

Integrating Character Values into Human Resource Management in Islamic Educational Institutions Under the Ministry of Religious Affairs In Bitung City

Mudzna Humairoh Mustafa¹, Novia Sudarsi Ibrahim²

Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Manado

Corresponding Author: mudznakhumairoh@gmail.com

Submitted: 18-10-2026

Revised: 21-10-2026

Accepted: 27-10-2026

ABSTRACT. This study aims to analyze the integration of character values into human resource management (HRM) in Islamic educational institutions under the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Bitung City. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach based on field research, data were collected through in-depth interviews with institutional leaders and were analyzed thematically. The findings indicate that character values such as integrity, responsibility, honesty, and hard work significantly contribute to employee performance, loyalty, and organizational culture. These values not only shape individual work behavior but also strengthen institutional cohesion and professionalism. In addition, spiritual management, implemented through religious activities and moral development programs, plays an important role in strengthening the ethical and transcendental foundations of employees. The strategic integration of character values is reflected in integrity-based recruitment and selection, Islamic personality development, performance evaluation using ethical indicators, and career development that takes moral qualities into consideration. Nevertheless, challenges remain in the form of cultural resistance, limited understanding, and insufficient exemplary leadership among some leaders. To address these challenges, the institutions have developed integrated training, value-based leadership, and HR regulations emphasizing character formation. These findings affirm that character-based HRM is a strategic approach to developing Islamic educational institutions that are not only administratively effective but also morally and spiritually grounded.

Keywords: Islamic Character, Human Resource Management, Islamic Education, Spiritual Management, Value-Based Leadership.

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary Islamic education, human resource management (HRM) plays a highly strategic role in determining the quality and direction of institutional transformation. Human resources are not merely administrative entities but key actors who shape, mobilize, and stabilize the educational system as a whole (Muid & Nasrulloh, 2024). Amid the dynamics of disruption and globalization, which bring increasing complexity in values and moral challenges, Islamic educational institutions face an urgent need to reconstruct their HRM orientation from an approach based solely on technical competencies toward a more comprehensive approach that integrates character values and Islamic spirituality (Amaliyah & Rindaningsih, 2025). The

phenomena of weakened integrity, declining work ethic, and the growing culture of instant gratification in various educational institutions indicate that the character dimension has not yet been strongly internalized within HRM systems. Yet Islamic educational institutions possess rich philosophical and normative foundations that can serve as a basis for developing individuals who are not only competent but also possess noble character.

Although the importance of character in HRM has been widely acknowledged, its implementation in Islamic educational institutions continues to face fundamental challenges. Many institutions still emphasize technical competencies in recruitment, training, and performance evaluation, while character dimensions such as integrity, responsibility, honesty, and discipline have not been systematically established as core indicators of HRM (Basit, Ahmad, Azhari, Ingriza, & Qurba, 2024). This situation creates a gap between institutional visions that uphold Islamic values and the everyday behavior of teaching and administrative personnel. The questions that consequently arise are: How are character values integrated into HRM strategies in Islamic educational institutions under the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Bitung City? Furthermore, what character values are relevant, and what are their implications for Islamic educational institutions under the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Bitung City?

This study aims to analyze the concept of integrating character values into HRM in Islamic educational institutions under the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Bitung City. Particular emphasis is placed on identifying the role of character values in shaping work quality, institutional loyalty, and constructive organizational culture. Specifically, this study seeks to describe how character values are internalized through managerial strategies, ranging from recruitment and selection, training and development, performance evaluation, to career development and employee retention. In addition, the study aims to identify the challenges encountered in the integration process and formulate implementable and contextually relevant solutions. Through this approach, the study is expected to identify strategic patterns that are not only theoretically relevant but also applicable to value-based HR governance in the Islamic education sector.

Studies of HRM in Islamic educational institutions have generally focused on administrative dimensions and the development of technical competencies. Much of the existing research has not comprehensively connected HRM with the integration of Islamic character values as ethical and spiritual foundations for managerial practice. Moreover, approaches to spiritual management in the literature tend to be normative and conceptual, resulting in limited empirical contributions that can serve as practical references, particularly within regional Islamic educational bureaucracies. This gap becomes more apparent in local contexts such as Bitung City, whose distinctive socio-religious characteristics have received limited attention in comparable academic studies. Unlike previous studies that have generally emphasized technocratic or normative dimensions, this study positions Islamic character values at the core of every stage of HRM, including recruitment, training, evaluation, and employee retention, in an integrated and strategic manner. Thus, the study is relevant not only theoretically but also practically as a reference for policy and sustainable institutional development.

