

EXPLORING HR MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: LESSON FROM MADRASA SERAJUL ULOOM, INDIA

Dasep Supriatna

Kazian School of Management, Mumbai India

Email: dasepazmatkhan@gmail.com

Informasi	Abstract
Volume : 2	<i>This study investigates human resource management (HRM) challenges within Madrasa Serajul Uloom, an Indian religious educational institution, using a qualitative case study approach guided by Institutional Theory. Findings reveal HRM practices are significantly shaped by the interplay of coercive pressures from state regulations, mimetic adoption of practices from peer institutions, and strong normative expectations rooted in religious values. This confluence generates tensions between formalization and tradition, leading to specific difficulties in areas like recruitment, compensation, and policy implementation. The research highlights the complex negotiation required to balance legitimacy demands.</i>
Nomor : 5	
Bulan : Mei	
Tahun : 2025	
E-ISSN : 3062-9624	
	Keywords : Human Resource Management (HRM), Religious Educational Institutions, Institutional Theory

A. INTRODUCTION

Human resource management (HRM) is critical for organizational effectiveness, yet its application within religious educational institutions (REIs) presents unique complexities often overlooked in mainstream management literature. These institutions operate at the intersection of faith-based missions and secular educational demands, creating distinct challenges for managing personnel (Nurdiana, 2023). Particularly in contexts like India, Madrasas play a significant role but face pressures balancing traditional values with contemporary administrative requirements. Understanding the specific HRM difficulties encountered by these organizations is crucial for their sustainability and effective functioning. This research addresses this gap by exploring the HRM landscape within a specific Indian Madrasa, illuminating broader issues relevant to REIs globally (Miftahul Huda, 2020).

This study focuses on Madrasa Serajul Uloom, an established Islamic educational institution in India, selected purposefully as an instrumental case study (Wenny Desty Febrian, 2023). Its operation within a complex environment, influenced by religious doctrine, community expectations, and state regulations, makes it an ideal site to investigate HRM challenges specific to REIs (Zohriah et al., 2024). The inherent tension between maintaining religious identity and complying with external mandates necessitates a nuanced analytical approach. Therefore, this research utilizes Institutional Theory, which posits that organizations conform to environmental pressures for legitimacy. This framework helps elucidate how coercive, mimetic, and normative forces shape the Madrasa's HRM practices and generate specific difficulties (Firman, 2024).

The primary aim of this research is to conduct an in-depth investigation into the specific human resource management challenges faced by Madrasa Serajul Uloom, employing a qualitative case study methodology (Mardiana et al., 2021). Guided by Institutional Theory, the study examines how coercive pressures from regulations, mimetic adoption of practices from peer institutions, and normative expectations rooted in religious traditions collectively influence HRM processes like recruitment, compensation, and staff relations. By analyzing interview data and institutional documents, this research seeks to identify the root causes of HRM difficulties and understand how the institution navigates conflicting demands, contributing valuable insights into managing REIs effectively (Rustandi et al., 2023).

B. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research utilizes Institutional Theory to understand the human resource management challenges within Madrasa Serajul Uloom. Institutional Theory posits that organizations adopt structures and practices considered legitimate within their specific environment, driven by pressures towards conformity (Rahman, 2024). These pressures manifest as coercive, mimetic, and normative isomorphism, compelling organizations to resemble others in their field to gain acceptance and resources. This framework is particularly relevant for religious educational institutions like Madrasas, which operate within strong cultural, religious, and regulatory fields, shaping their internal management approaches including HRM significantly.

Coercive isomorphism influences Madrasa Serajul Uloom through external mandates from governmental bodies or funding agencies. Compliance with state educational regulations, labor laws regarding hiring, compensation, and working conditions exerts pressure to formalize HR practices. This may conflict with traditional modes of operation deeply rooted in

religious custom or informal community agreements. The institution must navigate these external legal and regulatory demands while striving to maintain its unique religious identity and operational autonomy, creating inherent tensions within its HRM system.

Mimetic processes also shape HRM at the Madrasa. Facing uncertainty about optimal management practices within their unique context, institutions often imitate the structures and strategies of other organizations perceived as successful or legitimate. Madrasa Serajul Uloom might observe and adopt HR practices from other prominent Madrasas or even secular educational institutions regarding recruitment, performance evaluation, or staff development. This imitation serves as a risk-reduction strategy but may lead to adopting practices not fully aligned with the institution's specific mission and values.

