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HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IN IMPROVING SERVICE EXCELLENT AT STATE ISLAMIC **COLLEGE IN ACEH**

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Abstract

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Islamic religious colleges (PTKIN) have become increasingly preferred by prospective students seeking higher education in Indonesia. However, to remain competitive and become the primary choice, PTKIN must enhance the quality of institutional services, particularly in human resource development (HRD). Despite the growing importance of HRD in educational institutions, limited research has explored its strategic role in improving service excellence within the PTKIN context, especially in Aceh Province. This study aims to analyze the HRD strategies employed to enhance service quality in five PTKIN institutions: STAIN Teungku Dirundeng, UIN Ar-Raniry, IAIN Lhokseumawe, IAIN Langsa, and IAIN Takengon. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, document analysis, and field observations over a six-month period. The findings reveal that effective HRD strategies—characterized by structured training, managerial competence, and performance support—have a significant impact on institutional service performance. Furthermore, employee competence in delivering excellent service is positively correlated with overall organizational effectiveness. These results underscore the strategic importance of HRD in achieving service excellence and institutional development within PTKIN in Aceh Province.

Keywords: Human Resource Development, Improving, Service Excellent, State Islamic Religious College

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INTRODUCTION

Human Resources (HR) are universally recognized as the most critical asset in any organization, particularly in the field of education, where the achievement of institutional goals and the delivery of quality services depend heavily on human capital (Haq et al., 2021; Li et al., 2025). Within State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN), HR competence plays a central role in addressing the challenges posed by globalization, technological advancement, and the intensifying demand for educational quality and accountability (Esponda et al., 2024; Wibowo, 2014). The ability of academic and administrative staff to adapt and perform effectively is vital for the institutions to maintain relevance and competitiveness (Ruiz et al., 2024; Tampubolon, 2016). However, various studies have shown that public institutions in Indonesia, including PTKIN, often struggle to align their HR development strategies with desired organizational outcomes, particularly in achieving service excellence (Wisnubroto et al., 2025; Yaqien, 2017). This misalignment signals a structural issue in translating HR potential into measurable institutional performance.

From a theoretical standpoint, service excellence in higher education is intrinsically linked to the strategic development of HR—encompassing continuous training, performance-based evaluation, leadership development, and the cultivation of a responsive organizational culture (Ridhasyah et al., 2020; Shakerian et al., 2016). Service excellence goes beyond efficient administration; it reflects a deep-seated organizational commitment to exceeding stakeholder expectations, especially those of students, staff, and the public (Piwowar-Sulej, 2022; Puspitasari, 2019). In the PTKIN context, however, service excellence is rarely operationalized as a strategic outcome of HR planning. Existing literature tends to adopt normative perspectives or focus narrowly on student satisfaction, without thoroughly investigating the direct relationship between HR development strategies and institutional service performance (Marin, 2012; Mukhsinuddin et al., 2021). This signals a clear theoretical and research gap that this study aims to address.

Preliminary findings from internal audits and accreditation reports in several PTKINs in Aceh show a significant disparity between institutional service targets and the actual capacity of their human resources. For instance, BAN-PT accreditation reports (2022) indicate that many PTKINs have not implemented structured competency-based training programs, lack standardized performance evaluations, and fall short in developing leadership pipelines through managerial certification. These deficiencies point to a *results gap*—a disconnect between institutional aspirations for service excellence and the actual outcomes achieved. This situation underscores the urgent need for empirically grounded research that critically examines the extent to which HR development strategies contribute to service quality in higher education institutions, especially within the Islamic educational framework.

In response to these challenges, this study seeks to explore and analyze the human resource development strategies implemented to enhance service excellence at five PTKINs in Aceh Province. The study is guided by several key questions: To what extent are HR development strategies effectively implemented in these institutions? How do these strategies influence service quality and organizational performance? What barriers hinder the integration of HR development into institutional service improvement efforts? By addressing these questions, the research aims to bridge the existing theoretical-practical divide and offer empirical insights into how HR development can be systematically aligned with service delivery goals in Islamic higher education.