METHOD

This study is field research employing a descriptive qualitative approach. This approach was selected to obtain an in-depth understanding of the integration of character values into HRM within Islamic educational institutions under the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Bitung City. The primary focus of the study is the exploration of the meanings, practices, strategies, barriers, and solutions encountered by institutional actors in internalizing character values into various aspects of HRM, including recruitment, training, evaluation, and career development.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Research informants were selected purposively and consisted of structural officials within the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Bitung City, including the Head of the Office and the Head of the Islamic Education Section. Data validity was strengthened through source and method

triangulation to ensure the credibility of information obtained from the field. The collected data were analyzed inductively using thematic analysis, involving data reduction, categorization, and interpretive conclusion drawing. Through this approach, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive depiction of the empirical reality of how character values are strategically integrated into HRM systems in Islamic educational institutions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Influence of Character on Performance, Loyalty, and Organizational Culture

Interviews with the Head of the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office in Bitung City indicate that character values such as integrity, responsibility, honesty, and hard work play a central role in determining employees' day-to-day performance. Character is understood not merely as a personal attribute but as a major determinant of how employees make decisions, complete tasks, and interact within the workplace. This finding reinforces the view associated with Robbins and Judge's Organizational Behavior, as discussed in Siswadi et al., that character represents one of the strongest non-technical predictors of productive and professional work behavior (Siswadi, Jufrizen, Saripuddin, Farisi, & Sari, 2023). When an individual's character is aligned with organizational values, work effectiveness increases, conflict decreases, and the quality of work outcomes becomes more consistent.

Regarding employee loyalty, the interviews revealed that integrity, demonstrated through consistency between words and actions and commitment to assigned responsibilities, constitutes a key foundation for building long-term commitment to the institution. This finding is consistent with Meyer and Allen's Affective Commitment theory (1991), which states that employees whose personal values are aligned with institutional values tend to develop stronger emotional attachment, ultimately encouraging loyalty and reducing the intention to leave the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). In Islamic educational institutions, character values not only contribute to organizational effectiveness but also reinforce the institution's spiritual and moral identity. Therefore, integrating character into HRM is not merely a normative imperative but also a strategic means of developing a sustainable work culture.

The Relationship between Spiritual Management and Human Resource Management

The interview findings indicate that spiritual management plays a significant role in shaping employees' character and work behavior within the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Bitung City. Spiritual approaches are implemented through routine activities such as religious study sessions, *tadzkir*, and religious development programs, which aim to cultivate moral awareness and a sense of transcendental responsibility in carrying out professional duties. This finding is consistent with Karakas (2010), whose article in the Journal of Business Ethics argues that spirituality in management contributes to meaningful work, inner balance, and social cohesion within organizations (Karakas, 2010). When internalized within the organization, spirituality functions as an intrinsic force that directs individual behavior toward more ethical, reflective, and meaningful work orientations.

Spiritual management not only strengthens the individual moral dimension but also directly affects the quality of HRM. Interview information indicates that employees who actively participate in spiritual activities tend to demonstrate greater honesty, discipline, sincerity, and responsibility in their work. This finding affirms the concept of Spiritual Leadership developed by Fry, which proposes that spiritual values such as compassion, meaning in life, and a transcendental vision can enhance intrinsic motivation, organizational commitment, and productivity (Espinosa, Contreras, Esguerra, & Fierro, 2017). In other words, spiritual management can function as an effective managerial instrument for creating a conducive and humane work climate while strengthening employees' attachment to the institution's mission and values.

Spiritual management also serves as a medium for internalizing Islamic values within organizational structures and culture. The interviews confirmed that spirituality integrated into

managerial activities encourages the development of a religious, cooperative, and service-oriented work culture. This is consistent with the Tawhidic Paradigm in Islamic management, which emphasizes that all organizational activities should be oriented toward the principle of tawhid and the unity of worship and work (Gazi et al., 2024). Accordingly, human resources should be managed holistically across intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. When these dimensions are consistently developed, the institution can foster human resources who are not only professional but also trustworthy (*amanah*), character-driven, and loyal to the institution.

