

INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AT THE AL-RISALAH ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL IN BATETANGGA

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Abstract: Innovative Approach to Human Resource Development at the Al-Risalah Islamic Boarding School In Batetangnga

Salafist Islamic boarding schools face the challenge of preserving Islamic scholarly traditions whilst responding to the needs of digitalisation, educational quality, and preparing students for the professional world. This study aims to identify an innovative model for human resource development at the Al-Risalah Batetangnga Islamic Boarding School, a Salafist institution that integrates tradition, technology, and community empowerment. The research employs a qualitative approach with a single-case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis involving 12 informants selected through purposive sampling, comprising boarding school administrators, senior teaching staff, alumni, and members of the local community. Data were analysed using the Miles and Huberman model through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification; the coding process yielded 47 initial codes, 18 categories, and five main themes. The research findings indicate that human resource development at Al-Risalah Batetangnga forms an Innovative Synergy Model encompassing five dimensions: technological innovation in management and learning; the integration of the *Salafiah* curriculum with general education; character building through a disciplinary system and parental involvement; preparing students for the professional world; and the boarding school's socio-economic contribution to the local community. This model demonstrates that *Salafiah* boarding schools can serve as spaces for values-based educational innovation without losing their religious identity. The contribution of this research lies in the development of a conceptual framework for boarding school HRD that is adaptive, contextual, and capable of being further tested in cross-boarding school studies.

Keywords: *Human Resource Development (HRD), Salafiah Islamic Boarding Schools, Curriculum Integration, Innovative Synergy Model*

Abstrak: Pendekatan Inovatif Terhadap Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia di Pondok Pesantren Al-Risalah Batetangnga

Pesantren salafiah menghadapi tantangan untuk mempertahankan tradisi keilmuan Islam sekaligus merespons kebutuhan digitalisasi, mutu pendidikan, dan kesiapan santri menghadapi dunia profesional. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengidentifikasi model inovatif pengembangan sumber daya manusia (SDM)

di Pondok Pesantren Al-Risalah Batetangnga sebagai pesantren salafiah yang mengintegrasikan tradisi, teknologi, dan pemberdayaan komunitas. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus tunggal. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan studi dokumentasi terhadap 12 informan yang dipilih secara purposif, terdiri atas pengelola pesantren, tenaga pengajar senior, alumni, dan masyarakat sekitar. Data dianalisis menggunakan model Miles dan Huberman melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, serta penarikan kesimpulan/verifikasi; proses koding menghasilkan 47 kode awal, 18 kategori, dan lima tema utama. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pengembangan SDM di Al-Risalah Batetangnga membentuk Model Sinergi Inovatif yang mencakup lima dimensi: inovasi teknologi dalam manajemen dan pembelajaran, integrasi kurikulum salafiah dan pendidikan umum, penguatan karakter melalui sistem disiplin dan pelibatan orang tua, penyiapan santri menghadapi dunia profesional, serta kontribusi sosial-ekonomi pesantren bagi masyarakat sekitar. Model ini memperlihatkan bahwa pesantren salafiah dapat menjadi ruang inovasi pendidikan berbasis nilai tanpa kehilangan identitas keagamaannya. Kontribusi penelitian terletak pada pengembangan kerangka konseptual pengembangan SDM pesantren yang adaptif, kontekstual, dan dapat diuji lebih lanjut dalam studi lintas pesantren.

Kata Kunci: Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia (SDM), Pesantren Salafiah, Integrasi Kurikulum, Model Sinergi Inovatif

INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools, as traditional Islamic educational institutions, play a vital role in shaping the character and competencies of high-quality human resources (HR). According to Asri (2022), boarding schools not only function as centres for religious education but also serve as hubs for economic development and entrepreneurship capable of adapting to the demands of the digital age (Firdaus & Budiman, 2024). However, Islamic boarding schools face significant challenges in improving the quality of education and human resources, particularly regarding limitations in infrastructure, teaching skills, and readiness for the digital era (Azizah, 2024). Research findings indicate that although some Islamic boarding schools have attempted to integrate educational technology, there remain numerous obstacles hindering human resource development, particularly regarding internet access, teacher training, and the application of technology in the learning process (Tulili & Sari, 2025).