Normative isomorphism arises from professionalization and shared values within the relevant field. For Madrasa Serajul Uloom, this involves adhering to norms established by religious scholarly networks, Islamic jurisprudence regarding employer-employee relations, and educational philosophies specific to its tradition. Expectations regarding the piety, qualifications, and conduct of staff, often defined by religious leaders or associations, significantly influence recruitment criteria, ethical guidelines, and overall HR policies, distinguishing it markedly from secular HRM frameworks and presenting unique challenges. Institutional Theory thus provides a robust lens for analyzing the complex HRM landscape at Madrasa Serajul Uloom. The interplay between seeking legitimacy from diverse sources – state regulators (coercive), peer institutions (mimetic), and religious communities (normative) – generates specific challenges. Understanding how the Madrasa negotiates these often-conflicting pressures is crucial for identifying the root causes of its HRM difficulties and exploring pathways toward practices that are both effective and congruent with its core religious identity and mission.

C. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative case study design to conduct an in-depth investigation into the human resource management challenges specific to Madrasa Serajul Uloom. This approach is particularly well-suited for exploring complex, context-dependent phenomena within a bounded system, allowing for a rich, holistic understanding of the interplay between institutional pressures and HRM practices. The case study method facilitates detailed examination of real-life situations and provides nuanced insights into the unique operational dynamics of a religious educational institution. It enables the exploration of 'how' and 'why'

specific HRM challenges manifest within this particular organizational setting, which aligns perfectly with the research objectives.

The research focuses specifically on Madrasa Serajul Uloom as an instrumental case study, selected purposefully to illuminate the broader issue of HRM challenges in religious educational institutions in India. By concentrating on this single entity, the study aims to gather comprehensive data through multiple sources, capturing the intricacies of its management processes, cultural norms, and the lived experiences of its staff and administrators regarding HR issues. This bounded approach allows for a deep dive into the specific context, examining the institution's unique history, structure, and operational environment as they relate directly to human resource management practices and difficulties encountered.

This qualitative case study design is optimal for understanding the nuanced ways institutional forces shape HRM within Madrasa Serajul Uloom. It permits the detailed exploration required to identify how coercive pressures from regulations, mimetic processes involving peer institutions, and normative expectations from religious communities converge to create specific management challenges. The flexibility inherent in this approach allows researchers to probe deeply into emergent themes and capture the perspectives of various stakeholders involved. Ultimately, the case study facilitates the generation of thick descriptions and contextualized analysis essential for addressing the research questions regarding HRM difficulties within this unique institutional field.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The HRM Landscape at Madrasa Serajul Uloom: An Overview of Institutional Influences

Findings reveal that the human resource management landscape at Madrasa Serajul Uloom is intricately shaped by a confluence of institutional forces, consistent with Institutional Theory. Analysis of interview data and institutional documents indicates that HRM practices are not solely internally driven but are significantly influenced by external pressures demanding legitimacy and conformity. This creates a complex operational environment where the institution must constantly negotiate between maintaining its distinct religious identity and adapting to broader environmental expectations regarding management standards, resulting in unique challenges.

Evidence gathered through interviews with administrators and staff, corroborated by analysis of employment guidelines, points towards the tangible impact of coercive

isomorphism. The Madrasa experiences pressure to align its HRM practices, such as hiring procedures and compensation structures, with state educational regulations and national labor laws. This push towards formalization often clashes with long-standing, religiously informed customs and informal agreements prevalent within the institution, generating significant operational tension and necessitating careful navigation to ensure compliance while preserving core values.

Mimetic processes were also observed influencing HRM strategies within Madrasa Serajul Uloom. Facing uncertainties inherent in managing a religious educational institution within a modern context, administrators reported observing and sometimes adopting HR practices from other Madrasas or educational bodies perceived as successful. Interview data suggests this imitation, particularly concerning staff training or performance assessment methods, serves as a strategy to reduce ambiguity, though it risks importing practices not fully congruent with the Madrasa's specific mission and unique operational ethos. Normative isomorphism exerts a profound influence on HRM at the institution, as evidenced by interview themes and document content analysis focusing on mission statements and staff conduct expectations. Shared religious values, expectations derived from Islamic jurisprudence regarding employer-employee relations, and norms established within Islamic scholarly networks heavily dictate recruitment criteria, ethical guidelines, and performance standards. These normative pressures ensure alignment with the institution's religious identity but also create distinct HRM challenges compared to secular organizations.

