

Beyond Managerial Assumptions: Human Resource Management and Educational Quality in Islamic Early Childhood Education

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ABSTRACT. Improving educational quality remains a major concern in Islamic early childhood education, where effective management of educators and staff is often assumed to play a critical role. This study aims to examine the effect of human resource management (HRM) on educational quality improvement in Raudhatul Athfal (RA) institutions in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. A quantitative survey design was employed, involving 21 educators and staff selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire measuring HRM practices and educational quality, and analyzed using assumption testing and simple linear regression. The results of the normality tests indicated that the data were not normally distributed, while the linearity test confirmed a linear relationship between the variables. However, the regression analysis revealed that HRM does not have a statistically significant direct effect on educational quality, as indicated by both partial (t-test) and simultaneous (F-test) results. These findings suggest that improvements in educational quality in RA institutions may not be driven solely by formal HRM practices, but rather by other process-oriented and contextual factors inherent in Islamic early childhood education. The study contributes to educational management literature by highlighting the context-dependent nature of HRM effectiveness and by identifying the limitations of assuming direct managerial impacts on educational quality. Future research is encouraged to explore indirect mechanisms through which HRM may influence educational outcomes.

Keywords: *Human Resource Management, Educational Quality, Islamic Early Childhood Education, Raudhatul Athfal.*

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INTRODUCTION

Improving educational quality has become a central concern in global education policy, particularly in early childhood education (ECE), where learning experiences play a critical role in shaping children's cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development. International organizations consistently emphasize that the quality of early childhood education depends not only on curriculum and infrastructure but also on the human resources who design and implement learning experiences, especially teachers and educational staff (OECD, 2017).

In response to this concern, human resource management (HRM) has been increasingly promoted as a strategic mechanism to improve educational quality (Albert et al., 2025; Yusdiana et al., 2026). HRM encompasses practices such as recruitment, training, performance evaluation, and professional development, which are expected to strengthen workforce capacity and institutional effectiveness. In organizational and educational management literature, HRM is often associated with improved performance outcomes through enhanced employee competence,

motivation, and engagement (Alwi & Mumtahana, 2023; Avdeeva & Kokodey, 2024; Jiang et al., 2012; Nellitawati et al., 2024).

Several empirical studies support this assumption. Research in school and educational management contexts suggests that effective HRM practices contribute to improved teaching quality and organizational performance, particularly when HRM is integrated with professional learning and instructional leadership (Runhaar, 2016; Thoonen et al., 2011). From this perspective, HRM is viewed as an important lever for educational improvement, as it helps align institutional goals with teachers' professional growth and instructional practices (Agustyarini et al., 2026; Janah et al., 2026; Nitae et al., 2025). In Islamic school, Empirical evidence from Islamic education settings also suggests that human resource management (HRM) can contribute to improved educational performance, particularly when HRM is enacted as a coherent system of teacher development rather than mere administrative compliance. For example, studies conducted in integrated Islamic schools (*Sekolah Dasar Islam Terpadu/SDIT*) report that human resource development and leadership-driven HRM practices are positively associated with teacher performance, with HR development functioning as a key pathway linking leadership and teacher outcomes (Bayinah et al., 2024; Rahman, 2025). Evidence from madrasah contexts similarly indicates that HRM strategies can stimulate teacher innovation and creativity, suggesting that HRM contributes to educational quality improvement through professional growth and instructional enhancement mechanisms (Haqqi et al., 2025; Husnaeni & Burga, 2024; Rosdiana et al., 2024; Siswadi et al., 2026). In Islamic school settings that explicitly integrate HRM with Islamic values, such as ruhiyah or spiritual development, HRM is described as supporting educator performance through more holistic workforce development approaches (Rahman, 2025). Additional recent case studies in Islamic schooling also identify HRM as an enabling factor for improving educator performance and learning outcomes when aligned with institutional goals and supported by effective leadership (Aziz & Marlina, 2025; Humaida et al., 2026).

At the same time, findings across Islamic education settings indicate that HRM effects are conditional, tending to be stronger when HRM is implemented strategically and consistently, and weaker when HRM remains procedural, under-resourced, or weakly connected to classroom practice (Bayinah et al., 2024; Rosdiana et al., 2024). This conditionality aligns with broader strategic HRM scholarship, which emphasizes that HRM effects typically operate through mediating mechanisms, such as teacher capability and motivation, rather than through the mere formal presence of HR structures.

