ENHANCING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION: THE SYNERGY OF TEACHER RECRUITMENT, SELECTION, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Endah Winarti[1*], Akhmad Fauzi Hamzah[2], Dhea Melda Atqiya[3]

[1,2,3] UII Darullughah Wadda'wah, Pasuruan, Indonesia
*Email: endahwinarti@uiidalwa.ac.id**

Abstract: This study examines the recruitment, selection, and professional development processes of teachers aimed at enhancing student achievement. A qualitative case study approach was conducted at SMPIT YABIS, an Islamic educational institution. Data were collected through observations and interviews with five informants. The findings reveal that teacher recruitment prioritizes internal recommendations, which enhances efficiency and alignment with institutional needs. The selection process involves administrative screening, written tests, and practical teaching evaluations, emphasizing both academic competence and religious knowledge. Professional development includes structured training, support for further education, participation in professional forums (MGMP), and reward programs. Financial incentives are provided to long-serving teachers and those who successfully mentor high-achieving students, fostering motivation and commitment. These findings contribute theoretically to the discourse on human resource management in Islamic education, particularly in integrating academic and religious competencies into staffing strategies. Practically, the dual approach offers a replicable model for similar institutions, blending academic excellence with character building within faith-based education frameworks. This study underscores the critical role of motivated and well-supported teachers in achieving institutional goals and advancing student success, providing actionable insights for administrators and policymakers.

Keywords: *teacher recruitment, teacher selection, professional development, student achievement, Islamic education*

Abstrak: Studi ini mengkaji proses rekrutmen, seleksi, dan pengembangan profesional guru dalam meningkatkan prestasi siswa. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, Studi kasus dilaksanakan di lembaga pendidikan Islam SMPIT YABIS. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi dan wawancara dengan lima informan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa rekrutmen guru dilakukan dengan memprioritaskan rekomendasi internal, sehingga meningkatkan efisiensi dan keselarasan dengan kebutuhan institusi. Proses seleksi meliputi penyaringan administrasi, tes tertulis, dan evaluasi praktik mengajar, yang menitikberatkan pada kompetensi akademik dan pengetahuan keagamaan. Pengembangan profesional mencakup pelatihan terstruktur, dukungan pendidikan lebih lanjut, partisipasi dalam forum profesional (MGMP), dan program penghargaan. Insentif finansial diberikan kepada guru dengan masa kerja panjang dan mereka yang berhasil membimbing siswa berprestasi, sehingga meningkatkan motivasi dan komitmen. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi teoretis dengan memperkaya diskursus manajemen sumber daya manusia dalam pendidikan Islam, terutama dalam integrasi kompetensi akademik dan religius dalam strategi *staffing*. Pendekatan ganda ini memberikan model yang dapat direplikasi untuk lembaga serupa, memadukan prestasi akademik dengan pembentukan karakter dalam pendidikan berbasis nilai agama.

Kata Kunci: *rekrutmen guru, seleksi guru, pengembangan profesional, prestasi siswa, pendidikan Islam*

*Corresponding author

Endah Winarti, Akhmad Fauzi Hamzah, Dhea Melda Atqiya

A. Introduction

Educational goals are inherently tied to student success, serving as a foundational measure for the quality of educational institutions (Nolan, 1989). As a critical metric, student achievement reflects institutional performance and effectiveness (Alyahyan & Düştegör, 2020). However, student achievement is a multifaceted construct influenced by numerous variables, including the pivotal teacher-student relationship (Aspelin, 2012). Commonly assessed through academic achievements such as test scores, curriculum progress, and skill acquisition, student success also encompasses non-academic aspects, providing a holistic view of educational outcomes.

Teacher staffing has emerged as a critical issue in education, with teacher preparation, licensing, and evaluation directly affecting student outcomes (Bales, 2015). Research highlights the significant influence of teacher quality (De Talancé, 2017) and professional development (Kisi, 2023) on student achievement. Effective professional development programs enhance teachers' pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competencies (Peklaj, 2015), which are vital for improving student performance. Notably, initiatives such as dialogic pedagogical gatherings have demonstrated their effectiveness in elevating teacher quality and subsequently fostering student achievement (Roca-Campos et al., 2021).

