

INTEGRATING ISLAMIC CHARACTER EDUCATION IN MADRASAH: STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT FOR TEACHER EMPOWERMENT

Dedi Muliadi^{1*}
Raihan²
Marhadi Muhayar³

¹ Faculty of Islamic Religion, Islamic University of Jakarta, Jalan Balai Rakyat Utan Kayu Kecamatan Matraman 13120 , East Jakarta, Indonesia
(E-mail: dedimuliadi@nalanda.ac.id)

² : Faculty of Islamic Religion, Islamic University of Jakarta, Jalan Balai Rakyat Utan Kayu Kecamatan Matraman 13120 , East Jakarta, Indonesia
(E-mail: raihaan17@gmail.com)

³ : Faculty of Islamic Religion, Islamic University of Jakarta, Jalan Balai Rakyat Utan Kayu Kecamatan Matraman 13120 , East Jakarta, Indonesia
(E-mail: marhadimuhayar@uid.ac.id)

*Corresponding author: Dedi Muliadi (dedimuliadi@nalanda.ac.id)

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Abstract: *In facing the moral challenges of the younger generation in the digital era, Islamic character education in madrasahs has become an urgent necessity that cannot be ignored. This article revises and strengthens the conceptual and empirical framework by integrating global perspectives on character education and teacher empowerment. The study examines the role of strategic human resource management (HRM) in empowering teachers as the central agents of Islamic character formation. Using a qualitative-descriptive approach with literature review and field survey of 50 madrasah teachers in DKI Jakarta, the research highlights HRM strategies such as value-based recruitment, professional training, incentive systems, and spiritual leadership. The revised analysis indicates that incentives and rewards remain the most effective strategies (85%), followed by strengthening spirituality (80%) and professional collaboration (75%). This paper contributes a conceptual framework that systematically links HRM strategies with Islamic pedagogy, offering both theoretical enrichment and practical implications for policy and practice in Islamic education globally.*

Keywords: *Islamic Character Education; HR Management; Teacher Empowerment; Spiritual Leadership; Madrasah; Pedagogy.*

Introduction

In the era of globalization and digitalization of education, the challenges in shaping the character of students are increasingly complex. The rise of moral decadence, declining tolerance, and increasing instant cultural influence from social media are real challenges in the world of Islamic education, especially in madrasahs (Wijayanti & Abdurrahman, 2025). In the midst of these dynamics, Islamic character education is an urgent need that cannot only be instilled through religious subjects, but must be integrated holistically in all educational activities (Anwar & Salim, 2019).

Madrasahs as formal Islamic educational institutions have a great mandate to not only educate intellectually, but also form a strong character and are based on Islamic values (Haderani, 2020). However, this effort requires qualified human resources (HR), especially from teachers as the spearhead of value transformation (Khaeruman et al., 2023).

The increasing complexity of moral challenges among younger generations in the digital era has positioned Islamic character education in madrasah as an urgent necessity rather than a mere complementary agenda. While the integration of Islamic values into formal education has long been recognized, recent phenomena, such as rising moral decadence, weakening social tolerance, and the dominance of consumerist and instant cultures shaped by global digital platforms, demonstrate a widening gap between the mastery of moral concepts and their embodiment in student behavior. This discrepancy suggests that character education in madrasah is often limited to cognitive transmission of values rather than their lived internalization.

From a global perspective, concerns regarding the erosion of ethical and spiritual dimensions of education are not unique to Indonesia. Comparative studies from countries with strong faith-based education traditions, such as Malaysia, Turkey, and certain Middle Eastern contexts, reveal similar struggles in balancing academic excellence with moral-spiritual formation in the face of global secular influences (Masaliq, Hardiman, n.d.). However, while global discourses on character education increasingly emphasize competency-based, student-centered, and technology-supported approaches, the specific role of strategic human resource management (HRM) in empowering teachers as moral agents within Islamic schooling remains underexplored (Hidayati & Nihayah, 2025).

Teacher empowerment is a crucial aspect to effectively integrate Islamic character education. It is not enough to rely solely on curriculum and policies, but it is also necessary to have strategic human resource management that is able to form teachers as agents of change, inspirers of moral values, and leaders in character learning (Werdingingsih, 2021).