However, evidence regarding the effectiveness of HRM in education remains inconsistent and context-dependent. A growing body of literature cautions against assuming a universal positive effect of HRM on educational outcomes. Strategic HRM scholars argue that HRM does not automatically lead to improved performance and that its impact depends on contextual conditions, implementation quality, and alignment with core organizational activities (Huriyah et al., 2025; Paauwe, 2009; Sagoro et al., 2025; Shittu et al., 2025). In educational settings, HRM practices may remain administrative or compliance-oriented, limiting their influence on teaching and learning processes (Runhaar, 2016).

This complexity is particularly evident in early childhood education, where educational quality is strongly associated with process quality, such as teacher-child interactions, responsiveness, and pedagogical sensitivity, rather than formal managerial structures alone (OECD, 2021; Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004). Studies in ECE consistently show that improvements in educational quality are closely linked to educators' professional competence and daily classroom practices, suggesting that HRM reforms may not directly translate into improved outcomes unless they meaningfully influence pedagogy.

These challenges are especially relevant in the context of Raudhatul Athfal (RA), Islamic early childhood education institutions in Indonesia. RA institutions operate under distinctive governance structures that combine national education standards with religious and institutional regulations. Previous studies on RA have largely focused on curriculum implementation, teacher

behavior, or compliance with national quality standards, while empirical investigations into the role of HRM remain limited (Masnipal & Yugo, 2025; Noor, 2020). As a result, the extent to which HRM contributes to educational quality improvement in RA institutions is still unclear.

Furthermore, regional contexts such as Southeast Sulawesi present additional challenges related to institutional capacity, resource availability, and professional development opportunities. These contextual factors may shape how HRM practices are implemented and whether they can meaningfully influence educational quality. Despite the growing emphasis on HRM as a driver of educational improvement, empirical evidence from Islamic early childhood education institutions in developing regions remains scarce, particularly studies that critically examine both the presence and the effectiveness of HRM.

This study addresses this gap by examining the effect of human resource management on educational quality improvement in RA institutions in Southeast Sulawesi. By empirically testing this relationship and situating the findings within contemporary HRM and educational quality debates, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of when and under what conditions HRM supports educational quality, rather than assuming its effectiveness across all educational contexts.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach using a survey research design (Darwin & Umam, 2020), to investigate the effect of human resource management (HRM) on educational quality improvement in Raudhatul Athfal (RA) institutions was conducted during the 2025 academic year in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. A quantitative design was selected to enable objective measurement of HRM practices and educational quality and to assess their relationship using inferential statistics (Ringle et al., 2023).

Data were collected directly from respondents through a structured questionnaire. The population of this study comprised educators and staff working in RA institutions, particularly those involved in instructional activities and institutional management. A total of 21 respondents participated in the study. The sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique (Barroga & Janet, 2023), with inclusion criteria focusing on respondents' active involvement in educational implementation and familiarity with HRM practices within their institutions.

Data collection was carried out in a systematic manner. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their participation was voluntary and confidential. Completed questionnaires were screened to ensure completeness before being included in the analysis (Cheah et al., 2020). The data obtained were then subjected to descriptive analysis of the human resource management and education quality variables. The calculations used in this analysis are as follows and refer to the formula: $P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$ (Sayyida, 2023). Note: P = Percentage, F = Number of responses from respondents, N = Number of respondents.

The criteria for assessing student learning motivation levels in blended learning will then be analyzed using the following table (Ghanad, 2023):

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis Assessment Criteria

No	Positive Statement	Negative Statements	Interval
1.	Very High	Very Low	85% - 100%
2.	High	Low	69% - 84%
3.	Low	High	53% - 68%
4.	Very Low	Very High	36% - 52%

Structural model testing in PLS was conducted using SmartPLS for Windows V.2 software. Partial Least Squares (PLS) involves two steps. First, designing a measurement model (Outer Model) by assessing the Convergent Validity test output of each construct indicator. An indicator is considered reliable if its value is greater than 0.70, while a factor loading of 0.50-0.60 is considered adequate. Based on this criterion, any factor loading below 0.50 is dropped from the model (Sayyida, 2023).