Staffing in educational institutions, encompassing recruitment, selection, training, and development, represents a core component of human resource management aimed at ensuring the availability of competent and professional educators (Denis & Mudulia, 2019). Teachers are integral to the success of schools, playing a critical role in enhancing student achievement (Rivkin et al., 2005). Therefore, systematic recruitment, selection, and development processes are necessary to align teacher capabilities with institutional objectives and educational standards.

Human resource management theory underscores the importance of recruitment, placement, training, and compensation (Dessler, 2013, p. 42). Bradley (De Freitas Bradley, 2017) further elaborates that human resource development involves these elements alongside reward systems. The principle of staffing, commonly articulated as "the right person in the right job," emphasizes the need for role-specific qualifications before candidate selection (Akilah, 2018). Recruitment strategies that prioritize quality over quantity (Stronge & Hindman, 2006, p. 9) and rigorous selection procedures, including administrative screening, testing, and practical assessments (Wise & Others, 1987, p. 34), are essential for optimizing teacher performance (Chhy & Kawai, 2024). Evidence suggests that candidates with strong academic credentials are associated with improved student outcomes (Baker & Cooper, 2005).

Despite the growing focus on human resource management in education, studies addressing teacher recruitment, selection, and professional development within Islamic educational institutions remain limited. Islamic institutions often integrate unique values into their staffing processes, involving multiple stakeholders (Pohan, 2021) prioritizing familial networks, and emphasizing competency standards aligned with Islamic principles (Hasanah et al., 2023). This comprehensive yet distinctive approach represents a significant research gap, particularly concerning its impact on student achievement.

This study aims to bridge this gap by examining the processes of teacher recruitment, selection, and professional development in Islamic educational institutions, with a specific focus on their contribution to student achievement. Through a qualitative case study of SMPIT YABIS, the research investigates how the institution implements these processes to achieve its educational goals. Specifically, the study focuses on recruitment strategies, selection criteria, and development programs for teachers.

By analyzing these processes, this research contributes to the broader discourse on educational human resource management, particularly within Islamic education. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers, offering practical implications for improving teacher staffing strategies to enhance student achievement.

B. Methods

This study is a qualitative research with two main objectives. First, it is descriptive, aiming to depict and reveal the phenomenon under investigation. Second, it is explanatorily analytical, seeking to uncover and explain underlying relationships. The research approach employed is a case study, with the object of study being the teacher's recruitment, selection and program development processes at SMPIT YABIS and their impact on student achievement, at the YABIS Integrated Islamic Junior High School (SMPIT) in Bontang, Indonesia. Case studies allow for the collection of rich, qualitative data through interviews and observations, enabling a deeper understanding of the subject matter (Williamson et al., 2022). Data analysis in this study utilizes an interactive model, which is an in-depth study using direct data collection techniques from individuals within their natural environment. The interactive model emphasizes the interconnectedness of data collection, analysis, and interpretation, thereby fostering a comprehensive and reflective approach to qualitative research (Miles et al., 2014, pp. 32–33).

The primary data sources refer to data obtained directly from the first-hand sources through specific data collection procedures and techniques, such as interviews and observations. In this study, the primary data sources include representatives from the foundation (Head of Human Resources and Finance), the school principal, the vice-principal for curriculum, and two teachers. Secondary data sources are those obtained from indirect sources, such as official documentation regarding the objective conditions at YABIS Integrated Islamic Junior High School (SMPIT) in Bontang, which are relevant to the focus of the study. The selection of informants for data collection was done purposively, meaning the participants were chosen based on specific considerations and objectives (Sugiyono, 2013, p. 300).