The main issue in human resource development in Islamic boarding schools is the lack of readiness among teaching staff and the infrastructure required to support technology-based learning (Hasna et al., 2025). Most Islamic boarding schools remain trapped in old traditions that have not yet fully utilised technological advancements to enhance graduates' competencies (Muid et al., 2024). This is all the more crucial given that the digital age demands that students possess relevant

skills, such as digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and the ability to adapt quickly to change (Kinansyah & Pujiyanto, 2023).

Research on human resource development in Islamic boarding schools has been widely conducted, yet there remain gaps that need to be addressed. Research Azizah (2024) highlights that the integration of technology in Islamic boarding schools remains limited, and many institutions lack sufficient access or training to prepare their teaching staff. Furthermore, research conducted by Amaludin & Adaniyah (2025) underscores the importance of managerial transformation in Islamic boarding schools to keep pace with the times. They demonstrate that Islamic boarding schools need to adopt more modern management methods and be open to innovation in teaching. This is also highlighted by Hifasoh et al. (2024), which identifies the role of the *kiai* as a leader in implementing an innovation system based on technology and modern teaching methods.

There is a significant gap in the literature: no study has yet combined managerial innovation, technology-based curriculum integration, character building, and socio-economic contributions synergistically within a single conceptual model derived from the actual practices of *Salafiyah pesantren*. Most previous studies have also failed to produce a model that can serve as an operational reference for other *pesantren* with a transformative vision. In addition, existing research tends to examine these dimensions separately, resulting in a fragmented understanding of how innovation is implemented and sustained within the *pesantren* environment. It is this gap that forms the basis of this research.

This study aims to identify innovative approaches to human resource development at the Al-Risalah Batetangnga Islamic Boarding School, as well as to formulate a conceptual model that illustrates the synergy between *Salafiyah* values and the demands of the digital age. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of Islamic education management studies by offering an empirically grounded model that extends the multi-role HR framework into the context of traditional religious educational institutions. Furthermore, the proposed model is expected to enrich the discourse on educational innovation in Islamic boarding schools and provide a foundation for future comparative studies in similar institutional settings.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a single-case study design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach was chosen as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon of HR innovation within the specific context of *Salafiyah* Islamic boarding schools, a subject that has not yet been comprehensively researched. The case study design enables the researcher to examine the processes, practices, and experiences of participants in their natural setting, thereby providing a rich and contextualized understanding of the phenomenon. Furthermore, this

approach facilitates the identification of unique institutional characteristics that contribute to the development of innovative human resource practices within the *pesantren* environment. The research was conducted at the Al-Risalah Batetangnga Islamic Boarding School, Jl. Poros Permandian Biru, Salusoang, Batetangnga Village, Binuang Sub-district, Polewali Mandar Regency, West Sulawesi Province, between May and September 2025. There were 12 informants selected using purposive sampling based on relevance and direct involvement in the boarding school ecosystem, comprising: (1) 3 boarding school administrators (head of the boarding school, director of the *Ma'had*, and head of administration), (2) 3 senior teaching staff, (3) 3 alumni who have established careers in the professional world, and (4) 3 representatives of the local community. Informants were coded using the initials P (administrators), A (alumni), and M (community) to maintain the confidentiality of their identities.

Data was collected using three techniques. Firstly, in-depth interviews lasting an average of 45–90 minutes per session, using a semi-structured interview guide developed based on the five conceptual dimensions of the research. Secondly, participatory observation was conducted over eight weeks to observe management activities, learning processes, and community interactions. Third, a documentary study involved a review of annual reports, curriculum documents, activity records, and teacher training materials. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, comprising three stages. First, data reduction: interview transcripts were open-coded using qualitative analysis software, yielding 47 initial codes which were subsequently grouped into 18 categories. This process enabled the researcher to identify patterns, similarities, and recurring issues across the collected data. Second, data organization: these categories were organized into five main themes through axial and selective coding, allowing broader concepts and relationships among categories to emerge. Third, conclusions were drawn through cross-validation between informants and data sources to ensure the consistency and credibility of the findings. This analytical process facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and strengthened the trustworthiness of the research results. Data validity was ensured through four criteria: (1) credibility, through triangulation of sources (administrators, alumni, the community), triangulation of methods (interviews, observation, documentation), and member checking with key informants; (2) transferability, through a thick description of the research context; (3) dependability, through a documented research audit trail; and (4) confirmability, through researcher reflexivity and peer debriefing with academic colleagues.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings are presented based on five main themes identified through thematic analysis of interview data, observations, and documentation on