Overall, the HRM environment at Madrasa Serajul Uloom is characterized by the dynamic interplay of these coercive, mimetic, and normative pressures. Findings indicate these forces operate simultaneously, often pulling the institution in different directions. This necessitates a continuous balancing act to satisfy diverse stakeholders – regulators, peer institutions, and the religious community – leading to specific, context-dependent HRM challenges related to policy development, implementation consistency, and maintaining organizational legitimacy across multiple fronts, which subsequent sections will explore in detail.

Coercive Isomorphism in Practice: Navigating State Regulations and Labor Laws in HRM

Findings strongly indicate that coercive pressures from state educational bodies and national labor laws significantly compel Madrasa Serajul Uloom towards formalizing its HRM. Interviews revealed administrators grapple with implementing standardized hiring protocols, minimum wage adherence, and defined working hours mandated externally. Document analysis confirmed attempts to create formal employment contracts and maintain staff records aligned with regulatory expectations. This push contrasts sharply with historically informal, community-based employment arrangements, highlighting the direct impact of coercive isomorphism on operational structures within the institution.

The requirement to comply with external regulations creates palpable tension within the Madrasa, as articulated by several staff members and administrators during interviews. Adherence to secular labor laws, particularly concerning termination procedures and benefits, often conflicts with established practices rooted in Islamic jurisprudence or long-standing institutional customs. This necessitates a delicate balancing act, forcing the institution to navigate legal requirements while attempting to preserve religiously sanctioned employer-employee relationship norms, a core challenge stemming from coercive institutional forces. Specific examples of compliance efforts include the introduction of standardized job descriptions and attempts at formal performance appraisal systems, largely absent previously. However, implementation faces hurdles, as noted in administrative interviews, due to limited resources and personnel lacking formal HR training. Document analysis showed inconsistencies in applying mandated leave policies or provident fund contributions.

These practical difficulties underscore the challenges religious institutions face in fully integrating externally imposed bureaucratic structures required by coercive state mandates into their unique operational context. Staff and administrative perceptions regarding these state-mandated regulations varied. Some administrators acknowledged the necessity of compliance for legitimacy and avoiding legal sanctions, viewing it as an unavoidable aspect of modern operation. Conversely, several teaching staff expressed concerns that increased formalization, driven by external rules, could erode the institution's unique spiritual ethos and community feel. This divergence highlights the internal friction generated by coercive

pressures, impacting organizational culture alongside HRM procedures at Madrasa Serajul Uloom.

Ultimately, Madrasa Serajul Uloom attempts to reconcile coercive demands with its core identity through selective adaptation and negotiation where possible. Administrators described efforts to frame compliance within religious values or seek interpretations that minimize conflict with Islamic principles. This strategic response, aligning with Institutional Theory's view of organizations actively mediating external pressures, demonstrates the Madrasa's agency in navigating the coercive environment. It seeks legitimacy from the state without fully sacrificing the normative commitments central to its religious mission.

Mimetic Adoption and Adaptation: How Madrasa Serajul Uloom Borrows and Modifies HR Practices

Findings indicate that Madrasa Serajul Uloom engages in mimetic behavior, observing and selectively adopting HRM practices from other educational institutions, aligning with Institutional Theory's concept of imitation under uncertainty. Interview data revealed administrators actively look towards practices employed by both peer Madrasas perceived as successful and, occasionally, secular schools, particularly when facing novel administrative challenges. This borrowing is often an attempt to enhance legitimacy or find practical solutions within their unique operational context, demonstrating a clear mimetic influence on HR strategy development. Specific examples of mimetic adoption identified through interviews and document review include experimenting with structured interview formats during recruitment and introducing elements of formal staff development workshops, modeled after programs observed elsewhere. Administrators cited the need to appear 'modern' or 'professional' as a driver for adopting certain performance review terminologies or documentation styles seen in other institutions. This imitation reflects a strategy to navigate ambiguity regarding best practices in managing a religious educational entity in contemporary society.