Following this, discriminant validity testing is performed. An indicator is considered valid if it has the highest factor loading for the intended construct among all constructs. Composite reliability testing is then performed by measuring internal consistency, with a value above 0.70. If all latent variables have composite reliability or Cronbach's alpha values ≥ 0.7 , the construct has good reliability (Ji et al., 2021).

The second stage of the SMART-PLS analysis is testing the inner model, which can be seen from several indicators, including: 1. Path coefficient test, which measures the range of values from -1 to 1. A range of 0 to 1 is considered positive, and a range of -1 to 0 is considered negative. 2. Determinant Coefficient or R-square (R²). The R² value for each endogenous latent variable is considered to be the predictive power of the structural model (Darwin & Umam, 2020). The R-squared value is the result of a linear regression test, indicating the extent to which the exogenous variable can explain the endogenous variable. An R-square value above 0.67 indicates a strong category, 0.67 - 0.33 indicates a moderate category, and 0.33-0.19 indicates a weak category (Cheah et al., 2020).

After testing the outer and inner models, the next step is to explain the relationship between variables x and y by examining the probability values and t-statistics. The probability and p-value values with a 5% alpha are <0.05 (Fernanda et al., 2022). The t-table value for a 5% alpha is 1.96. So the criteria for accepting or rejecting the hypothesis are: H_a is accepted and H_o is rejected if the t-statistic is $>$ the t-table value of 1.96. To reject or accept the hypothesis using probability, then H_a is accepted if the p-value < 0.05 .

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Descriptive Variable Analysis Human Resource Management

The human resource management variables in this study were measured using five indicators: staff planning, recruitment, training, supervision, and performance evaluation. The percentage analysis results are detailed in the following table:

Table 2. Results of Descriptive Analysis of Human Resource Management

No.	Statement	Percentage Value
Staff Planning		
1.	Recruitment of teaching staff is in accordance with school needs	95.2%
2.	The principal agrees on teaching staff recruitment methods	89.3%
3.	The principal conducts evaluations to determine the success rate of teaching staff	86.9%
4.	The recruitment process is carried out in accordance with school needs	81.0%
	<i>Percentage Value for Staff Planning Indicator</i>	88,1%
Staff Recruitment		
5.	The teaching staff recruitment process is not carried out properly	38.1%
6.	The school uses information and communication technology in recruitment	75.0%
7.	Recruitment methods influence the acquisition of qualified teaching staff	84.5%
8.	Distributing teaching staff recruitment announcements on social media	73.8%
	<i>Percentage Value for Staff Recruitment Indicator</i>	67,9%
Training		
9.	The school does not make recruitment announcements	47.6%
10.	Teaching staff recruitment activities are in accordance with school goals	81.0%
11.	Identifying teaching staff needed by the school	77.4%

12.	Finding potential teaching staff	81.0%
	<i>Percentage Value of Training Indicator</i>	71.7%
	Supervision	
13.	Teaching staff do not match the needs of the school	45.2%
14.	The school provides facilities for teaching staff to develop their creativity	88.1%
15.	Teaching staff are not supported to continue their education	48.8%
16.	Teaching staff are not provided with adequate facilities	42.9%
	<i>Percentage Value of Staff Supervision Indicator</i>	56.3%
	Performance Evaluation	
17.	Evaluation results are used in decision-making	77.4%
18.	Evaluation results provide feedback to improve future human resource planning	79.8%
19.	Evaluations are only conducted when problems arise	54.8%
20.	The evaluation process is not carried out properly	42.9%
	<i>Percentage Value of Staff Evaluation Indicator</i>	63.7%

Based on the descriptive analysis results, the highest percentage value of 81.0% for the Staff Planning indicator means that human resource management at the early childhood education level in South Sulawesi is at a very good level. Statements on teaching staff planning are carried out through the recruitment of teaching staff to meet school needs, with a 95.2% value. All indicators in human resource management are above 50%, indicating that the processes of staff planning, recruitment, training, supervision, and performance evaluation at early childhood education institutions in South Sulawesi are at a very good level.