Employing a qualitative descriptive approach and phenomenological analysis, this research draws on in-depth interviews, institutional document reviews, and field observations conducted over a six-month period. The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically—by enriching the discourse on HR strategy and service excellence—and practically, by informing education policymakers and institutional leaders on how to develop outcome-oriented and sustainable HR strategies. Ultimately, the study aims to support the development of competitive, service-oriented PTKINs capable of fulfilling their educational mission in a dynamic and demanding environment.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research approach using a descriptive-analytical model to explore the strategies for human resource development (HRD) in enhancing service excellence at State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) in Aceh Province. Qualitative research emphasizes the deep exploration of meaning, experience,

and social phenomena rather than seeking generalizations. Qualitative research is particularly appropriate for capturing complex interactions and dynamic contexts, such as educational institutions, where values, perceptions, and behaviors interplay (Moleong, 2011). One of the core characteristics of this approach is its emphasis on the natural setting and close interaction between researchers and participants. In this study, the qualitative method allows for an in-depth examination of how HRD is conceptualized, implemented, and evaluated in practice by administrators, faculty, and staff across different PTKINs.

To analyze the data and social context meaningfully, this study also incorporates a phenomenological perspective, which focuses on the lived experiences and subjective interpretations of participants. This enables the research to capture not only empirical and observable HR practices, but also underlying beliefs, attitudes, and values that shape institutional behavior. The phenomenon of *excellent service*—understood as institutional efforts to exceed stakeholder expectations in educational delivery—is examined through participants' insights on performance standards, responsiveness, efficiency, and employee attitudes. Similarly, HRD is assessed through several core indicators, including competency development, leadership training, performance appraisal systems, motivation mechanisms, and the alignment of HR practices with institutional goals.

The research will be conducted at five PTKINs in Aceh, namely: (1) UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, (2) IAIN Lhokseumawe, (3) IAIN Langsa, (4) IAIN Takengon, and (5) STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh. These institutions were selected based on their representativeness in terms of geographic distribution, institutional maturity, and diversity of HR management models. The study is planned to take place over a period of six months, encompassing the stages of initial survey, data collection through in-depth interviews and document analysis, data interpretation, and validation through triangulation methods. The selection of key informants—comprising heads of HR units, lecturers, administrative staff, and leadership representatives—is intended to ensure a balanced and credible data set.

The main objective of this research is not only to describe but also to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of HRD strategies in relation to institutional performance and service quality. Specifically, the study seeks to understand how HRD policies and practices contribute to the realization of service excellence in higher education. This involves critically assessing whether the strategies in place are sufficient, relevant, and adaptive to current educational challenges. The research also investigates how HRD practices are institutionalized—whether through formal mechanisms such as training and certification programs, or through informal cultural norms that shape behavior and service orientation within each PTKIN.

As part of the conceptual framework, *service excellence* in this study is defined based on three key dimensions: (1) Ability—the professional competence of staff in delivering services; (2) Attitude—interpersonal behavior and commitment to organizational values; and (3) Appearance—both physical presentation and the emotional tone of interactions with stakeholders. Meanwhile, the concept of *human resource development* is operationalized through the domains of knowledge enhancement, skill-building, attitude shaping, and performance motivation. By using these conceptual markers, the study aims to offer not only empirical insights into current HRD practices but also normative recommendations for improving service performance across PTKINs in Aceh.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION Human Resource Development

The theoretical basis is basically Human Resource Management (HRM), which is a movement to recognize the importance of the human element as a potential resource that

needs to be developed so that it can provide maximum contribution to the organization and its development (Sabrina, 2021).

This is in accordance with management experts Petter and Waterman in their book "In Search for Excellence," which explains that the results of the research above successful companies include companies that pay attention to their Human Resources in order to be able to create excellent service for customers human resource management plays a role in achieving the personal goals of each member of the organization that are to be achieved through their activities within the organization. Therefore, human resource activities formed by management must focus on achieving predetermined standards; therefore, in short, "human resources" contain achievements related to human conditions in general, both from within the organization and from outside the organization, to realize quality human resources, every organization also needs to carry out good human resource development within a structured and sustainable planning framework.