C. Results and Discussion

1. Results

a. Teacher Recruitment: Prioritized for Internal Recommendations

The recruitment process is a fundamental step in the staffing strategy of educational institutions, serving as a means to align institutional needs with human resource capacity. At YABIS Integrated Islamic Junior High School (SMPIT) in Bontang, recruitment is conducted to address vacancies in specific subject areas or to accommodate the growing demand for additional classes. This process begins with a needs analysis to determine the required teaching positions, followed by a submission to the foundation for verification. The foundation evaluates the needs, including the number of teachers required for each class, before granting approval for recruitment to proceed.

To attract qualified candidates, SMPIT YABIS Bontang disseminates job vacancy announcements through various channels. These include notifications to the local labor office (Disnaker), postings on official social media platforms, and referrals from stakeholders, such as the foundation or school representatives. This multi-channel approach ensures a broad reach and increases the likelihood of attracting suitable applicants who meet the institution's specific requirements.

Among these recruitment channels, internal recommendations hold a special priority. Recommendations from current teachers, school stakeholders, or the foundation itself are valued for their ability to identify candidates whose qualifications and competencies align closely with the institution's needs. This preference is based on the understanding that internal stakeholders possess a deeper familiarity with the institution's culture, expectations, and educational goals, making their referrals particularly reliable and effective in identifying

the right candidates for the available positions. Recruitment activities for enhancing student achievement appears in the figure 1.
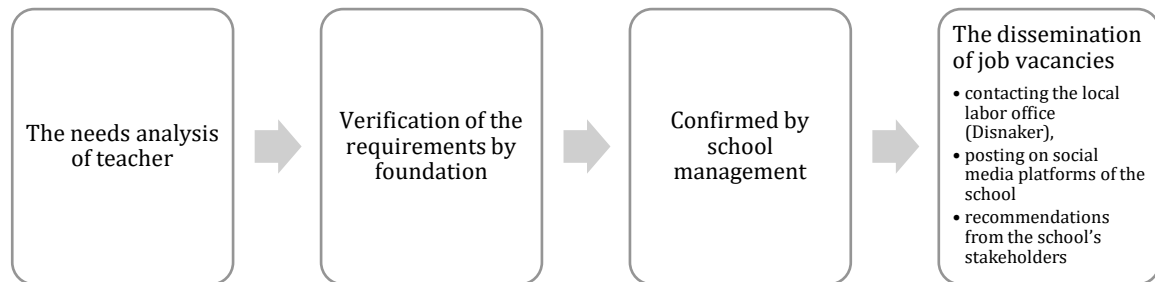

Figure 1. Enhancing Student Achievement Through Teacher Recruitment Activities

Based on Figure 1, it can be inferred that the process of procuring teacher positions starts with a needs analysis, which examines the conditions and requirements within the field. Teacher recruitment based on needs analysis is crucial for improving education quality.

b. Teacher Selection: Emphasis on Religious Foundation

The selection process at SMPIT YABIS Bontang serves as a critical phase following recruitment, aimed at identifying the most qualified teaching candidates. This process consists of three main stages: administrative selection, written tests, and interviews. During the administrative selection phase, applicants submit an application letter accompanied by supporting documents, including diplomas, academic transcripts, curricula vitae, identification cards, photos, and teaching certification obtained through the Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG). Candidates must also meet general requirements, such as age, religion, and educational background. Additional consideration is given to applicants who demonstrate notable achievements or potential in the subject matter relevant to the available position.

The written test constitutes the second stage and evaluates candidates through three distinct components: the IGB test, professional test, and religious test. The IGB test assesses candidates' theoretical knowledge of classroom leadership styles and effective pedagogical strategies. The professional test focuses on the candidates' expertise in their specific subject area, including both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. The religious test examines their understanding of Islamic studies, with a particular focus on Qur'an literacy, including the ability to read and write the Qur'an. These comprehensive evaluations ensure that candidates possess a balance of academic and religious competencies essential for their role.

The third stage, consisting of interviews and practical tests, provides further insights into candidates' abilities and commitment. Candidates are required to conduct a teaching demonstration to showcase their classroom management skills, pedagogical approaches, and Qur'an literacy in a live classroom setting. Senior or experienced teachers observe and assess the candidates during this practical evaluation. In addition, the interview serves as a platform to confirm the results of previous tests and assess candidates' alignment with the institution's vision and mission. Successful candidates are subsequently invited for a final interview that focuses on their dedication to the teaching profession and their long-term commitment to the institution.

