrated competency-based HR development strategy model for pesantren. This model encompasses four main pillars—planning, recruitment and selection, competency development, and performance evaluation and career development—which are interrelated and sustainable. The model's emphasis on a competency-based approach that considers the unique characteristics of pesantren as Islamic educational institutions offers a distinctive contribution to the field of Islamic education

management. These findings support the theoretical proposition that competency-based HR development is a key factor in improving the quality of education in pesantren.

The practical implications of this research extend to pesantren management policy and practice. For pesantren leaders/kyai, the findings highlight the importance of visionary leadership in encouraging HR development and providing adequate resources. For administrators, the findings emphasize the need for systematic HR planning, strict recruitment and selection, sustainable development programs, and transparent performance evaluation. For educators, the findings underscore the importance of continuous competency development and openness to change. For policymakers, the findings indicate that support for HR development in pesantren—including funding, training, and facilities—is crucial for improving the quality of education in pesantren.

The findings of this research also have implications for the development of Islamic education in Indonesia. In the era of globalization, technological advancement, and societal expectations for the quality of Islamic education, pesantren are required to transform and adapt without losing their identity and traditional values. Competency-based HR development strategies offer a systemic approach to improving the quality of educators and administrators in pesantren through strengthening planning, recruitment, development, and evaluation oriented towards the needs and potential of pesantren. This approach enables pesantren to produce educators who are not only academically excellent but also possess strong Islamic character and 21st-century skills.

However, this research has several limitations. First, the research was conducted at several pesantren in Lampung Province, which may limit the generalizability of findings to other contexts. Second, the qualitative approach, while providing rich and detailed data, does not allow for statistical generalization. Third, the research relied on self-reported data from participants, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Fourth, the research did not include a comparison group or comprehensive baseline data, making it difficult to attribute improvements in HR quality solely to competency-based development strategies. Future research should expand the scope to include more pesantren across different regions, use mixed-methods approaches, and include longitudinal designs to examine the long-term impact of competency-based HR development strategies on the quality of education in pesantren.

5. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that competency-based human resource development in pesantren is effectively implemented through an integrated process consisting of systematic planning, competency-based recruitment and selection, continuous professional development, and transparent performance evaluation. These interconnected strategies contribute to improving the pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies of educators while strengthening institutional performance and educational quality. The successful implementation of this model is supported by visionary leadership, a strong organizational culture, and institutional commitment, although challenges such as limited financial resources, inadequate facilities, restricted access to professional development opportunities, and resistance to organizational change remain. Overall, the competency-based HR development model provides a comprehensive framework for enhancing the quality of educators and administrators, enabling pesantren to produce competent,

ethical, and adaptive human resources who are capable of responding to the demands of 21st-century Islamic education.

Pesantren are encouraged to strengthen competency-based human resource management by conducting regular competency needs assessments, improving recruitment and selection procedures, expanding sustainable professional development programs, and implementing transparent performance evaluation systems that support career advancement. In addition, institutional leaders should establish strategic partnerships with government agencies, higher education institutions, and other stakeholders to increase access to funding, training, and technological resources. Future research is also recommended to examine the long-term impact of competency-based HR development on educational outcomes across different types of pesantren and to explore the integration of digital technologies and innovative leadership approaches in strengthening human resource management.

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