Descriptive Variable Analysis Educational Quality

The dependent variable, educational quality, encompassed aspects of teaching implementation, learning processes, and institutional support for early childhood development in RA settings. The percentage analysis results are detailed in the following table:

Table 3. Results of Descriptive Analysis of Educational Quality

No.	Statement	Percentage Value
	Institutional Support	
1.	Teachers do not use the lesson plans prepared by the school	40.5%
2.	The quality of the facilities and infrastructure provided does not meet established standards	46.4%
3.	Adequate tools are not available for the learning process	45.2%
4.	The school does not provide adequate facilities and infrastructure	38.1%
	<i>Institutional Support Indicator Value</i>	42.6%
	Learning Process	
5.	Teachers develop learning materials in accordance with learning objectives	85.7%
6.	Teachers provide lesson plans at the beginning of each new school year	65.5%
7.	The methods used are not easy to understand	48.8%
8.	Teachers do not correct student work	50.0%
9.	Teachers do not provide practice questions	57.1%
	<i>Learning Process Indicator Value</i>	61.4%
	Learning Implementation	
10.	Teachers do not provide objective assessments	38.1%
11.	Teachers' educational level is not important	35.7%
12.	Educators must establish standards	83.3%
13.	Educators can be good role models for students	86.9%
	59.5%	
14.	Educators do things that are not in accordance with school regulations	53.6%
	<i>Learning Implementation Indicator Score</i>	59.5%

Based on the descriptive analysis, the highest percentage score of 81.0% for the learning process indicator indicates that the quality of education at the early childhood education level in South Sulawesi is very good. The statement on the learning process indicates that educators develop learning materials in accordance with learning objectives, with a 85.7% score. All indicators of education quality are above 50%, indicating that the implementation of teaching, the

learning process, and institutional support at early childhood education institutions in South Sulawesi are at a very good level.

SMART PLS Inferential Analysis

Outer Model Testing

The Smart PLS output from the bootstrapping command produces the T-statistic shown in Figure 1 as follows:

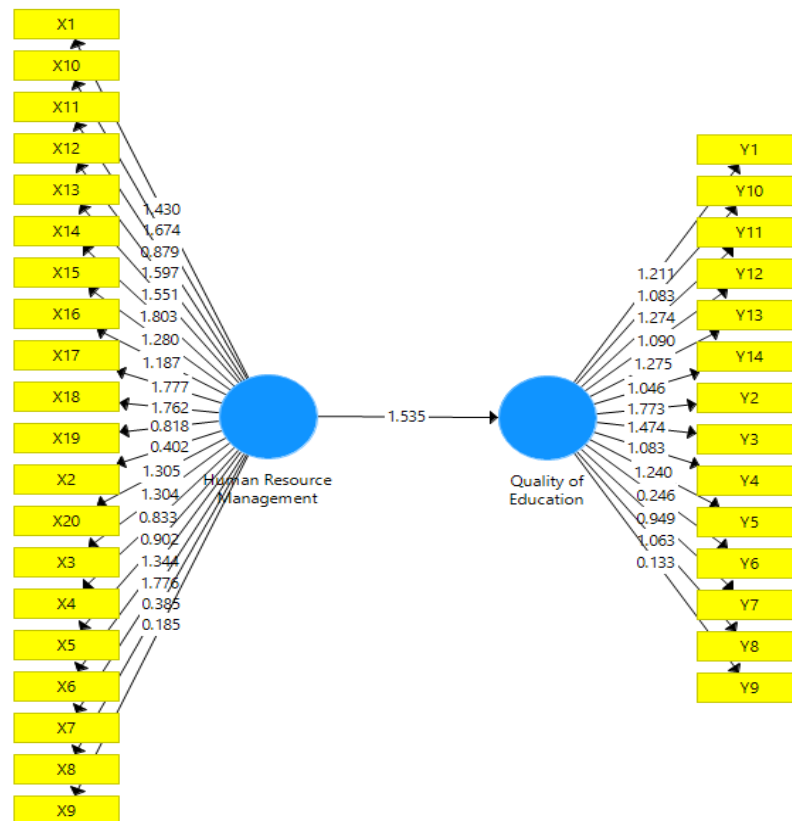


Figure 1. Model Diagram of Bootstrapping T-Statistic Output

Outer Loading Value

After obtaining the T-statistic, the next step is to evaluate the measurement model by examining indicator validity and construct reliability (convergent and discriminant validity). The output values for the individual item reliability of the human resource management variable are detailed as follows:

Table 4. Outer Loading Results

Item Statement	Outer Loading	Cut Off	Description
X1	0.670	> 0,6	Valid
X2	0.762	> 0,6	Valid
X3	0.630	> 0,6	Valid
X4	0.675	> 0,6	Valid
X5	0.987	> 0,6	Valid
X6	0.646	> 0,6	Valid
X7	0.735	> 0,6	Valid
X8	0.992	> 0,6	Valid
X9	0.753	> 0,6	Valid

X10	0.759	> 0,6	Valid
X11	0.759	> 0,6	Valid
X12	0.983	> 0,6	Valid
X13	0.610	> 0,6	Valid
X14	0.689	> 0,6	Valid
X15	0.623	> 0,6	Valid
X16	0.778	> 0,6	Valid
X17	0.792	> 0,6	Valid
X18	0.688	> 0,6	Valid
X19	0.750	> 0,6	Valid
X20	0.763	> 0,6	Valid

Source: Processed Primary Data (2025)

The results of the SMART PLS analysis using the Calculate PLS Algorithm for human resource management indicate that all statements are valid and can be used in further analysis because all statements have outer loadings greater than 0.6.

Meanwhile, in the evaluation of the measurement model, the individual item reliability of the education quality variable (Y) was measured using the following 14 statements:

Table 5. Outer Loading Results for Education Quality

Item Statement	Outer Loading	Cut Off	Description
Y1	0.798	> 0,6	Valid
Y2	0.702	> 0,6	Valid
Y3	0.767	> 0,6	Valid
Y4	0.735	> 0,6	Valid
Y5	0.701	> 0,6	Valid
Y6	0.812	> 0,6	Valid
Y7	0.766	> 0,6	Valid
Y8	0.914	> 0,6	Valid
Y9	0.702	> 0,6	Valid
Y10	0.731	> 0,6	Valid
Y11	0.876	> 0,6	Valid
Y12	0.708	> 0,6	Valid
Y13	0.814	> 0,6	Valid
Y14	0.712	> 0,6	Valid

Source: Processed Primary Data (2025)

The results of the SMART PLS analysis using the Calculate PLS Algorithm for the education quality variable (QE) indicate that all statements are valid and can be used in further analysis because all indicators have outer loadings greater than 0.6.

Internal Consistency or Construct Reliability

Internal consistency reliability is indicated by Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values. The interpretation of Composite Reliability (CR) is the same as Cronbach's Alpha. A cut-off value >0.7 is acceptable, and a value >0.8 is reliable and very satisfactory.

Table 6. Cronbach's Alpha & Composite Reliability Test Results.

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Criteria CA	Composite Reliability	Criteria CR	Description
HRM	0.978	> 0.7	0.980	> 0.8	Reliable
QE	0.974	> 0.7	0.977	> 0.8	Reliable

Source: Processed Primary Data (2025)

The results of the SMART PLS analysis using the Calculate PLS Algorithm Output Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability for the human resource management (HRM) and quality of education (QE) variables indicate that all variables are reliable and can be used in further analysis because all variables have Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.7, and Composite Reliability values greater than 0.8.

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) Value

Fornell and Larcker, as cited in Ghozali, recommend an AVE of >0.4 as indicative of good convergent validity. This means that the latent variable can, on average, explain more than half of the variance in its indicators. The AVE value indicates the extent to which the latent construct accounts for variance or diversity in the manifest variables. The first three measurements are considered to demonstrate convergent validity. Convergent validity measures the magnitude of the correlation between the construct and the latent variable.

Table 7. Average Variance Extracted Test Results

Variable	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
HRM	0.807
QE	0.842

Source: Processed Primary Data (2025)

The results of the SMART PLS analysis using the Calculate PLS Algorithm indicate that all latent variables have Average Variance Extracted values greater than 0.4. This means that all variable constructs can, on average, explain more than half of the variance in their indicators and can be used in subsequent analyses.

Inner Model Testing

To answer the research hypothesis regarding the influence of entrepreneurial behavior on farming performance in Lumajang Regency, the results of the inner model test first ensured that the coefficient of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and overall goodness of fit were high and satisfactory. Therefore, the proposed model is valid and fits the overall model.

Evaluating the R-Square Value

The R^2 value in the structural model indicates a good, moderate, and weak model fit—the R^2 value for the dependent latent variable, education quality. The structural model was evaluated by evaluating the R^2 value for the dependent variable. The results of the SMART PLS analysis using the Calculate PLS Algorithm (RPLS) R -Square value are described in the following table.