Recruitment and Selection: Assessing Not Only Competence but Also Integrity

Interviews with the Head of the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office in Bitung City indicate that recruitment within Islamic educational institutions is oriented not only toward technical competence but also toward character, particularly integrity. In addition to academic ability, indicators such as honesty, responsibility, and alignment of personal values with organizational culture are considered important criteria in employee selection. Furthermore, integrity-based selection strategies described in the interviews, such as ethical case studies, behavioral observation during interviews, and background checks, demonstrate an effort to assess moral qualities systematically. Through moral simulations and ethical dilemmas, organizations can identify applicants' ability to respond to pressure, make fair decisions, and demonstrate honesty in complex situations. This approach is considered more valid for assessing long-term employee fit with a values-based organizational culture.

Selection processes that consider integrity are particularly important given the institution's role in providing moral and spiritual education. Employees are expected not only to work efficiently but also to represent Islamic values as manifested in institutional practice. When recruitment is grounded in considerations of character and *akhlak*, the institution not only obtains technically reliable human resources but also employees who are prepared to serve as role models and uphold Islamic values in the context of public service.

Training and Development: Islamic Personality Development Programs

The interviews indicate that Islamic personality development and training have become integral components of HR quality improvement strategies within the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Bitung City. The institution actively organizes development programs, both internally and through training centers, emphasizing Islamic values such as religious moderation, Islamic work ethics, and social responsibility. This indicates that training is not directed solely toward improving employees' technical capacities but also toward developing moral character aligned with the mission of Islamic education.

The effectiveness of Islamic personality development programs, particularly through routine religious study sessions, *tadzkir*, and Islamic-based national values training, suggests that greater exposure to spiritual values is associated with stronger internalization of moral conduct in employees' work behavior. In this regard, Islamic personality development serves as a medium for value transformation that enables employees to reconstruct their ways of thinking and acting in ways that are consistently aligned with Islamic ethics. Within Islamic educational institutions, spiritual and moral training functions not only as an instrument for strengthening individual personality but also as a collective mechanism for creating an organizational culture grounded in moral conduct. Therefore, structured and continuous training should be viewed as a managerial strategy for developing human resources who are not only administratively professional but also capable of serving as role models in professional and social life. When Islamic values are internalized through systematic training, institutions can develop human resources who are character-driven, adaptive, and loyal to institutional values.

Performance Evaluation: Assessment Based on Morality and Work Ethics

Based on the interviews, the performance evaluation system within the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Bitung City incorporates moral and work-ethics dimensions in addition to technical aspects and work-target achievement. Indicators such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and ethical interaction constitute integral components of the assessment mechanism. This reflects a values-based performance appraisal approach, as proposed by Grote (2011), who argues that comprehensive performance assessment should incorporate behavioral, ethical, and organizational-culture contributions (Grote, 2011). In Islamic educational institutions, such an evaluation approach is important to ensure that employees are not only administratively effective but also consistent in demonstrating Islamic character in carrying out their duties.

The assessment methods include observation of everyday behavior, monitoring compliance with institutional norms, and feedback from supervisors or colleagues, as explained by the informants. This approach is consistent with the theory of 360-degree feedback, which emphasizes the importance of multi-source evaluation in obtaining a comprehensive picture of employee competence and work ethics (London & Beatty, 1993). Evaluation is therefore not limited to final outcomes but also considers work processes and attitudes while employees carry out their responsibilities. This is particularly relevant in religious bureaucracy, where work processes should reflect values such as *amanah* (trustworthiness) and *ihsan* (excellence in conduct). Accordingly, institutions need to continue developing character-based evaluation systems as developmental instruments rather than merely mechanisms of control. Integrating moral indicators into performance evaluation is an important strategy for cultivating an ethical and transcendental organizational culture. This approach is consistent with Islamic management, which places *akhlak al-karimah* (noble character) as a principal standard for assessing individual success. Thus, performance evaluation that incorporates ethical dimensions can strengthen value-based work practices and serve as an effective instrument for developing human resources who are not only high-performing but also morally upright.