Table 1. The following is a summary of the themes, sub-themes, and key informant quotes:

Table 1. Summary of Thematic Themes, Subthemes, Key Quotes, and Informant Codes

No	Main Theme	Sub-theme/Category	Key Quote	Informant Code
1	Technological Innovation in the Pesantren System	Academic information systems, permit management, electronic finance (e-wallet), computer laboratories	"...attendance, timetabling... student permits... all are information system-based..." "...teachers' salaries via e-wallet... shopping at the cooperative via e-wallet..."	P1, A1, M1
2	Integration of the Salafiah Curriculum and General Education	The traditional religious curriculum is combined with general subjects (ICT, science); impact on students' adaptability	"...the curriculum must be integrated... general subjects include information technology..." "...fostering a balanced way of thinking... more critical and adaptive..."	P1, A2, M1
3	Character Building through a Disciplinary System	A tiered demerit point system; educational sanctions; parental involvement	"...offences are organizatio... there are major, moderate and minor points..." "...when their parents are called in, their hearts will open..."	P1, A1, A2, M1
4	Preparing Students for the Professional World	Training in graphic design, video editing, and leadership within the boarding school's internal organisation	"...learning technology, graphic design, video editing... there is a media management section..." "...experience in learning about organization and technology is a major asset..."	P1, A2
5	Social and Economic Contributions of the Islamic School Boarding School	Participation in the community's religious activities; provision of supplies by local residents	"...reading the Yasin, <i>Barzanji</i> ... attending community religious activities..." "...the <i>pesantren</i> 's needs, such as fish, vegetables and chicken, are purchased from the local community..."	M1

Source: Data processed by the researcher, 2025

Technological Innovation in the *Pesantren* System

The Al-Risalah Batetangnga Islamic Boarding School has implemented a management information system that includes electronic attendance, scheduling, and digital management of student permits. This transformation goes beyond the

mere adoption of technological devices; it reflects a shift in the managerial paradigm at the level of the boarding school's management.

P1 stated: *"...attendance, scheduling... student permits... all are system-based..."* Furthermore, the management has also implemented an electronic financial system (e-wallet) for internal transactions, including the payment of honoraria and purchases at the boarding school's cooperative. Alumni confirmed the positive impact: *"...the computer lab... has been very helpful both during university studies and in the workplace..."* (A1).

It should be note that this innovation did not proceed without obstacles. Some senior teaching staff initially showed resistance to changes in the administrative system, which required an adaptation period of around three months. This demonstrates that digital transformation in Islamic boarding schools is not a smooth process, but rather requires a planned change management strategy.

Integration of the *Salafiah* Curriculum and General Education

Al-Risalah Batetangnga implements an integrative curriculum model that combines the study of classical Islamic texts with general subjects, including information and communication technology (ICT) and science. This integration is designed not to replace, but to strengthen the students' Islamic foundations with contextual insights.

P1 emphasised: *"...the curriculum must be integrated... general subjects include information technology..."* The impact of this integration is clearly felt by alumni. A2 states: *"...it fosters a balanced way of thinking... more critical and adaptive..."* The community's perspective also supports its relevance: *"...if they only study religion, they will struggle to adapt to university life later on..."* (M1).

However, this integration process faces technical challenges in the form of a shortage of textbooks that cohesively combine Islamic and scientific perspectives, as well as unmet teacher training needs. These conditions indicate that curriculum integration is a process that is still being refined.

Character Building through a Disciplinary System and Parental Involvement

The disciplinary system at Al-Risalah Batetangnga is designed on a points-based system for offences, classified according to severity (major, moderate, and minor offences) with sanctions that are educational and social in nature. The uniqueness of this system lies in the active involvement of parents as part of the guidance mechanism.

P1 explains: *"...offences are categorized... there are major, moderate and minor points... sanctions are social and educational..."* A1 adds: *"...it makes the students think twice before committing an offence..."* Meanwhile, M1 highlights the emotional dimension: *"...when their parents are called in, their hearts may open up..."* A2 adds a long-term perspective: *"...fostering an awareness that actions have social and emotional consequences, not just administrative ones..."*

Nevertheless, it should be noted that a points-based system risks encouraging a calculative approach to behavior among students (avoiding points rather than internalize values). This tension between external compliance and the internalization of moral values is an aspect that requires ongoing evaluation in the system's implementation.