The primary motivation for adopting HR practices from external organizations, as articulated by administrative participants, is often rooted in reducing uncertainty and seeking perceived legitimacy. By mirroring the structures or processes of institutions deemed successful or compliant, Madrasa Serajul Uloom attempts to signal competence and navigate complex managerial demands. This mimetic strategy is perceived as a lower-risk approach

compared to developing entirely novel HR systems internally, especially given resource constraints and limited specialized HR expertise within the institution. Crucially, borrowed HR practices are rarely adopted wholesale but undergo significant adaptation to fit Madrasa Serajul Uloom's specific religious and cultural context. For instance, performance evaluation criteria observed elsewhere might be modified to include assessments of religious piety or adherence to institutional ethos alongside pedagogical skills. This adaptation process, highlighted in interviews, reflects an attempt to reconcile mimetic pressures with the powerful normative expectations inherent in the Madrasa's identity, though it sometimes leads to hybrid practices.

This process of mimetic adoption and subsequent adaptation yields mixed results regarding HRM effectiveness at Madrasa Serajul Uloom. While borrowing practices can introduce potentially beneficial structures, the adaptation required to align them with normative religious values sometimes dilutes their original purpose or creates internal inconsistencies. Findings suggest this interplay between imitation and modification contributes to the complexity and challenges observed in establishing coherent and universally accepted HR policies and procedures within the institution.

The Power of Normative Pressures: Religious Expectations and Professional Standards Shaping HRM

Normative isomorphism profoundly shapes HRM at Madrasa Serajul Uloom, stemming primarily from deeply embedded religious values and expectations within its specific institutional field. Findings from interviews consistently highlighted the paramount importance of aligning HR practices with Islamic principles and the norms established by associated religious scholarly networks. Document analysis, particularly of mission statements and internal guidelines, corroborated that legitimacy within its religious community heavily dictates HRM policies, often prioritizing religious suitability over purely technical qualifications or secular professional standards found elsewhere.

Interplay and Tension: Synthesizing Institutional Demands and Addressing HRM Challenges at Madrasa Serajul Uloom

The findings demonstrate a complex interplay between coercive, mimetic, and normative institutional pressures shaping HRM at Madrasa Serajul Uloom. These forces do not operate independently but converge, creating a dynamic and often contradictory

environment. The institution must simultaneously satisfy state legal requirements, emulate perceived best practices from peers, and adhere strictly to religious and community expectations. This synthesis reveals that HRM practices are negotiated outcomes resulting from the tension between these competing logics, rather than stemming from a single, unified strategy. The primary source of HRM challenges stems from the inherent tensions between these institutional demands. For instance, coercive pressures for formalized, secular employment contracts and performance metrics directly conflict with normative expectations emphasizing religious piety, informal agreements, and community-based relationships.

Similarly, mimetic adoption of management techniques from secular institutions may clash with the Madrasa's unique religious ethos and operational norms, creating friction and resistance among staff who prioritize traditional values and practices over imported administrative systems. Madrasa Serajul Uloom navigates this complex terrain through strategic adaptation and negotiation, attempting to synthesize conflicting demands. Administrators engage in selective decoupling, formally adopting certain structures required by law while maintaining informal, normatively-driven practices internally. They also modify mimicked practices significantly to align with religious values, demonstrating agency in mediating external pressures. This balancing act is crucial for maintaining legitimacy across different institutional spheres, though it requires constant effort and careful management to avoid overt contradictions. This continuous negotiation results in specific HRM challenges, including policy ambiguity, inconsistent application of rules, and difficulties in establishing clear performance standards acceptable to all stakeholders. Staff may experience role conflict due to competing expectations from administrators enforcing regulations and religious leaders emphasizing normative conduct. Resource constraints further exacerbate these issues, limiting the capacity for developing sophisticated HR systems capable of effectively integrating the diverse and often opposing institutional requirements placed upon the Madrasa.