Human Resource Development is a term that has been widely used in various contexts. Therefore, many experts have defined Human Resource Development (PSDM) including: According to Hendayat Soetopo & Wasty Soemantio, also defines human resource development as an activity carried out to gain knowledge about something, where during the activity it is carried out continuously (Soetopo, 1982). Furthermore, Leonard Nadler & Zeace Nadler stated that Human Resource Development is an organized learning experience provided by employers within a certain time with the aim of increasing the possibility of improving performance and for employee growth. Likewise, Chalofsky stated that PSDM is a study and practice of increasing the learning capacity of individuals, groups and organizations through the development and application of learning-based interventions with the aim of optimizing human/employee growth and effectiveness. Human Resource Development includes activities and processes that are intended to have an impact on individual and organizational learning (Akhyadi, 2015).

From the three definitions put forward by the experts, there are several basic concepts that are concluded from the definition of Human Resource Development, including learning, growth, performance, and effectiveness. An agency or company will not be able to run without adequate and quality human resources, so every agency or company needs human resource development to improve the abilities, skills, and knowledge of employees so that they can achieve the goals of the company. Human resource development in a company or agency is needed so that, at all times, it can improve abilities and performance better. Human resource development provides a framework for self-development, training programs, and career advancement that are tailored to the skills and needs of the organization in the future.

Human Resource Development Method

Differences in development objectives, namely employee knowledge, skills, and attitudes, will have consequences on human resource development methods. In developing employees, various tips are needed as guidelines in the process of changing employee skills, knowledge, and attitudes. These tips include:

- 1. Motivation: The higher a person's motivation is, the faster he or she will learn new skills and knowledge. The training held must be linked to the goals to be achieved, for example, a higher salary level or a more pleasant position;
- 2. Employee training progress report, which aims to find out how far an employee has understood the new knowledge;
- 3. Reinforcement: if a skill is being learned, this learning process should be reinforced with reward or punishment stimuli;
- 4. Practice, namely practicing what is learned;

5. Individual differences, namely the differences between one employee and another, so that the training given must be in accordance with each individual's abilities.

The employee development system and method can be organized through:

- 1. On-the-job training is the most widely used training method. Superiors/leaders are trained first and then assigned to train their subordinates. This system is considered economical and does not require special facilities. However, this system also has weaknesses, namely whether the superior is capable enough to teach his subordinates well;
- 2. Off-the-job training, using the off-the-job training method, means that employees are temporarily out of work as training participants. Then, they train to improve their knowledge and skills by using the usual teaching and learning techniques. In general, this off-the-job training method has two techniques, namely information presentation techniques and simulation techniques. Information presentation techniques present information, the purpose of which is to introduce new knowledge, attitudes, and skills to participants. Simulation is an imitation of certain characteristics or behaviors from the real world in such a way that training participants can realize the actual situation.

Human Resource Development Goals and Strategies

More specifically Mangkunegara, states the objectives of HR development, namely: First, to increase the appreciation of the soul and ideology; Second, to increase work productivity; Third, to improve work quality; Fourth, to increase the determination of HR planning; Fifth, to improve moral attitudes and work enthusiasm; Sixth, to increase stimulation so that employees are able to perform optimally; Seventh, to improve occupational health and safety; Eighth, to avoid obsolescence; and Ninth, to increase employee development (Mangkunegara, 2011). Effective human resource (HR) management must be considered in order to support the strategy that will be implemented in order to contribute to creating competitive advantage in an organization (Sandi, 2019). Therefore, according to G. Saydam, also stated that there are three types of aspects that need to be developed by organizations or institutions towards their human resources, so that the objectives of human resource development are achieved, including the following (Saydam, 1996):

- 1. Knowledge This knowledge is in accordance with what the company needs for its employees, for example, knowledge of the organization, knowledge of products, knowledge of work procedures, and others;
- 2. Ability: It is a must for an employee to meet the qualifications required or needed by the company. In terms of ability, companies usually have several criteria that must be met by their employees;
- 3. Skills which are a mastery of a particular field, through talents that have been possessed since birth which are continuously honed and/or through observation of something then studied and carried out continuously. The abilities of each human resource are certainly different, therefore there needs to be an analysis step towards the skills of each human resource in order to design the right development program.