A distinctive finding from the selection process at SMPIT YABIS Bontang is the emphasis placed on candidates' religious knowledge and Qur'an literacy. These aspects are critical to the institution's mission of integrating education with Islamic *da'wah*. Teachers are expected not only to impart academic knowledge but also to serve as role models in promoting Islamic values. The ability to read and write the Qur'an is regarded as a fundamental qualification, reflecting the institution's commitment to nurturing an educational environment rooted in Islamic principles. This emphasis underscores the integral role of religious competencies in achieving the institution's educational and spiritual objectives. Selection activities for enhancing student achievement appears in the figure 2.
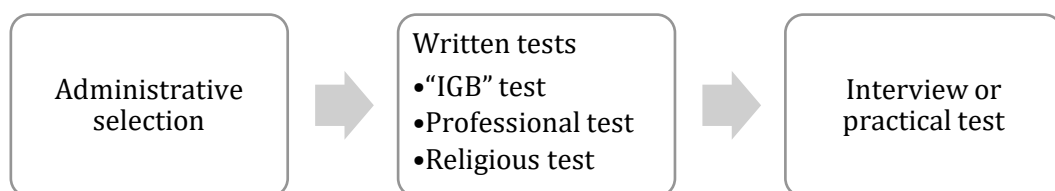
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│                    │      │ Written tests      │      │                    │
│  Administrative    │ ──▶  │ •"IGB" test        │ ──▶  │  Interview or      │
│  selection         │      │ •Professional test │      │  practical test    │
│                    │      │ •Religious test    │      │                    │
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Figure 2. Enhancing Student Achievement Through Teacher Selection Activities

c. Teacher Development: Facilitating and Recognizing Teacher's Improvement

The teacher development program at SMPIT YABIS Bontang adopts an on-the-job training approach, designed to enhance the capabilities of both new teachers with limited experience and long-serving staff. Training activities are systematically scheduled before the academic year begins or during school holidays to avoid disruptions to the school calendar while preparing teachers for upcoming challenges. These training sessions are conducted in a classical format, addressing relevant educational needs such as online teaching techniques and curriculum innovation. Job instructor methods are employed, where tasks are demonstrated to inspire teachers, supported by examples and practical guidance. To motivate long-serving teachers, the institution provides recognition through service awards for those

who have dedicated 10, 20, or more years to teaching and those who help students achieve academic excellence.

In addition to internal training, SMPIT YABIS Bontang facilitates professional growth by supporting teachers who pursue higher level education. The institution provides annual leave to enable teachers to focus on their academic endeavors, reflecting its commitment to long-term capacity building. Seminars and workshops are also integral to teacher development, equipping educators with skills and insights to meet the evolving demands of the education sector. Topics covered in these seminars have included online teaching platforms and strategies for professional development, allowing teachers to enhance their competencies and stay current with modern pedagogical practices.

Another significant initiative for teacher development is participation in MGMP (Subject Teacher Working Groups), which serves as a professional forum for collaboration and knowledge exchange among educators teaching similar subjects. MGMP sessions offer opportunities for teachers to share effective teaching practices, discuss solutions to classroom challenges, and explore strategies for fostering high-achieving students. By participating in MGMP, teachers not only improve their teaching methods but also benefit from peer support and shared expertise, enriching their overall professional development.

Recognition and rewards are another cornerstone of teacher development at SMPIT YABIS Bontang. Teachers with long service—10, 20, or even 30 years—are acknowledged with financial incentives, celebrating their dedication and loyalty. Additionally, monetary rewards are given to teachers who successfully guide students to achieve academic excellence, fostering a culture of commitment and achievement. These awards serve as a motivation for teachers to continuously strive for excellence in their roles, aligning with the institution's mission to uphold high educational standards.