Table 8. Determination of R-Square of Dependent Variable

Dependent Construct	R Square	R Square Adjusted
QE (Quality of Education)	0.684	0.316

Source: Processed Primary Data (2025)

The calculation results in Table 8 show a Business Performance coefficient of 0.684, indicating that the independent variables of human resource management account for 68.4% of the variation in the quality of education. This indicates that the proposed model is valid or fit.

Evaluating the Goodness of Fit Value

The goodness-of-fit test is conducted by evaluating the overall structural model using the Goodness of Fit (GOF) index. The GOF index is a single measure that assesses the combined performance of the measurement and structural models.

Table 9. Goodness of Fit Test Results

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.127	0.127
d_ULS	3.391	3.391
d_G	2.334	2.334
Chi-Square	1028.217	1028.217
NFI	0.633	0.633

Source: Processed Primary Data (2025)

Based on Table 9, the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) output is 0.127 and/or the normal fit index (NFI) output is 0.633, with the following interpretations: > 0.1 (small Gof), > 0.25 (moderate Gof), and > 0.36 (large Gof). The GOF index is 0.076, which is greater than 0.36, indicating a high GOF and a very good fit for the research model.

Research Hypothesis Testing

Once the data meet the requirements for the measurement model and structural model, the hypothesis can be tested using the significance of (1) the path coefficient, (2) the t-statistic, and (3) the R-squared value. The path coefficient is used to assess the structural model by examining the significance of the relationships between constructs, which describes the strength of those relationships. The sign or direction of the path coefficient must align with the hypothesized theory. Its significance can be assessed using a t-test or the CR (critical ratio) obtained from a bootstrapping (resampling) process.

The following presents the results of hypothesis testing for the SEM-PLS model relating human resource management (HRM) to quality of education (QE).

Table 10. Hypothesis Test Results: Path Coefficients

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (STDEV)	P Values
HRM -> QE	-0.926	-0.735	0.603	1.535	0.125

Source: Processed Primary Data (2025)

Based on the Path Coefficients values in Table 10, several conclusions can be drawn regarding the hypotheses outlined as follows: Hypothesis 1 examines the influence of human resource management (HRD) and the quality of education (QE) in South Sulawesi. The test results yielded a p-value of $0.125 < 0.005$, thus confirming the following conclusion:

Ho is accepted: Human resource management (HRD) has no effect on the quality of education (QE) for early childhood in South Sulawesi.

The original sample interpretation, with a negative value of -0.926, indicates that the human resource management (HRM) and quality of education (QE) variables are inversely related. If the value of the human resource management variable increases, the value of the quality of education variable decreases, or vice versa.

Discussion

The results of hypothesis testing conclude that Human resource management (HRD) has no effect on the quality of education (QE) for early childhood in South Sulawesi. The original sample interpretation, with a negative value of -0.926, indicates that the human resource management (HRM) and quality of education (QE) variables are inversely related. If the value of the human resource management variable increases, the value of the quality of education variable decreases, or vice versa. The present study examined the direct effect of human resource management (HRM) on educational quality and found that the relationship was not statistically significant. While this result diverges from managerial assumptions that position HRM as a primary driver of organizational performance, it aligns with a growing body of international literature emphasizing that educational quality is a multidimensional and context-dependent outcome rather than a direct product of managerial systems alone (Bush, 2016; Hallinger, 2016).

Rather than indicating the ineffectiveness of HRM, the findings suggest that HRM may operate through indirect, conditional, or mediated mechanisms, which are not captured by direct-effect regression models. In the other words, the results indicate that HRM does not have a statistically significant direct effect on educational quality. Both the partial (*t*-test) and simultaneous (*F*-test) analyses consistently showed non-significant results, even though the relationship between HRM and educational quality was found to be linear.

These findings suggest that, within the RA context, HRM practices alone may be insufficient to directly enhance educational quality. This result aligns with research in early childhood education (ECE) emphasizing that educational quality is primarily determined by process-oriented factors, such as teacher–child interactions, pedagogical responsiveness, and daily instructional practices, rather than by managerial structures in isolation (OECD, 2021; Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004). In RA institutions, where learning emphasizes holistic child development and religious values, improvements in educational quality may depend more on classroom-level practices than on formal HRM arrangements.