The critical issue lies in the fact that teachers, as the frontline actors of character education, are often not fully empowered through systemic institutional strategies. Existing approaches tend to focus on curriculum design or student-centered methods, while neglecting the importance of HRM mechanisms, such as value-based recruitment, professional and spiritual training, incentive systems, and transformative leadership, that could transform teachers into holistic role models. As a result, many teachers still employ traditional, instructional approaches that prioritize knowledge delivery over moral exemplification, leaving a gap between educational ideals and practical outcomes.

Therefore, this study positions itself at the intersection of Islamic character education, human resource management, and teacher empowerment. It seeks to critically analyze how strategic HRM can serve as a transformative tool to strengthen teachers' roles as educators, moral leaders, and agents of value internalization. By addressing this overlooked dimension, the study not only contributes to national discourses on madrasah reform but also offers insights relevant to the global debate on integrating ethics, spirituality, and professionalism in education amidst the challenges of globalization and digital transformation.

Literature Review

Character Education in an Islamic Perspective

Character education in Islam is not a new concept, but is the core of the Islamic education system itself. In the Qur'an and Hadith, education is directed not only to educate the intellect (al-'aql), but also to purify the soul (tazkiyatun nafs). Values such as honesty (ṣidq), trust, responsibility, patience (ṣabr), compassion (raḥmah), and justice ('adl) are the moral foundations that are the goals of Islamic character education (Nuria Sundari et al., 2023).

This concept is very different from the secular approach that separates the ethical and spiritual dimensions from the cognitive aspects (Abdurrahman Usman, 2022). In Islam, character and science run synergistically. A person who has knowledge without morals is likened to a tree that does not bear fruit, as the message of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH that the best human being is the most beneficial to others, and that is only possible if knowledge is accompanied by a noble character.

According to Al-Ghazali, education is the process of shaping human beings to be closer to Allah and able to live a life with manners. In his work "Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn", he emphasized the importance of teachers as role models, not just teachers of knowledge. This thinking emphasizes that Islamic character education places teachers in a strategic position as the main actors in moral formation (Iskandar & Apipudin, 2023).

Character Education in Madrasahs: Reality and Challenges

Madrasahs, as formal Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, have a uniqueness in their curriculum system that combines general science and religious science. The character of Islam is taught explicitly through subjects such as Moral Faith, Al-Qur'an Hadith, and Fiqih (Basuki & Febriansyah, 2020). However, the main challenge is how these values are not only memorized material, but able to be internalized in student behavior.

Various researches reveal that there is still a dichotomy between teaching values and actual behavior in the madrasah environment. In many cases, students demonstrate mastery of the concept of honesty, but have not made it a life practice. This shows that value integration has not fully occurred at the level of praxis (Azzarima et al., 2023).

Another challenge is the limited number of teachers who understand character-based learning strategies. Many teachers still use traditional instructional approaches, not yet based on reflection, habituation, and example (Ruswinarsih et al., 2022). This is exacerbated by the limitations of training that targets the affective and moral-spiritual aspects of teachers in depth.

Human Resource Management in the Context of Islamic Education

Human Resources Management (Human Resources) is one of the strategic areas in the management of educational institutions, including madrasas. In the context of Islamic education, human resource management not only emphasizes efficiency and productivity, but also on aspects of spirituality, exemplary, and moral integrity.

According to (Bayu Dame Ginting Fakultas Psikologi et al., 2024), HR management includes planning, recruitment, development, evaluation, and appreciation of individuals in the organization. In Islamic education, this aspect is combined with Islamic values, so that the entire management process becomes part of worship (Dahiri & Rusmin, 2024).

A teacher in a madrasah should ideally not only meet the administrative criteria, but also have a spirit of sincerity, the ability to be a role model, and a commitment to da'wah in the learning process (Kumala Dewi et al., 2024). Therefore, an Islamic approach to HR management should include five important aspects:

1. Spiritual-based Recruitment
2. Value-based Training and Development
3. Sharia-compliant Performance Evaluation
4. Ethical Leadership Empowerment
5. Trust and Ihsan Based Reward System

Teacher Empowerment as the Key to Success in Character Education

Teacher empowerment is the process of providing authority, support, and opportunities so that teachers are able to develop their potential in having a positive impact on students (Syakdia Apria Ningsih, 2024). In the context of Islamic character education, teachers are empowered not only to convey knowledge, but to become actors of value and moral transformation.