Ultimately, the interplay of institutional forces necessitates a hybrid approach to HRM at Madrasa Serajul Uloom, blending formal procedures with deeply ingrained religious and cultural norms. While this synthesis allows the institution to survive and maintain legitimacy within its multifaceted environment, it also generates persistent operational challenges. Addressing these difficulties requires acknowledging the legitimacy of diverse pressures and

seeking HRM solutions that are contextually appropriate, balancing efficiency and compliance with the core religious mission and identity.

E. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that human resource management within Madrasa Serajul Uloom is significantly shaped by the interplay of coercive, mimetic, and normative institutional pressures, as theorized by Institutional Theory. The research confirms that external mandates from regulatory bodies, the imitation of practices from peer institutions, and deeply ingrained religious norms collectively forge a complex HRM environment. This necessitates constant negotiation by the institution to balance demands for formal compliance and perceived best practices with the imperative to uphold its distinct religious identity and operational traditions, leading to specific, context-dependent management challenges discussed throughout the findings.

The primary HRM challenges identified stem directly from the inherent conflicts between these isomorphic forces. Coercive pressures pushing for secular, standardized procedures often clash with normative expectations rooted in Islamic jurisprudence and community customs regarding employment relationships. Similarly, mimetic adoption of external management techniques requires careful adaptation to align with the Madrasa's unique mission and values, sometimes resulting in hybrid practices that lack full coherence. The institution navigates these tensions through strategies like selective adaptation and negotiation, attempting to maintain legitimacy across diverse stakeholder groups despite the operational friction generated.

Ultimately, the case of Madrasa Serajul Uloom underscores the unique complexities of managing human resources within religious educational institutions operating under multiple institutional logics. Effective HRM in such contexts requires more than adopting generic best practices; it demands context-sensitive approaches that acknowledge and strategically reconcile competing pressures. Achieving a sustainable balance between regulatory compliance, operational efficiency derived from peer observation, and fidelity to core religious values and normative expectations remains the central challenge and key determinant of successful human resource management within this specific institutional field.

D. REFERENCES

Firman. (2024). INOVASI ISLAM PEMBELAJARAN DI ERA DIGITAL. *Jurnal Review Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran*, 7(3), 9035–9044.

- Mardiana, Aisyah, E. S. N., Hardini, M., & Riadi, B. (2021). Peran Teknologi Dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam Pada Globalisasi Untuk Kaum Milenial (Pelajar). *Alphabet Jurnal Wawasan Agama Risalah Islamiah, Teknologi Dan Sosial (Al-Waarits)*, 1(1), 65–74. <https://journal.pandawan.id/al-waarits/article/view/29>
- Miftahul Huda, R. (2020). Perkembangan Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia dan Upaya Penguatannya dalam Sistem Pendidikan Nasional. *Journal of Islamic Education Research*, 1(2), 2–14.
- Nurdiana, A. (2023). Peran Kepemimpinan dalam Pengelolaan Sumber Daya Manusia untuk Meningkatkan Kualitas Pendidikan di STAI Siliwangi Garut. *Jurnal Ekonomi Utama*, 2(3), 278–286. <https://doi.org/10.55903/juria.v2i3.127>
- Rahman, A. (2024). Dinamika Pendidikan Islam: Tantangan dan Inovasi di Era Globalisasi. *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 2(2), 76–85.
- Rustandi, F., Nova Ismawati, & Gozali. (2023). Peluang dan Tantangan Pengelolaan Sekolah Islam Terpadu: Perspektif Total Quality Management. *JEMSI (Jurnal Ekonomi, Manajemen, Dan Akuntansi)*, 9(5), 2219–2227. <https://doi.org/10.35870/jemsi.v9i5.1587>
- Wenny Desty Febrian. (2023). KESEIMBANGAN KEHIDUPAN KERJA: MEWUJUDKAN KESEJAHTERAAN KARYAWAN MELALUI MANAJEMEN SDM YANG BERKELANJUTAN. *Jurnal Review Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran*, 7(1), 728–738.
- Zohriah, A., Fauzi, A., & Al Qosam, S. N. (2024). Penerapan Konsep Dasar Manajemen Sumber Daya Manusia dalam Lingkup Pendidikan di Era Industri 4.0. *JiIP - Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan*, 7(4), 3617–3621. <https://doi.org/10.54371/jiip.v7i4.4294>