From a strategic HRM perspective, the non-significant findings support arguments that HRM does not automatically lead to improved organizational outcomes. Meta-analytic and review studies in HRM consistently show that HRM effects on performance are contingent and often operate through mediating mechanisms, such as employee capability, motivation, and work opportunities, rather than through direct structural effects (Jiang et al., 2012; Paauwe, 2009). When HRM functions primarily as an administrative or compliance-oriented system, as may be the case in many RA institutions, its capacity to influence educational quality directly becomes limited.

The results can also be interpreted through the Ability–Motivation–Opportunity (AMO) framework. According to AMO theory, HRM contributes to performance when it enhances employees' abilities, strengthens motivation, and provides opportunities to perform effectively (Appelbaum et al., 2000). In RA settings, teachers often demonstrate strong intrinsic and religious motivation independent of formal HRM systems. However, opportunities for structured professional development, pedagogical innovation, and systematic instructional support may be constrained. This imbalance may explain why HRM does not emerge as a significant predictor of educational quality in the present study.

Institutional conditions further help explain the findings. From an Institutional Theory perspective, educational organizations frequently adopt formal management practices to satisfy regulatory requirements and gain legitimacy rather than to transform core instructional processes (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). RA institutions operate under dual pressures from educational authorities and religious governance structures, which may encourage the formal adoption of HRM practices without ensuring their substantive implementation in classroom practice. Under such conditions, HRM may remain weakly coupled with pedagogical improvement, resulting in limited observable effects on educational quality.

The present findings differ from studies conducted in other Islamic education contexts, such as integrated Islamic schools or secondary education institutions, that report positive effects of HRM on teacher performance and instructional quality (Bayinah et al., 2024; Runhaar, 2016; Thoonen et al., 2011). This divergence highlights the importance of educational level and institutional capacity. Early childhood institutions, particularly RA, face unique pedagogical demands, resource limitations, and workforce characteristics that may reduce the direct impact of HRM on educational outcomes.

Despite the absence of a significant direct effect, this study contributes to the literature by identifying the boundary conditions of HRM effectiveness in Islamic early childhood education. Rather than indicating that HRM is unimportant, the findings suggest that HRM may influence educational quality indirectly, through variables such as teacher professionalism, instructional practices, leadership support, and organizational culture. These mediating mechanisms were not examined in the present study and should be addressed in future research using multivariate or mixed-method approaches.

Overall, the discussion underscores the need for a context-sensitive approach to educational management in RA institutions. Efforts to improve educational quality should not rely solely on strengthening HRM systems, but also on ensuring that HRM practices are meaningfully aligned with pedagogical priorities, teacher development, and the distinctive characteristics of Islamic early childhood education.

CONCLUSION

The results of hypothesis testing conclude that Human resource management (HRD) has no effect on the quality of education (QE) for early childhood in Raudhatul Athfal (RA) institutions in Southeast Sulawesi., indicates that the human resource management (HRM) and quality of education (QE) variables are inversely related. If the value of the human resource management variable increases, the value of the quality of education variable decreases, or vice versa. Although the relationship between the two variables was linear, both partial and simultaneous tests consistently indicated non-significant results. These findings suggest that improvements in educational quality in Islamic early childhood education cannot be attributed solely to formal HRM practices. In the RA context, educational quality appears to be more strongly influenced by classroom-level and process-oriented factors, such as teacher–child interactions, pedagogical practices, and intrinsic teacher motivation, rather than managerial structures alone.

Consequently, HRM may play a supporting or indirect role rather than functioning as a primary determinant of educational quality. The study contributes to the literature by highlighting the contextual limitations of HRM effectiveness in Islamic early childhood education. By demonstrating that HRM does not automatically translate into improved educational quality, this research challenges universal assumptions regarding HRM outcomes and emphasizes the need for context-sensitive and mechanism-oriented approaches in educational management research. Several limitations should be acknowledged. The relatively small sample size restricts the generalizability of the findings, and the study examined only a direct relationship between HRM and educational quality. Future research is encouraged to explore indirect pathways, including mediating variables such as teacher professionalism, instructional quality, leadership support, and organizational culture, using larger samples and more comprehensive analytical models.

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