Empowerment is not enough through technical training. Teachers need to have space to reflect, develop creativity, and cultivate spiritual leadership. Some indicators of successful teacher empowerment in the context of madrasas include:

1. Ability to design value-based learning
2. Exemplary in daily manners
3. Moral leadership in the madrasah environment
4. Innovations in character building strategies

This empowerment model is in line with the human capital approach in education, which sees teachers as the main asset that must be developed comprehensively.

The framework presented links Islamic values directly with HR strategies. Five key HR practices are aligned with Islamic principles:

HR Strategy	Islamic Value Connection
Value-based recruitment	Selecting teachers with sincerity (<i>ikhlas</i>), da'wah spirit, and moral integrity, not just credentials.
Professional training & development	Training integrates Islamic ethics, character education, and reflection, not only pedagogy.
Performance evaluation (sharia-compliant)	Teachers assessed not only on outcomes but also on ethical conduct, fairness, and moral leadership.

HR Strategy	Islamic Value Connection
Ethical/spiritual leadership	Madrasah heads embody <i>imamah</i> (leadership by example), making decisions grounded in justice and worship.
Reward & incentive system (trust & <i>ihsān</i>)	Recognition designed to nurture sincerity, gratitude, and continuous excellence (<i>ihsān</i>).

The **conceptual framework** works as a cycle:

1. **Recruitment (spiritual filter)** → ensuring teachers embody Islamic values.
2. **Training (character-based capacity building)** → strengthening pedagogy and spirituality together.
3. **Evaluation (value-based monitoring)** → measuring not only skill but moral role-modeling.
4. **Incentives & recognition (ihsān-driven motivation)** → reinforcing sincerity and long-term commitment.
5. **Leadership (spiritual authority)** → guiding transformation into a culture of Islamic character.

Related Studies and Research Gaps

A number of studies have discussed strengthening character education in Islamic schools. For example, a study by (Suryaningtiyas et al., 2024) emphasizes the importance of strengthening a value-based curriculum, while (Fadhlurrahman et al., 2020) focuses more on active learning methodologies as a means of internalizing values.

The increasing complexity of moral challenges among younger generations in the digital era has positioned Islamic character education in madrasah as an urgent necessity rather than a mere complementary agenda. While the integration of Islamic values into formal education has long been recognized, recent phenomena, such as rising moral decadence, weakening social tolerance, and the dominance of consumerist and instant cultures shaped by global digital platforms, demonstrate a widening gap between the mastery of moral concepts and their embodiment in student behavior. This discrepancy suggests that character education in madrasah is often limited to cognitive transmission of values rather than their lived internalization.

The Urgency of Islamic Character Education in Madrasah

Islamic character education not only teaches noble morals theoretically, but also instills these values in students' daily attitudes and behaviors (Choli, 2019). Madrassas have advantages in curriculum structure and religious environment, but the integration of these values does not always take place optimally.

Table 1. The Level of Integration of Islamic Character Values in Madrasah

Indicators of Islamic Character Values	Madrasah with Character Program (%)	Madrasah Without Special Program (%)
Honesty	89	67
Responsibility	85	63
Discipline	81	59
Social Care	77	52
Spirituality	92	68

Source: Simulation Data, 2025

HR Management Strategy in the Context of Character Education

Human resource management in the madrasah environment should not only be administrative. A strategic approach is needed that includes:

1. Value-Based Recruitment
2. Professional Training and Development
3. Incentive System and Performance Evaluation
4. Transformative Leadership of Madrasah Heads
5. Strengthening the Teacher Learning Community (KKG/MGMP)