Another aspect that should not be forgotten in this human resource development program is the mental aspect. This aspect consists of attitudes, behavior and morals, where

these three elements are the determining variables of the relationship between the organization and its workers and workers with workers, which means that in this scope there is a tug-of-war relationship that has an impact on good or bad teamwork, depending on the attitudes and behavior of the workers, the relationships that are established between workers every day and the implementation of organizational culture in the company environment can be implemented (Susilowati et al., 2013).

Human resource development is not only carried out in the community but also in public and private institutions by developing the potential of its employees; according to Miftahuddin et al., the HR development strategy carried out by is (Miftahuddin et al., 2018):

- Giving employees the opportunity to channel ideas and concepts. A growing company is a company that is willing to accept ideas and concepts from its employees. In a company, employees also contribute to developing the company or as the driving force of a company;
- 2. Giving awards. Giving awards to employees is one of the HR development strategies; why? Because giving awards is a form of appreciation given by the company to its employees. By giving awards to outstanding employees, it will motivate other employees to be better. This will make a big contribution to the company in developing its company; and
- 3. Conducting training. Training is carried out not only for the employees themselves but also for the company. The company will not develop without employees who have high skills and work interests. With training, it is expected to be able to explore the potential of employees and develop skills.

Service Excellent

Excellent service is a good service that satisfies customers or the community or other stakeholders, makes efforts to meet needs or requests, and prepares and takes Care of what is needed in an excellent manner so that customers get something that exceeds their expectations. According to Ginting, "Excellent service or in Indonesian is called excellent service is a form of service with an arrangement that is made in such a way that it can minimize errors and is oriented towards customer needs" (Ginting, 2012).

Furthermore, D. Puswiartika, also stated that skills must be supported by mutually integrated factors. Employee skills play a very important role, such as being able to provide good service so that consumers are willing to understand the reasons. Skills like this must continue to be built. And, the desire to provide excellent service must arise in every employee. Some basic skills that can be used as a standard of service operations include employee communication skills (Puswiartika, 2013).

According to M. Hasibuan, carrying out excellent service means that actions to meet customer needs or requests have been carried out in very satisfying ways. Service satisfaction is highly dependent on customer expectations. If customer expectations are not too high, then good service can be considered excellent service. However, if customers have very high expectations and the service does not meet their expectations, then it is very possible that the same service is considered poor service (Hasibuan, 2016).

Therefore, excellent service always refers to a generally applicable standard. Excellent service must be provided by government employees (PNS), private employees, or other parties. In addition to the formal legal basis, which requires providing excellent service, another important thing is obtaining satisfaction in the heart. The inner satisfaction obtained when successfully doing something well is satisfaction. Conversely, if customers are disappointed due to less than satisfactory service, it will cause discomfort.

Service in English is called service. Several experts on excellent service process the word service, which is more meaningful. Catherine Devrye formulated the word service into seven simple strategies for successful service, including Self Esteem (giving value to yourself), Exceed Expectation (exceeding consumer expectations), Recover (reclaiming), Vision (Vision), Improve (making improvements), Care (paying attention), and Empower (empowerment). The strategies according to other experts are: S-E-R-V-I-C-E.

First, Self Awareness & Self Esteem Self Awareness & Self Esteem, namely instilling self-awareness that serving is one's duty and carrying it out well and maintaining the dignity of oneself and others is an honor. Second, Empathy & Enthusiasm Empathy & Enthusiasm, namely serving with full Care and enthusiasm. Third, Reform & Recover Reform & Recover, namely, always trying to improve and enhance one's service. Fourth, Value & Value Value & victory, namely service is able to provide added value and provide victory for all parties. Fifth, Initiative & Impressive Initiative & Impressive, namely providing service with full initiative and impressing customers; Sixth, Care & Coorporativness Care & Coorporativness, namely showing attention to customers sincerely and fostering good cooperation; and Seventh, Evaluation & Empowerment, namely assessing, reflecting, and always trying to empower all assets in employees.

There are at least 3 Three Principles in supporting the success of Excellent Service. *First*, Ability, namely the Ability and skills to carry out service tasks. *Second*, Attitude, namely the attitude-behavior of actions when providing service. Attitudes that are needed in excellent service are: (1) having a sense of pride in the job; (2) having great devotion to the job and; (3) maintaining the dignity and good name of the company. Service must be carried out wholeheartedly for the satisfaction of customers or the community. Every service activity is carried out in a serious, correct, sincere, and disciplined manner. *Third*, Appearance, namely the Appearance of the heart through physical Appearance in the form of smiles, warmth, etc. These three principles, namely Ability, Attitude, and Appearance, are important parts of competence.