In summary, the teacher development program at SMPIT YABIS Bontang focuses on two primary strategies: facilitation and recognition. Facilitation includes providing training, supporting further education, and encouraging participation in professional forums like MGMP, which enable teachers to enhance their skills and broaden their knowledge. Meanwhile, recognition is offered through financial incentives for long-serving teachers and those who contribute to student success. Together, these initiatives form a comprehensive approach to fostering professional growth and maintaining the high quality of education at the institution.

2. Discussion

The findings on teacher recruitment, selection, and professional development at SMPIT YABIS Bontang highlight a comprehensive and strategic approach to ensuring educational excellence. The recruitment process prioritizes internal recommendations to identify candidates who align with the institution's values and needs, demonstrating the importance of familiarity and trust in candidate selection. The teacher selection process is rigorous, involving administrative screenings, written tests covering professional and religious knowledge, and practical teaching evaluations, with a strong emphasis on candidates' religious competence and Qur'an literacy to support the institution's *da'wah* mission. Meanwhile, teacher professional development is facilitated through structured training programs, support for continuing education, and participation in professional forums like MGMP, enabling teachers to enhance their skills and share best practices. Additionally, the institution recognizes and rewards teacher achievements through financial incentives for long service and contributions to student success. Collectively, these activities reflect SMPIT YABIS Bontang's commitment to maintaining high-quality education through effective teacher management strategies. The comprehensive strategies can be represented in the figure 3.

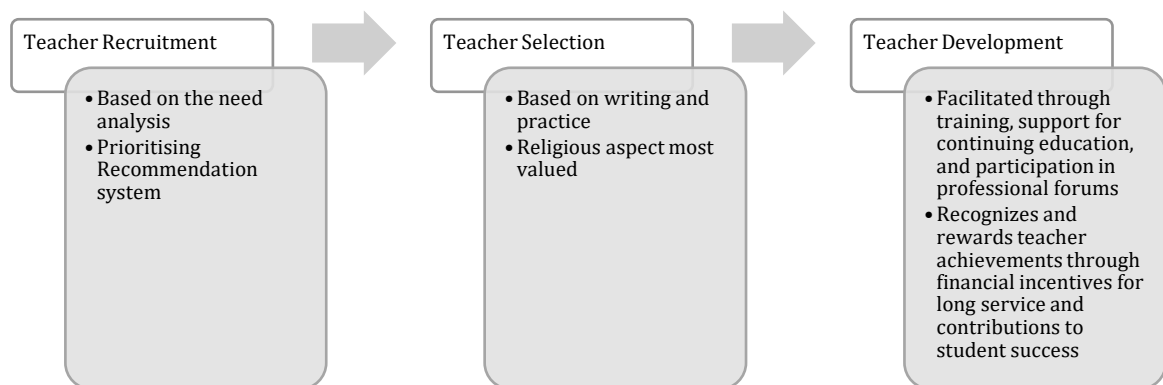| Teacher Recruitment	Teacher Selection	Teacher Development
• Based on the need analysis • Prioritising Recommendation system	• Based on writing and practice • Religious aspect most valued	• Facilitated through training, support for continuing education, and participation in professional forums • Recognizes and rewards teacher achievements through financial incentives for long service and contributions to student success

Figure 3. Strategic Staffing Approach to Ensuring Educational Excellence

Based on Figure 3, it can be inferred that staffing is a comprehensive and interconnected process, in which the success of one activity influences the outcomes of others, ultimately impacting the overall effectiveness of staffing practices. The findings of teacher recruitment, selection, and professional development at SMPIT YABIS Bontang align with existing theories and research on effective human resource management in educational institutions, while also presenting unique insights that contribute to the body of knowledge in this field.

First, prioritizing internal recommendations in the recruitment process aligns with theories emphasizing that candidates who understand the organization's values and culture are more likely to succeed and contribute effectively (Sims, 2002, p. 107). This practice is also consistent with research findings highlighting the benefits of utilizing recommendations. The use of recommendations in recruitment offers several advantages, including providing a credible source of information about candidates and resulting in lower turnover rates (Aggarwal & Kaur, 2024, p. 117) and higher productivity, as referred candidates tend to perform similarly or better than non-referred candidates (Burks et al., 2013).