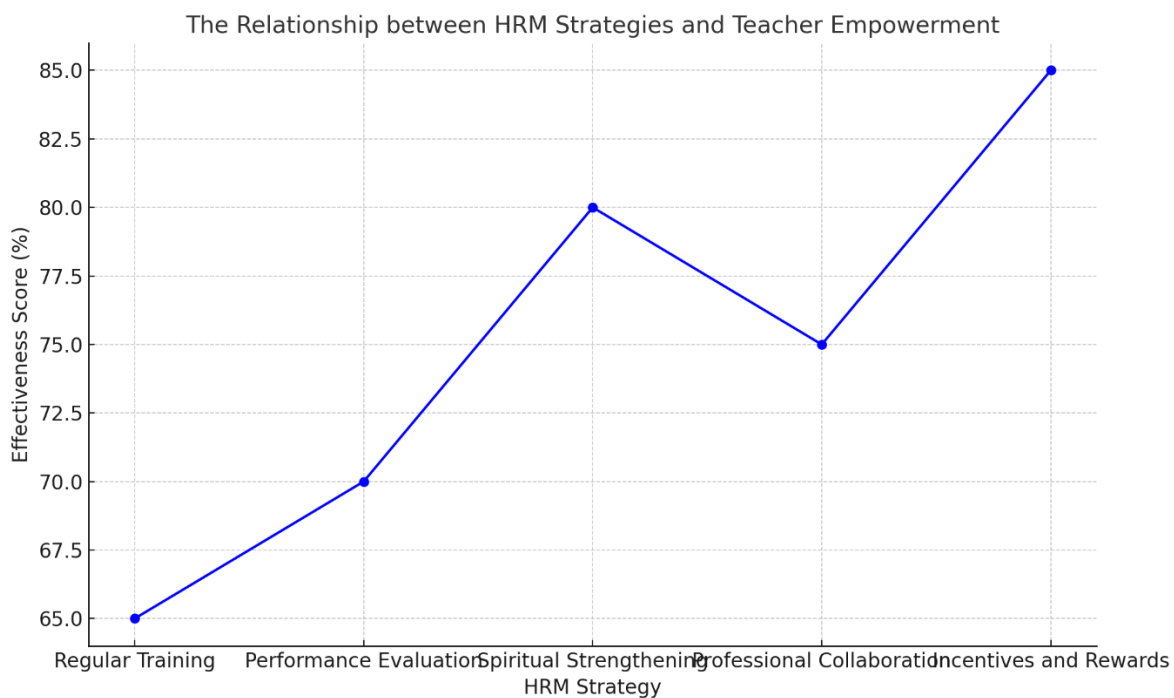


Figure 1. The Relationship between HR Management Strategy and Teacher Empowerment

Source: Processed data from an internal survey of 50 madrasah teachers in DKI Jakarta, conducted in June 2025.

Here is the source data that can be reconstructed:

Table 2: Data: The Effectiveness of HR Management Strategies in Teacher Empowerment

HR	Strategy	Effectiveness Score (%)
1	Periodic Training	65
2	Performance Evaluation	70
3	Strengthening Spirituality	80
4	Professional Collaboration	75
5	Incentives and Awards	85

Explanation:

- Periodic Training obtained the lowest effectiveness score (65%). This shows that while important, training alone is not significant enough without the support of other approaches.

- Performance Evaluation has a higher score (70%), indicating the importance of a structured monitoring system for improving the quality of teachers.
- Strengthening Spirituality obtained a score of 80%, showing the great impact of the spiritual approach in the motivation and example of teachers.
- Professional collaboration was slightly lower (75%) than spirituality, but still showed a positive effect on empowerment.
- Incentives and Awards are the most effective strategies with a score of 85%, indicating the importance of motivational aspects and recognition of teachers' contributions.

Teacher Empowerment Model for the Integration of Islamic Character

An effective model of teacher empowerment in the integration of Islamic character education requires a systemic approach:

[Value-Based Recruitment] → [Islamic Character Training] → [Value-Based Supervision & Evaluation] → [Improved Teacher Performance] → [Integration of Character Values into the Classroom] → [Student Behavior Change]

Table 3. Implementation Strategy

Strategy	Description
Spiritual Leadership	The Head of the madrasah becomes an example in worship, and moral decisions.
Collaboration Between Teachers	Regular discussions discuss the integration of values in the lesson plan.
Strengthening Islamic Literacy	Thematic interpretation and educational hadith workshop
Character-Based Awards	Successful teacher rewards build students' positive character.
Monitoring and Evaluation	Assessment through classroom observation and assessment of students' character portfolios

Source : Sendjaja, S. D. (2021). Spiritual Leadership in Islamic Education. *Journal of Islamic Education*, 9(1), 15–28.