Preparing Students for the Professional World

Al-Risalah Batetangnga systematically equips students with 21st-century skills through training in technology, organizational leadership, and entrepreneurship. This programme is designed as concrete preparation for higher education and professional careers. In addition to technical competencies, students are encouraged to develop communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills through various organisational and extracurricular activities within the *pesantren* environment.

P1 explains: "...learning technology, graphic design, video editing... there is a media and community management section..." The benefits are felt directly by alumni. A2 states: "...experience in organizational and technological learning is a major asset when facing university and the world of work..." These experiences help students become more confident and adaptable when transitioning from the *pesantren* environment to higher education institutions and professional settings.

However, it should be noted that this training program is still extracurricular in nature and has not yet been formally integrated into the main curriculum structure. This limits the scope of its benefits to students who actively participate in internal organisational activities.

The *Pesantren's* Contribution to the Social and Economic Life of the Community

The presence of Al-Risalah Batetangnga has a tangible impact on the local community, both through participation in religious activities and through economic engagement that empowers local residents. The *pesantren* serves not only as an educational institution but also as a social partner that contributes to strengthening community cohesion and local development.

M1 stated: "...reading the *Yasin, Barzanji*... attending the community's religious activities..." and "...the boarding school's needs, such as fish, vegetables, chicken... are purchased from the local community..." This pattern creates a symbiotic relationship that strengthens the *pesantren's* social legitimacy whilst boosting the local economy. Through these interactions, the *pesantren* fosters mutual trust and cooperation, enabling the community and the institution to support one another in achieving shared social and economic benefits.

Based on an analysis of these five themes, the researcher proposes an Innovative Synergy Model for Human Resource Development at the *Salafiah Pesantren*. This model illustrates the functional relationship between five dimensions that collectively center on the vision of the *pesantren* as an inclusive and transformative *Salafiah* institution, with the output being outstanding, adaptive, and

competitive *santri* human resources. The model also demonstrates how traditional Islamic educational values can be harmonized with innovation, community engagement, and contemporary educational demands to support sustainable institutional development.

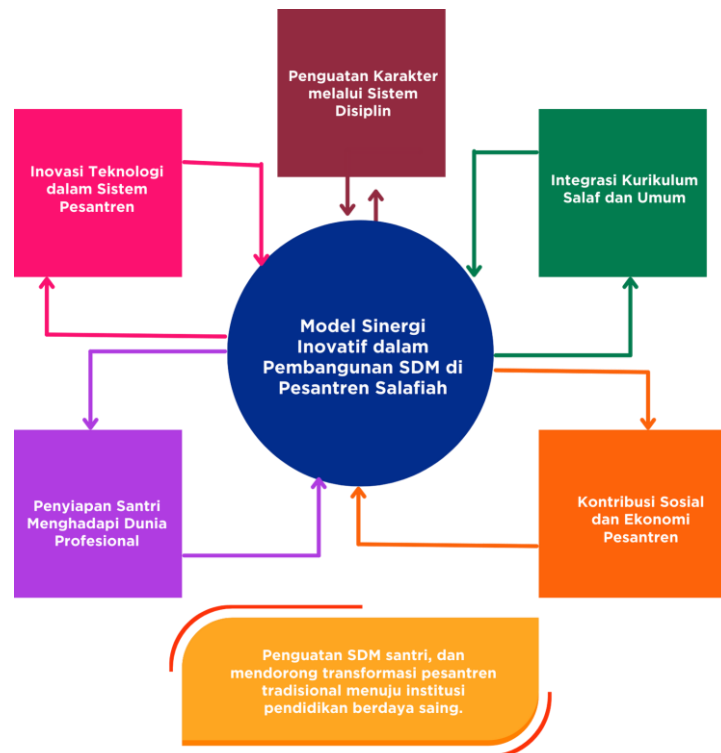


Figure 1. Innovative Synergy Model for Human Resource Development in *Salafiah* Islamic Boarding Schools

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that human resource transformation at the Al-Risalah Batetangnga Islamic Boarding School is multidimensional—it not only addresses the technical aspects of technology adoption but also involves restructuring the curriculum, character development, and the boarding school’s relationship with the community. The following discussion critically analyses these findings whilst taking into account contextual limitations and tensions arising in the field.