Teacher recruitment based on needs analysis is crucial for improving education quality. The process involves evaluating teacher shortages in schools (Pujiantari & Wahyudiati, 2022). By aligning teacher supply with demand, educational institutions can address issues of teacher shortages, quality, and skill relevance, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of education (Gangga et al., 2023). Verification and confirmation are to ensure that the procurement of teacher positions is relevant. Recommendation system on teacher recruitment is prioritised because it has advantages. Recommendation systems have emerged as valuable tools in education, particularly for supporting teachers in resource selection and professional development. These systems can help teachers navigate information overload and find appropriate educational resources, especially in challenging work environments (Nashed et al., 2022).

The recommendations provided serve as an effort to enhance the accuracy of aligning the institution's needs with the positions being offered. In line with existing studies, recommender systems using collaborative filtering can improve the recruitment process by identifying the most appropriate candidates (Chanavaltada et al., 2015). Recommendations help ensure that employers can find suitable candidates more efficiently (Horton, 2017). The internal filtering conducted through a recommendation system can identify and rank the most suitable candidates based on specific job requirements (Boukari et al., 2020), thereby increasing the effectiveness of the hiring process. However, SMPIT YABIS Bontang's specific focus on recommendations from senior stakeholders adds a layer of cultural and contextual nuance, particularly within Islamic educational settings, where trust and alignment with religious values are paramount.

Second, selection activities, both written and practical, are designed to provide a thorough assessment of a teacher's teaching capabilities. Furthermore, mastery of religious knowledge is a critical factor in the success of Islamic education, as it directly contributes to the achievement of institutional goals. The selection process at SMPIT YABIS Bontang,

particularly its emphasis on religious competence and Qur'an literacy, reflects the institution's mission of integrating academic and religious education. This approach echoes the findings of Noh et al (2025), who argued that Islamic schools prioritize religious knowledge to support their *da'wah* objectives. However, the integration of modern evaluation methods, such as classroom management demonstrations and subject-specific proficiency tests, showcases a balanced approach, differing from more traditional Islamic school models that may prioritize religious competence over pedagogical skills (Helmawati et al., 2024). This dual emphasis ensures that teachers are not only capable of transmitting knowledge but also effective in modern pedagogical practices.

Cognitive ability being the most valued attributes for effective teachers (Sautelle et al., 2015) . In contrast to previous studies, this research highlights the prioritization of the religious aspect in the teacher selection process. Teachers' religious and moral orientations can influence their professional behavior and approach to moral education. Teachers' religious beliefs often form a strong reference point for their professional role, even in schools without formal religious education (Kumar, 2024).

According to previous studies, the alignment of educational background is generally a primary consideration in teacher selection activities, as it is seen as directly relevant to the knowledge and competencies required for the teaching field. Most importantly, outstanding teachers play a crucial role in producing outstanding students (Thompson et al., 2008). Teacher experience is consistently linked to improved student outcomes, with studies indicating that more experienced teachers lead to better academic results (Burroughs et al., 2019). Mastery of religious knowledge is a key standard in the selection process. This is because, in Islamic educational institutions, teachers are not only responsible for teaching academic subjects but also for nurturing students' moral character. This ensures that the vision of the Islamic educational institution as a center for *da'wah* (Islamic outreach) is fulfilled. In addition, shared vision within school management teams is positively related to teacher commitment and support for students (Hallinger & Lu, 2014).

Third, the development of teacher competencies and skills is facilitated through various quality improvement initiatives, such as participation in training sessions, seminars, workshops, professional development groups, and opportunities for further academic study. Additionally, providing recognition and appreciation is essential for fostering teacher motivation and commitment. Teachers who are highly motivated and committed are more likely to engage in continuous professional growth and contribute to the overall success of the educational institution.