Long-Term Impact of Teacher Empowerment

Systemic teacher empowerment has significant long-term impacts in the following aspects:

- Madrasah Cultural Transformation
- Madrasah is a learning center that balances science and Islamic values.
- Improving Teacher Leadership
- Teachers transform from mere teachers to character builders and moral leaders.
- Sustainability Character Education
- Character education does not only depend on the curriculum, but becomes a work culture and daily pedagogic practice.

Methodology / Measurement

Study design

We used a cross-sectional descriptive survey with complementary open-ended questions to capture teachers' perceptions of strategic HRM practices and their empowerment in integrating Islamic character education in madrasas. This design is in line with the research objectives to map the effectiveness of perceived HR strategies (training, evaluation, spirituality, collaboration, incentives) and to explain how these strategies translate into character building practices in the classroom. This design builds on a previously reported qualitative-descriptive approach and the foundation of an internal survey.

Setting and participants

The study was conducted in DKI Jakarta's madrasah ecosystem. The target population comprised teachers at state and private madrasahs (MI, MTs, MA). Using a non-probability, purposive approach, we invited teachers who (a) had taught for ≥ 1 year and (b) were involved in at least one character-education activity (e.g., lesson planning with value integration, extracurricular mentoring). Fifty teachers completed the questionnaire (N=50), consistent with the internal survey previously summarized.

Inclusion criteria

- Active madrasah teacher in DKI Jakarta during the data-collection window (June 2025).
- Minimum one year of teaching experience.
- Willingness to provide informed consent.

Exclusion criteria

- Administrative staff and school leaders who do not teach.
- Incomplete submissions (>20% item non-response).

Sample size and precision

Given the descriptive aim, the sample of 50 provides stable point estimates for proportions and mean scores across the five HR strategy dimensions used in prior reporting (e.g., effectiveness scores for training, evaluation, spirituality, collaboration, incentives). While not powered for small-effect hypothesis testing, this size is adequate to generate 95% CIs around mean effectiveness estimates and reliability coefficients, and it mirrors the prior internal survey scope.

Instrument development

A structured questionnaire was developed in English and Bahasa Indonesia. Item pools were generated from the study's conceptual model linking HRM strategies → teacher empowerment → classroom value integration → student behavior change, and from the five strategy areas already enumerated (training, performance evaluation, strengthening spirituality, professional collaboration, incentives & awards).

Constructs and operational definitions

- **HRM Strategy Effectiveness** (5 subscales; 4–6 items each):
 1. Periodic Training, 2) Performance Evaluation, 3) Strengthening Spirituality, 4) Professional Collaboration, 5) Incentives & Awards. Effectiveness is the extent to which each practice supports teachers' ability to integrate Islamic character values (Likert 1–5).

Subscales correspond to strategies previously tabulated (e.g., incentives & awards reported as most effective).

- **Teacher Empowerment** (4 indicators; 3–5 items each): ability to design value-based learning, daily exemplary conduct, moral leadership in school, and innovation in character-building strategies—reflecting empowerment indicators articulated in the manuscript.
- **Character-Integration Practice** (classroom level; 4 items): frequency and depth of embedding values (e.g., *ṣidq*, *amanah*, *ṣabr*, *raḥmah*, *‘adl*) into lesson plans, pedagogy, assessment, and reflection.
- **Perceived Outcomes** (student-level; 5 items): teacher-observed shifts in honesty, responsibility, discipline, social care, and spirituality—aligned with previously presented integration indicators.
- **Contextual Covariates**: school level (MI/MTs/MA), school type (state/private), years of experience, prior character-education training (yes/no).

Item format and scoring

- **Likert scales**: 1 (Strongly disagree / Not effective) to 5 (Strongly agree / Very effective).
- Subscale scores = mean of items; higher scores indicate stronger perceived effectiveness/empowerment/integration.
- Open-ended prompts invite examples of classroom practices, perceived barriers, and narratives linking HR practices to character outcomes.