The Relevance of the Multi-Role HR Model in the *Pesantren* Context

The findings of this study indicate that the management of boarding school human resources can be understood through Ulrich’s *HR Champions* framework, which positions human resources within four key roles: *strategic partner*, *administrative expert*, *employee champion*, and *change agent* (Ulrich, 1997). In the boarding school context, the role of *strategic partner* is evident in the institution’s

ability to integrate the vision of classical text education, moral development, and general education as a strategy for institutional sustainability. The role of *administrative expert* is reflected in the organisation of service systems, student administration, dormitory management, and more orderly institutional documentation. Meanwhile, the role of *change agent* is evident through the adoption of technology, transparency of information, and the updating of management systems oriented towards efficiency and the quality of educational services. Recent studies also indicate that technology in *pesantren* management can enhance administrative efficiency, record-keeping accuracy, information access, and communication between administrators, teachers, students, and parents (Hidayati et al., 2024; Tantowi et al., 2025). Thus, *pesantren* human resources do not merely function as operational staff, but also as drivers of institutional transformation, bridging Islamic scholarly traditions and the demands of educational modernisation.

The application of a multi-role human resources model in Islamic boarding schools needs to be contextualised, as these institutions have a social structure that differs from that of corporate organizations. Whilst in modern organisations authority tends to flow through formal structures, in Islamic boarding schools the *kiai's* authority remains the center of moral, spiritual and managerial legitimacy. The *kiai's* leadership often operates through a combination of charisma, exemplary conduct, emotional bonds, consultation, and the social compliance of both the students and the community (Alwi, 2025; Nawawi, 2025; Robaeah et al., 2023). Consequently, the role of the '*employee champion*' in the *pesantren* should not be interpreted merely as an advocate for staff interests, but must be expanded to include fostering the moral, emotional, and spiritual well-being of the *santri*. The disciplinary system, dormitory supervision, the cultivation of religious practices, communication with parents, and the exemplary conduct of teachers constitute forms of *human and moral development* that are distinctive to the *pesantren* ecosystem. These findings demonstrate that *pesantren* operate within a hybrid human resources model: modern in governance, yet still rooted in values, charisma, and a communitarian culture. Consequently, the formalization of human resources management must be carried out adaptively so as not to undermine the traditional authority of the *kiai*, but rather to strengthen the professionalism, accountability, and sustainability of the *pesantren* (Raharjo, 2025).

Curriculum Integration: Between Idealism and Implementation Challenges

The curriculum integration model developed by Al-Risalah Batetangnga aligns with the concept of '*blended identity*' in contemporary Islamic education (Al Khalifa & Lafi, 2025), namely the formation of a *santri* identity capable of internalising classical intellectual heritage whilst actively responding to modern realities. This finding also resonates with the principles of *Education for Sustainable Development*

(ESD), which emphasise the relevance of life skills within the education system (Fernando & Tajan, 2024; Huang et al., 2024).

However, it is important to acknowledge that curriculum integration at Al-Risalah is still in its developmental stage. The scarcity of teaching materials that integrate Islamic and scientific perspectives, as well as the unmet need for teacher training, indicate that this model has not yet reached full implementation maturity. These findings contrast with the optimistic claims Azizah (2024) which suggest adaptive solutions without adequately addressing the structural barriers.

The Disciplinary System and Critical Dimensions of Character Formation

The points-based disciplinary system implemented within the *pesantren* environment forms part of a broader character-building ecosystem. When this system is combined with the involvement of parents, teachers, *musyrifs*, and *pesantren* administrators, discipline no longer stands as a punitive mechanism, but becomes a pedagogical instrument for instilling moral awareness, personal responsibility, and social sensitivity. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, discipline has a more complex meaning as it is directly linked to the development of etiquette, self-control, adherence to religious values, and the students' ability to live within a collective culture that demands order (Shokirova et al., 2025). Therefore, a points system can serve as an initial tool for fostering positive habits, particularly for students still in the early stages of behavioral development.