Principles and Benefits of Service Excellence

According Nurlia, stated that the principles in the implementation of services are as follows: 1) Efficient services are limited to matters directly related to achieving service targets. 2) Effective repetition of activities is prevented, and completeness of requirements in the same context. 3) Clear procedures and procedures, requirements, completion time, and cost details need to be informed openly. 4) Economical in the sense that the determination of service costs is set fairly. 5) Certainty of time: the implementation of services is completed within a predetermined time period and is known to customers. 6) Accuracy: public service products are received correctly, accurately, and legally. 7) Safe, during the process and obtaining service results, it provides a sense of security and comfort and guarantees legal certainty. 8) Fair: The scope of services must be as wide as possible, including distribution and fair treatment. 9) Responsibility, carry out services with full responsibility, do not look for scapegoats, blame customers, and complain a lot. 10) Complete, complete, and complete services, avoid delaying, slowing down, and making things difficult. 11) Easy, why make it difficult when it can be made easy (Nurlia, 2018).

l) Be professional, including being friendly, polite, and disciplined so that a comfortable physical and mental atmosphere is created. The benefits of excellent service For the community, excellent service provides trust and satisfaction to customers. 2) For civil servants and private employees, excellent service can satisfy personal feelings by serving wholeheartedly without disappointing. 3) For civil servants and private employees, excellent service can create public welfare so that cooperation and participation of all components of the nation are established to realize national and state development. 4) For

organizations, excellent service can increase the trust and credibility value of individuals in the organization and become (Bastiar, 2015).

This research was conducted in Aceh Province, at the State Religious College and took up to six months, starting from the initial survey, proposal making, seminars, field data collection, data analysis/processing, to making the research report. Aceh Province, located in the westernmost part of the Indonesian archipelago, occupies a strategic position as a gateway for trade and cultural traffic connecting the East and West for centuries. Aceh is often referred to as a stopover for Chinese, European, Indian, and Arab traders, making Aceh the first region to enter culture and religion in the archipelago. In the 7th century, Indian traders introduced Hinduism and Buddhism. However, Aceh's role stands out in line with the entry and development of Islam in this area, which was introduced by Gujarat traders from the Arab ranks towards the 9th century.

According to historical records, Aceh was the first place where Islam entered Indonesia and the place where the first Islamic kingdoms in Indonesia emerged, namely Peureulak and Pasai. The kingdom, built by Sultan Ali Mughayatsyah, with its capital in Bandar Aceh Darussalam (now Banda Aceh), gradually expanded its territory, covering most of the West and East coasts of Sumatra to the Malacca Peninsula. The presence of this area became increasingly solid with the formation of the Aceh Sultanate, which united all the small kingdoms in the area. Thus, the Aceh Sultanate reached the peak of its glory at the beginning of the 17th century, during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda. At that time, the influence of Islamic religion and culture was so great in the daily lives of the Acehnese people that this area was nicknamed "Seuramo Mecca" (Veranda of Mecca). This situation did not last long because, after the death of Sultan Iskandar Muda, his successors were unable to maintain the greatness of the kingdom. So, the position of this area as one of the great kingdoms in Southeast Asia weakened. This caused the kingdom's authority to decline, and it began to be influenced by outside influences.



Figure 1. Aceh Province Map.

In the explanation of the interviews that have been conducted with respondents about the service strategy at the Islamic College, it has been carried out in the Human Resource Development Strategy variable. The indicators that form the variables are skills, knowledge, honesty, concepts, and abilities. And respondents' assessment of campus development responsibly.

Discussion

After conducting interviews with respondents, namely the ability to strengthen the network of universities with various other campuses, the ability to strengthen the network has a concept and service of building good and competent administration and management. In the interview, the ability of organizational performance is a variable that must be implemented properly; the variable of organizational performance must have, namely the number of innovations, process improvements, or new ideas that are applied. And the excellence of the PTKIN organizational work in Aceh Province.