In terms of professional development, SMPIT YABIS Bontang's structured training programs and support for continuing education align with Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory through professional development and recognition, which highlights the importance of opportunities for growth in enhancing employee satisfaction and performance (Johannessen, 2018). Similar practices have been observed in research by Azim et al. (2019), who found that professional development activities positively impact teacher retention and performance. What sets SMPIT YABIS apart is its combination of facilitation—such as support for MGMP participation and further education—with financial incentives for long-serving teachers and those who mentor high-achieving students. This blend of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation underscores the institution's holistic approach to fostering teacher professionalism.

In the previous study, competencies including teacher knowledge and linearity were prioritised. Moreover, an educational background should be accompanied by the development of relevant skills. One of the key methods for such development is through training, which aims to enhance the use of new skills and strategies in classroom practice. This is a critical point, as strategic staffing can directly impact student achievement (Grissom et al., 2017). Various forms of recognition, such as promotions, awards, and other forms of appreciation, are primary motivators for teachers and significantly influence their success in the profession (Lim, 2021). Highly motivated teachers are associated with higher levels of student achievement (Al-Amri et al., 2020). Teacher development should be designed to create motivated and committed teachers who are quality teachers.

While many studies focus on either academic or religious education, the practices at SMPIT YABIS Bontang bridge these domains, reflecting the dual mandate of Islamic schools to produce educators who are both pedagogically skilled and religiously grounded. This finding contributes to the discourse on hybrid models of education management, as suggested by Abdullah et al. (2020), who emphasize synthesis both faithful to Islamic principles and relevant to contemporary society. It means that the importance of integrating traditional and modern educational paradigms in Islamic institutions.

In conclusion, the recruitment, selection, and professional development strategies at SMPIT YABIS Bontang offer a distinctive model that blends contextual religious values with modern educational practices. While these findings are largely consistent with existing theories and research, they also highlight the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Islamic educational institutions, contributing to broader discussions on effective teacher management in diverse educational settings.

D. Conclusion

Staffing activities conducted by schools to achieve student success include recruitment, selection, and teacher development. Recruitment at SMPIT YABIS Bontang prioritizes recommendations from internal stakeholders, reflecting the positive effects of this approach on staffing efficiency and accuracy. The selection process is designed not only to evaluate candidates' knowledge, competencies, and skills but also to assess their religious understanding. Prospective teachers with demonstrated expertise or notable achievements are considered to have greater potential for contributing to student success. Furthermore, proficiency in religious knowledge and Qur'an literacy is a fundamental criterion, as it aligns with the vision and mission of Islamic educational institutions. These institutions hold a dual mandate: to deliver education rooted in Islamic values and to contribute to character building through *Da'wah*.

Teacher development initiatives emphasize fostering teacher excellence by facilitating opportunities for professional growth and providing recognition and rewards. Programs such as on-the-job training, continuing education support, and participation in professional teacher forums (MGMP) enhance teacher competencies and pedagogical skills. Additionally, financial incentives for long-serving teachers and those who mentor high-achieving students further enhance motivation and commitment. Motivated and committed teachers are instrumental in creating an environment that supports student achievement.

The findings of this study enrich the body of knowledge on human resource management in Islamic educational institutions by integrating the dual role of academic and religious development in teacher recruitment, selection, and development processes. The emphasis on Qur'an literacy and religious knowledge as selection criteria provides a distinctive contribution to existing theories of teacher competencies, particularly in the context of faith-based education. Additionally, the holistic integration of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational strategies in teacher development offers new insights into Herzberg's two-factor theory, demonstrating its application in faith-based educational settings.

Practically, these findings provide a model for Islamic educational institutions seeking to balance academic excellence and religious values. Stakeholders, including school leaders, policymakers, and teacher trainers, can adopt similar recruitment and selection criteria to ensure alignment with institutional visions and missions. Moreover, teacher development programs that combine facilitation (such as training and further education) with recognition and rewards can serve as an effective strategy to enhance teacher performance and student outcomes. Policymakers can also use these insights to design frameworks that support sustainable teacher management in Islamic education.

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