The main strength of such a system lies in the follow-up guidance. If every violation is merely recorded, counted, and penalize without a process of dialogue, then the disciplinary system will remain at the level of external control. Conversely, if every violation is used as an entry point for reflection, advice, counselling, communication with parents, and the instilling of values, then the system can develop into a more substantial space for character education (Bhoki et al., 2025; Efendy, 2026). According to Adha (2026), the quality of human resources in Islamic boarding schools is determined not only by students' formal compliance with rules, but also by the depth of moral character formed through the process of understanding the reasons behind the rules, realizing the impact of behavior on oneself and the environment, and cultivating the ability to consciously improve oneself.

Socio-Economic Contributions and the Limits of Model Generalisation

The social and economic dimensions of the model depict a mutually reinforcing community-based ecosystem between the *pesantren* and the surrounding community. This pattern reflects the function of the *pesantren* as social capital that plays a role in local economic empowerment, as outlined by Kurniawan et al. (2023).

However, it is important to establish clear limits on the applicability of this model. This research was conducted in only one *pesantren* with specific characteristics regarding leadership, geographical location, and social networks. The proposed model is therefore propositional—offering a conceptual framework that can

be adapted, rather than a universal prescription applicable to all *pesantren*. Overgeneralization must be avoided, given that the success of Al-Risalah is heavily influenced by contextual factors that cannot always be replicated.

This study fills a gap in the literature not addressed by previous studies, namely the presentation of an integrated human resource model derived from the actual practices of *Salafiyah pesantren* and analyzed in dialogue with contemporary management theory. Unlike the descriptive approach that dominates studies of Indonesian *pesantren*, this research seeks to develop a conceptual contribution that can be further tested in comparative studies across different *pesantren*.

The novelty of this study lies in its formulation of the Innovative Synergy Model as an integrated framework for understanding human resource development in *Salafiah pesantren*. This model is not limited to administrative reform or technological adoption, but connects five interdependent dimensions: digital management, curriculum integration, character formation, professional preparation, and community-based socio-economic engagement. By deriving the model from empirical practices at Al-Risalah Batetangnga, this study demonstrates that innovation in *Salafiah pesantren* does not necessarily weaken traditional religious identity. Instead, innovation can operate as a contextual mechanism for strengthening institutional resilience, student adaptability, and the social relevance of *pesantren* in contemporary education.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that human resource development at the Al-Risalah Batetangnga Islamic Boarding School is shaped through an Innovative Synergy Model consisting of five interconnected dimensions: technological innovation in management and learning, integration of the *Salafiah* curriculum with general education, character building through discipline and parental involvement, preparation of students for the professional world, and socio-economic contribution to the surrounding community. These dimensions show that *Salafiah pesantren* can develop adaptive human resources while maintaining their religious, moral, and communal foundations.

The main theoretical contribution of this study is the contextual expansion of human resource development thinking into the setting of traditional Islamic educational institutions. Human resource development in *pesantren* is shown not only as a managerial process, but also as a moral, spiritual, social, and cultural process. The findings indicate that *pesantren* human resources function simultaneously as agents of institutional management, transmitters of religious values, facilitators of student character formation, and connectors between the *pesantren* and the wider community. Thus, this study enriches the understanding of human resource development by showing how modern organisational practices can be adapted within a value-based educational institution.

The novelty of this research is reflected in the development of a field-based conceptual model that integrates tradition, technology, curriculum, character education, professional orientation, and community empowerment in one analytical framework. Unlike studies that tend to describe *pesantren* innovation separately in terms of curriculum, leadership, or technology, this study offers a more integrated model of how these elements work together in shaping competitive and adaptive *santri* human resources.

This study is limited to a single case at Al-Risalah Batetangnga, so the findings should not be generalised to all *Salafiah pesantren* without further empirical testing. Future research should conduct comparative studies across *pesantren* with different leadership patterns, institutional capacities, geographical contexts, and educational orientations. Quantitative studies are also needed to measure the impact of the Innovative Synergy Model on student competence, institutional performance, alumni outcomes, and community empowerment. For *pesantren* administrators, this model can be used as a reference in designing human resource development strategies that balance tradition and innovation. For policymakers, the findings emphasise the need for structured support in technology training, infrastructure development, curriculum strengthening, and collaboration between *pesantren*, higher education institutions, and industry.

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