



Soft Skill Management in Improving the Quality and Competence of Human Resources in Islamic Junior High Schools

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Abstract :

This study aims to examine soft skills management to improve the quality of education and human resource competency in Islamic schools. The focus of this study includes soft skills management strategies, factors that support and hinder their implementation, and their implications for improving the quality of education. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. Research data were collected from the principal, vice principal of curriculum, teachers, and students through interviews, observations, and documentation studies. Data analysis was carried out through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion using content analysis, discourse analysis, and data interpretation. The research findings indicate that soft skills management is implemented through participatory leadership, collaborative learning, the formation of a school culture, and professional development programs. The soft skills developed include communication skills, leadership, teamwork, discipline, and a sense of responsibility. This implementation has an impact on increasing teacher professionalism, the quality of learning, and the formation of student character. This study concludes that soft skills management is an effective strategy for sustainably improving the quality of education and human resource competency in Islamic junior high schools.

INTRODUCTION

Educational developments require educational institutions to focus not only on improving academic abilities but also on developing soft skills as a crucial element in enhancing the quality of human resources. Soft skills management is a crucial and strategic requirement for madrasas and Islamic schools in their efforts to improve educational quality and strengthen graduate competitiveness (Armila & Sopianingsih, 2022; Subhan et al., 2025). Soft skills such as communication, leadership, collaboration, and adaptability have been shown to improve teacher performance and foster a more effective school culture (Rahtikawatie et al., 2021; Sista & Sodikin, 2022; Souad & Ramdane, 2022). Madrasas that manage soft-skills development in a structured manner generally produce more professional educators with greater innovation.

Recent studies have shown that soft skills are a crucial element in educational leadership because they influence school climate, work morale, and improve the quality of the learning process (Diding Nurdin, 2023; Dutta & Sahney, 2022; Ursin et al., 2021). In

addition, the application of soft skills in Islamic education has been proven to strengthen collaboration, leadership, and problem-solving abilities in the context of modern education (Nailasariy et al., 2023; Shobron et al., 2020; Zakiy, 2021). Thus, the management of soft skills to improve the quality and competence of human resources is an important issue that requires in-depth research, especially at MTs Sunan Ampel Kamal Kuning, an Islamic educational institution facing the challenges of modern educational change.

Studies on human resource development in Islamic education indicate that improving educational quality is highly dependent on strengthening educators' competencies, but have not comprehensively examined the management of soft skills (Humaisi et al., 2024; Khoiri & Aryati, 2021). Other studies emphasize that human resource management strategies include training and strengthening organizational culture, but have not yet positioned soft skills as a primary integrated management model (Akmalia et al., 2023; Arifin et al., 2024; Baharun et al., 2025). Thus, there remains a research gap that warrants a more in-depth study of soft skills management as a strategy to improve the quality and competence of human resources in Islamic educational institutions. This gap is particularly relevant in the context of Islamic Junior High School, where the development of human resources through soft skills management can become an important strategy for responding to educational changes and improving institutional competitiveness in the modern era.

This study aims to examine and analyze soft skills management to improve the quality and competence of human resources at MTs Sunan Ampel Kamal Kuning. This study examines how soft skills management strategies are implemented to improve the quality of teaching staff and the quality of education. Effective management of soft skills is expected to strengthen teacher professionalism, build a positive organizational culture, and improve the quality of educational services. Previous studies have shown that transformational leadership that emphasizes soft skills development can significantly improve the competence and professionalism of teaching staff in Islamic educational institutions. Furthermore, structured human resource management has been shown to positively impact the quality of education through training, evaluation, and competency development. Therefore, this study poses the main question of how to implement soft skill management, what the supporting and inhibiting factors are, and how it influences the improvement of the quality and competence of human resources at MTs Sunan Ampel Kamal Kuning.

This research is based on the assumption that soft skills management plays a significant role in improving the quality and competence of human resources in Islamic education. Structured soft-skills management can enhance educators' professionalism and strengthen the quality of educational institutions. Strengthening communication, leadership, and collaboration skills can create a more adaptive and innovative organizational culture. Recent research shows that integrated human resource management can improve educational quality by strengthening competencies and developing a collaborative work culture. Other studies also confirm that integrated educational management is a crucial factor in the continuous improvement of school quality. Therefore, this research tests the assumption that soft skills management is an effective strategy for improving educational quality and human resource competence in Islamic Junior High Schools.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore soft-skills management practices aimed at improving the quality and competence of human resources at MTs Sunan Ampel Kamal Kuning. The institution was selected as the research site because it integrates Islamic educational values and *pesantren* culture into its human resource development programs. The case study approach enabled an in-depth examination of soft skills management within its natural setting and organizational context, allowing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Truman, 2023).

Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their roles, experiences, and involvement in the implementation of soft skills development programs. The participants consisted of the principal, the vice principal for curriculum affairs, teachers, and students. The principal was included because of his responsibility for policy formulation and human resource development, while the vice principal for curriculum affairs provided information regarding the implementation of educational programs. Teachers and students were selected as key stakeholders directly involved in and affected by soft skills development activities.

Data were collected through observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Observations focused on classroom learning activities, extracurricular programs, and organizational practices related to soft skills development. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain detailed information regarding the planning, implementation, and outcomes of soft skills management. In addition, institutional documents, including school programs, strategic plans, activity reports, and other relevant records, were analyzed to support and validate the findings. The use of multiple data collection techniques facilitated triangulation and enhanced the credibility of the study.

Data analysis was conducted through an interactive process involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Maxwell, 2020). Data reduction involved selecting, organizing, and categorizing information to align with the research objectives. The organized data were then presented in thematic and narrative forms to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn and continuously verified through comparison across different data sources. To strengthen the analytical process, content analysis was employed to identify major themes, discourse analysis was used to examine meanings embedded in communication practices and institutional policies, and interpretative analysis was applied to understand the broader significance of the findings. The analysis process was conducted continuously until coherent and valid conclusions were obtained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Improving the Quality of Educational Institutions

Soft skills development is not treated as a separate program but is integrated into various educational, managerial, and extracurricular activities. The interview data reveal that the madrasa leadership places significant emphasis on strengthening communication, collaboration, leadership, discipline, and professionalism as essential competencies for improving educational quality. These competencies are developed through teacher training programs, academic supervision, collaborative professional

forums, student leadership activities, and the cultivation of a supportive organizational culture. The results of interviews related to soft skill management in improving the quality and competence of human resources at MTs Sunan Ampel Kamal Kuning show that there is systematic implementation, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Informant Interview Results

Informant	Soft Skills	Management Strategy	Impact of Education Quality	Impact of Human Resources Competence
Madrasah Principal	Leadership, communication	Coaching and Supervision	Improved work culture	Teacher professionalism
Curriculum Vice Principal	Collaboration, coordination	Regular Meetings and Lesson Study	Effective learning	Pedagogical competence increases
Teacher	Cooperation, creativity	Active Learning	Learning innovation	Professional competence increases
Students	Discipline, responsibility	Habits and Project Learning	Improved achievement	Character development

Soft skills management is implemented comprehensively across all components of the madrasah. The principal emphasizes leadership aspects, the vice principal for curriculum focuses on coordination, teachers develop creativity in learning, while students show improvements in character development. This data reaffirms that soft skills are a crucial component in efforts to improve the quality of education and human resource competency at MTs Sunan Ampel Kamal Kuning.






A pattern emerged indicating that soft skills management is systematically integrated within the madrasah environment. The first pattern indicates that the principal's leadership plays a key role in the implementation of soft skills. The principal actively provides guidance through ongoing coaching and supervision. The second pattern indicates that the deputy head of curriculum plays a role in strengthening communication and coordination between teachers through regular meetings and lesson study activities. The third pattern indicates that teachers implement soft skills through collaborative and innovative learning. Meanwhile, the fourth pattern indicates that students experience character development through the development of discipline and responsibility. Furthermore, this pattern also demonstrates the link between soft skills management and improving educational quality. Teachers with strong soft skills are able to deliver more innovative and effective learning processes. This demonstrates that soft skills management plays a strategic role in continuously improving the quality of human resources and education.

This pattern emerged because soft skills management at MTs Sunan Ampel Kamal Kuning is supported by visionary leadership and a collaborative organizational culture. The principal acts as a leader, encouraging soft skills development through ongoing coaching. Furthermore, an open communication culture allows teachers to share experiences and improve their competencies collaboratively. Teachers with strong communication and collaboration skills are able to deliver a more effective learning process. Furthermore, students with strong soft skills demonstrate improvements in both academic and non-academic achievement. Therefore, managing soft skills is a crucial strategy for improving educational quality and human resource competency at MTs Sunan Ampel Kamal Kuning.