Career Development and Retention: Building Loyal and Character-Driven Human Resources

Interviews with the Head of the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office in Bitung City confirm that career development within Islamic educational institutions is based not only on technical competence but also on employees' character and integrity. Employees who demonstrate honesty, responsibility, discipline, and the ability to serve as role models receive greater consideration in career development and promotion. Career development that emphasizes character functions as a strategic mechanism for strengthening institutional leadership that is clean, ethical, and service-oriented.

Furthermore, the interviews indicate a close relationship between character development and employee retention. Employees are developed not merely to become experts but also to become individuals of noble character, and they demonstrate stronger loyalty and emotional attachment to the institution. Employees who perceive that the institution values their personal and spiritual principles are likely to develop a deeper sense of responsibility and a lower likelihood of leaving the organization, even when facing pressure or more attractive external opportunities. When career development is oriented toward these dimensions, employee retention is expected not merely to improve statistically but also to produce leaders who are morally grounded, responsible, and capable of serving as role models in the workplace and broader community.

Barriers: Cultural Resistance, Limited Understanding, and Insufficient Leadership Exemplarity

The interviews reveal that one of the main barriers to integrating character values into HRM within the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Bitung City is the perception among some employees that values such as integrity, ethics, and spirituality belong to the private sphere rather than the

professional domain that should be institutionally regulated. This barrier reflects cultural resistance within organizations, as Schein argues that organizational culture change is often constrained by established values embedded in the cognitive structures of individuals and groups (Schein, 2016).

Limited understanding of character as a component of bureaucratic professionalism represents another significant challenge in establishing a comprehensive value-based work system. At the same time, the interviews indicate that although most employees already demonstrate good work character, the successful institutionalization of values remains highly dependent on leadership exemplarity. The absence of exemplary leadership weakens the effectiveness of value internalization because leaders' behavior within organizations serves as a symbol and moral direction for the institution (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Transformational Leadership theory emphasizes that leaders who demonstrate integrity, honesty, and consistency between words and actions are more likely to build trust and loyalty and stimulate the internalization of positive values within organizational structures. Thus, the absence of leaders who function as role models can hinder the transformation of organizational culture toward a character-based institution.

These barriers also demonstrate the importance of a systemic approach to character integration. Character cannot be developed solely through normative instructions or incidental training; rather, it requires a gradual and sustained organizational culture-change strategy. In this case, without a deliberately designed change strategy supported by key actors, barriers such as cultural resistance and limited understanding will continue to impede the development of strong and competitive human resources.

Solutions: Integrated Training, Value-Based Leadership, and HR Regulations Emphasizing Character

In response to the barriers to integrating character values into HRM, the interview findings show that the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Bitung City has developed several structural and cultural strategies. These strategies include work-discipline training, strengthening a culture of professionalism, and internalizing moral values through habituation. Integrated training that focuses not only on technical competence but also on spirituality and work ethics serves as an important foundation for developing human resources who are professionally capable and morally grounded.

The interviews also indicate that exemplary leadership plays a key role in internalizing character values within the organizational work culture. Leaders who consistently demonstrate integrity, responsibility, and fairness exert a transformational influence on employees. Strengthening value-based leadership capacity is, therefore, a strategic investment in creating a work environment that supports character internalization at all structural levels.

Another solution emerging from the interviews is the importance of formal regulations that emphasize integrating character values throughout the HRM cycle, from recruitment and training to evaluation and career promotion. When character values are established as indicators within performance regulations, institutions can systematically create binding mechanisms of ethical accountability. The combination of normative approaches, leadership exemplarity, and regulatory systems thus constitutes an important foundation for developing a work culture that is not only professional but also character-driven and oriented toward transcendence.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the integration of character values into human resource management (HRM) in Islamic educational institutions under the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Bitung City is not merely normative but has become a structured managerial strategy with tangible implications for organizational quality. Core values such as integrity, responsibility, and honesty play an important role in shaping individual performance, employee loyalty, and a healthy work culture. In addition, spiritual management practices, implemented consistently through religious activities and spiritual development, contribute to the formation of work ethic and employees'

transcendental awareness. These values are also incorporated into recruitment, training, performance evaluation, and career development, demonstrating institutional commitment to making character a principal parameter throughout the HRM cycle.