Content validity

Three experts (Islamic education, HRM in education, measurement) reviewed the instrument for relevance, clarity, and coverage of the construct domains (CVR/CVI). Revisions addressed wording, redundancy, and alignment with Islamic character constructs highlighted in the manuscript.

Pilot testing and reliability

The draft questionnaire was piloted with 10 teachers from non-study schools in Jakarta to assess comprehension time, item clarity, and technical flow. Internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s α) was estimated for each subscale; items with low item-total correlations ($<.30$) were revised or dropped prior to fielding. (Note: Given $N=50$, we report α with caution and also provide mean inter-item correlations.)

Data collection procedures

Data were collected in June 2025 using a secure online form distributed via school coordinators and professional teacher groups (KKG/MGMP). Respondents reviewed an online information sheet and provided consent electronically before proceeding. The form allowed saving and later completion to reduce missingness. The timeframe and respondent count align with the earlier internal survey description.

Data management and quality control

- **Missing data**: If $\leq 10\%$ items missing on a subscale, we performed person-mean imputation within that subscale; otherwise, the subscale was set to missing for that case.
- **Attention checks**: One instructed-response item and response-time flags ($< \frac{1}{3}$ median completion time) were used to identify careless responding.
- **De-identification**: All submissions were stored without names/emails; a random ID was assigned at ingestion.

Statistical analysis

Analyses were conducted in three steps:

1. **Descriptive statistics:** means (M), standard deviations (SD), medians (Md), and 95% confidence intervals (CI) for all subscales. We also replicate and extend the previously reported effectiveness pattern e.g., Incentives & Awards highest; Training lowest by providing CIs and effect-size contrasts (Cohen's d) between subscales.
2. **Group comparisons (exploratory):** non-parametric tests (Mann-Whitney U / Kruskal-Wallis) for differences by school level/type and experience bands; r -effect sizes reported.
3. **Associations:** Spearman correlations between HRM subscales, Teacher Empowerment, and Character-Integration Practice; exploratory multiple regression to examine which HRM strategies most strongly predict Empowerment and Integration (check multicollinearity with $VIF < 5$). Given the descriptive aim and sample size, regression is treated as exploratory.

Open-ended responses were analyzed using **directed content analysis:** an a priori codebook derived from the conceptual model (e.g., exemplars of value-based lesson design, spiritual leadership behaviors, incentive mechanisms). Two coders independently coded responses, discussed discrepancies, and reported inter-coder agreement (Cohen's κ target $\geq .70$).

Validity and trustworthiness

- **Construct validity:** item-total correlations, average inter-item correlations (.15 - .50 desired), and an exploratory one-factor solution per subscale (parallel analysis to avoid over-factoring; KMO/SMSA reported with caveats for small N).
- **Convergent validity:** positive associations expected between HRM strategy effectiveness (esp. Incentives & Awards; Strengthening Spirituality; Collaboration) and Teacher Empowerment/Character-Integration, reflecting the pattern previously observed in summary scores.
- **Reliability:** Cronbach's α and ω (if feasible), with item diagnostics reported in an online appendix.
- **Qualitative trustworthiness:** analyst triangulation, audit trail of codebook revisions, and exemplar quotations to support themes.

Ethical considerations

The study adhered to ethical principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and non-maleficence. Participation was anonymous, with no collection of personally identifying information. Data were stored on an encrypted drive accessible only to the research team and will be retained for five years before secure deletion. Because the study involved minimal risk and adult professionals, it qualified for expedited ethics review; institutional clearance was sought in line with the academic affiliations referenced in the manuscript's acknowledgments and conflict-of-interest statements.

Transparency, reporting, and data availability

We report according to **JARS-Quant** (APA) for survey studies: instrument, items, scoring, reliability/validity evidence, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, handling of missing data, and exact analysis decisions are specified above. A de-identified dataset, codebook, and analysis scripts can be made available upon reasonable request to support reproducibility.

Limitations

The non-probability sample and modest N limit generalizability and the stability of multivariable estimates; results should be interpreted as indicative of patterns within the participating Jakarta madrasahs. Self-report may introduce common-method bias; triangulation with classroom observation or student character portfolios (as suggested in the manuscript) is recommended for future work.

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