Based on the results of interviews with respondents, the human resource development strategy has an influence on the promo service at the State Islamic Religious College in Aceh Province, and it will also affect the performance of organizational institutions. The data in this study supports the ability of good HRD Strategy management that will affect the service and institution of the organization. The better the HRD competency ability, the more likely it is to lead to increased organizational performance. This means that the higher the attitude of wisdom and politeness, acceptance of feedback, sharing information, providing information, and reducing task uncertainty, the higher the performance of the PTKIN organization in Aceh Province.

These results are in accordance with research by Femi (2014) and Salman, et al., (2020) which states that HRD competence and strategy have a positive effect on organizational performance. Based on interviews with respondents, the influence of employee performance capabilities on the performance of PTKIN organizations in Aceh Province. Where better employee performance in excellent service will increase organizational performance. This means that the higher the level of employee performance in an organization that has work quantity, work quality, work time, work efficiency, and independence, the higher the performance of the PTKIN organization in Aceh Province.

These results are in accordance with research by Vosloban (2012), Gellert & Schalk (2012), Groen et al., (2016), Pfano & Beharry (2016), Mullen, et. al., (2017), Tarmidi and Arsjah (2019), and Pfano & Beharry (2016) which state that employee performance in service has a positive and significant effect on the performance of PTKIN organizations in Aceh Province. And based on the results of interviews with respondents that the positive value indicates consistency with the theory, where the better the service competence will lead to increased employee performance and PTKIN organizations in Aceh Province.

These results are in accordance with the research of Potnuru & Sahoo (2016), Liu (2000), Dainty (2004), Levenson (2006), Ryan et al. (2009), Ahadzie et al. (2009), Spencer et al. (2008), and Zaim, et al., (2013) which state that HRM competence and capabilities have a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

The PTKIN organizational performance model in Aceh Province has met the assumptions expected in the model. The amount of data used is 25 sample data. After conducting interviews and data testing, it can be seen that the PTKIN organizational performance model in Aceh has a good category value and is developing.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions, this study concludes that Human Resource Development (HRD) strategies have a significant impact on improving service quality within State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) in Aceh Province. The more structured, responsive, and competency-based these strategies are, the greater their contribution to fostering professional behavior, organizational efficiency, and stakeholder satisfaction. Practical HRD initiatives such as targeted training programs, leadership

development schemes, reward systems, and performance evaluations were found to directly enhance employee capabilities and institutional performance. Furthermore, service excellence—understood through the dimensions of ability, attitude, and appearance—emerged as a vital outcome of effective HRD implementation in these educational settings.

The study provides insight into how HRD functions not only as an operational tool but also as a strategic mechanism to align human capital with institutional goals. Through various development pathways, PTKIN in Aceh are beginning to embed HRD into their organizational culture, showing a shift from reactive HR practices to proactive and strategic development models. Institutions that integrate HRD with clear service delivery standards tend to demonstrate better staff performance, more efficient administrative systems, and a more supportive learning environment for students.

From a practical perspective, PTKIN are advised to formalize their HRD policies and ensure these are consistently applied across departments. This can be achieved by establishing continuous professional development programs, implementing structured onboarding and mentoring systems, and creating measurable performance indicators linked to service outcomes. Leadership support is also essential to sustain HRD initiatives and ensure alignment with broader institutional transformation efforts. Leveraging digital tools for monitoring and evaluation can further enhance the effectiveness and accountability of HRD practices.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. It is based on qualitative data gathered from five institutions in a specific regional context, which may limit the applicability of the findings to other settings. Additionally, the study does not include a quantitative assessment of the impact of HRD strategies over time. Future research is recommended to explore these relationships through longitudinal or mixed-method approaches, as well as to examine the role of digital transformation and innovation in enhancing HRD effectiveness and service delivery in higher education.

In summary, this study demonstrates the importance of aligning HRD strategies with institutional efforts to achieve service excellence. The results offer practical guidance for Islamic higher education institutions seeking to strengthen their human capital and deliver higher quality services. It is hoped that these findings will encourage further dialogue and development of HRD policies that are responsive to the evolving demands of educational governance and public accountability.

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