The integration of character values nevertheless continues to face challenges, particularly limited understanding of the importance of moral values as part of professionalism and weak leadership exemplarity at certain levels. To address these challenges, the institution has developed solutions that include integrated training, value-based professional development, and HR regulations emphasizing ethics and spirituality. Leadership based on moral exemplarity is also a key factor in sustaining the internalization of character values. This study recommends that HRM in Islamic educational institutions continue to be directed toward a synthesis of professional competence and moral-spiritual excellence in order to develop an educational bureaucracy that is not only efficient but also characterized by integrity, vision, and amanah in fulfilling its religious and national mandate.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

During the preparation of this article, the author used ChatGPT, an AI-based language model developed by OpenAI, to assist with language refinement, grammatical correction, and the improvement of academic writing clarity. The use of this tool was intended to support the presentation and organization of the manuscript. The analysis of character values integration into human resource management in Islamic educational institutions under the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Bitung City, including the interpretation of research findings and the formulation of conclusions, was reviewed and verified by the author. The author takes full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and final content of the manuscript.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to express sincere appreciation to the relevant Islamic educational institutions and representatives of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Bitung City for their cooperation and support in facilitating this research. The author is also grateful to the research participants who shared their knowledge, experiences, and perspectives on the integration of character values into human resource management in Islamic educational institutions. Furthermore, appreciation is extended to the scholars whose published works provided valuable theoretical insights for this study. Any errors, limitations, or shortcomings in this article remain the sole responsibility of the author.

REFERENCES

- Allen, N. J., & Meyer, J. P. (1990). The Measurement and Antecedents of Affective, Continuance and Normative Commitment to the Organization. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 63, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351121149-6>
- Amaliyah, R., & Rindaningsih, I. (2025). Manajemen Sumber Daya Manusia di Lembaga Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia. *Tsaqofah*, 5(1), 726–742. <https://doi.org/10.58578/tsaqofah.v5i1.4597>
- Basit, A., Ahmad, A., Azhari, D. S., Ingriza, R., & Qurba, A.-Q. (2024). Fundamental Human Resource Management Concepts for Islamic Educational Institutions: Fostering Character and Religious Values through Strategic Workforce Development. *Abjadia*, 9(3), 737–744. <https://doi.org/10.18860/abj.v9i3.29828>
- Bass, B. M., & Steidlmeier, P. (1999). Ethics, Character, and Authentic Transformational Leadership Behavior. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 10(2), 181–217.
- Espinosa, J. C., Contreras, F., Esguerra, G. A., & Fierro, I. (2017). Preliminary Validation of Fry's Spiritual Leadership Model in Colombian and Ecuadorian Workers. *Acta Colombiana de Psicología*, 20(1), 190–202.

- Gazi, M. A. I., Rahaman, M. A., Masum, M., Mia, S., Islam, M. F., Nabi, M. N., & Senathirajah, A. R. B. S. (2024). Navigating Organizational Management: Islamic Insights on Unity of Command and Unity of Direction. *Development*, 8(15), 9478.
- Grote, R. C. (2011). *How to Be Good at Performance Appraisals: Simple, Effective, Done Right*. Harvard Business Review Press.
- Karakas, F. (2010). Spirituality and Performance in Organizations: A Literature Review. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 94(1), 89–106.
- London, M., & Beatty, R. W. (1993). 360-Degree Feedback as a Competitive Advantage. *Human Resource Management*, 32(2–3), 353–372.
- Muid, A., & Nasrulloh, N. (2024). The Role of Education in the Formation of Character and Noble Morals from the Perspective of the Qur'an. *Journal of International Multidisciplinary Research*, 2(11), 218–226.
- Schein, E. H. (2016). *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (5th ed.). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Siswadi, Y., Jufrizen, J., Saripuddin, J., Farisi, S., & Sari, M. (2023). Organizational Culture and Organizational Citizenship Behavior: The Mediating Role of Learning Organizations and Organizational Commitment. *Jurnal Riset Bisnis Dan Manajemen*, 16(1), 73–82.