Formation of Student Character and Leadership

The first pattern demonstrates that active learning encourages improved student communication skills, with group discussions helping them hone their speaking and teamwork skills. The second pattern indicates that teacher meetings play a role in strengthening collaboration and coordination between educators. The third pattern indicates that extracurricular activities serve as a platform for developing student leadership. Meanwhile, the fourth pattern shows that routine activities, such as school ceremonies, contribute to instilling discipline and responsibility in students. The results of observations regarding the implementation of soft skill management at MTs Sunan Ampel Kamal Kuning are presented in the following Table 2.

Table 2. Results of The Application of Soft Skills Management

School Activities	Emerging Soft Skills	Implementation Form	Impact	Documentation
Classroom learning	Communication	Group discussion	Participation increases	
Teachers' meeting	Teachers' meeting	Team planning	Effective program	
Extracurricular	Leadership	Student organizations	Character development	
School ceremony	Discipline	Code of Conduct	Positive culture	
Religious activities	Responsibility	Habit of worship	Religious character increases	

Furthermore, religious activities also strengthen students' religious character. This pattern indicates that soft skills develop through habituation and direct experience. This demonstrates that soft skills management is implemented systematically through




various structured school activities. This pattern emerged because MTs Sunan Ampel Kamal Kuning implemented an experiential learning approach. Soft skills were not only taught theoretically but also implemented in daily activities.


Furthermore, a school culture that supported character development was also a crucial factor. Another interpretation suggests that soft skills develop optimally when students are directly involved in various school activities. Collaborative activities provide opportunities for students to hone their communication and cooperation skills. Furthermore, activities related to leadership contribute to a heightened sense of responsibility. Therefore, implementing soft skills through school activities is an effective strategy for improving the quality of education and the competence of human resources.

Improving Teacher Competence through Soft Skills Training

Documentation data shows a pattern of soft skills development through formal programs in schools. Teacher training programs play a role in improving communication competency. The MGMP program encourages increased collaboration between teachers. Student development programs contribute to strengthening student leadership, while academic supervision enhances teacher professionalism. Documentation regarding soft skill management in improving human resource competency is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of Improving Human Resource Competencies

Program	Soft Skill	Form of Activity	Results	Documentation
Teacher Workshop	Communication	Training	Competence increases	
Internal MGMP	Collaboration	Discussion	Learning innovation	
Student Development	Leadership	Student Council	Character development	

Academic Supervision	Professionalism	Evaluation	Quality increases	
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The data indicate that soft skills management at MTs Sunan Ampel Kamal Kuning is systematically integrated into various human resource development programs. Communication skills are strengthened through teacher workshops, which contribute to increased professional competence and support more effective interactions in the educational environment. Collaboration is developed through Internal MGMP activities, where discussion forums encourage knowledge sharing and stimulate learning innovation among teachers. Leadership skills are fostered through student development programs, particularly student council activities, which provide opportunities for students to practice decision-making, responsibility, and organizational management, thereby supporting character formation. Furthermore, academic supervision promotes professionalism through continuous evaluation and feedback processes, contributing to improvements in educational quality.

Discussion

Soft skills management plays a pivotal role in enhancing educational quality and human resource competency at MTs Sunan Ampel Kamal Kuning. Leadership, communication, collaboration, and discipline emerged as essential competencies that support teacher professionalism, strengthen organizational performance, and foster student character development. These competencies enable teachers to become more adaptive, communicative, and innovative in responding to educational challenges. In educational institutions, where organizational effectiveness depends heavily on social interaction and collective engagement, the systematic development of soft skills contributes significantly to achieving institutional goals. This result is consistent with previous studies showing that soft skills improve leadership effectiveness, teamwork, and organizational productivity, ultimately contributing to higher levels of teacher engagement and student achievement (Armila & Sopianingsih, 2022; Irawan et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2024).

The analysis further indicates that leadership and organizational culture constitute the primary mechanisms through which soft skills are cultivated and sustained. The principal's role extends beyond administrative responsibilities to include mentoring, coaching, and facilitating professional collaboration among teachers. Such leadership practices create an environment that encourages active participation, continuous learning, and collective responsibility for educational improvement. This supports the argument that transformational leadership influences teachers' professional growth by fostering motivation, commitment, and collaborative behavior. Similar conclusions have been reported in previous studies, which highlight the relationship between leadership effectiveness, teacher competency development, and institutional performance (Otaya et al., 2023; Tarmo & Kimaro, 2021). Consequently, soft skills management should be viewed not merely as an individual development strategy but as an organizational process

shaped by leadership practices and institutional culture.

The integration of soft skills into daily educational activities also contributes significantly to competency development among teachers and students. Communication skills are strengthened through classroom interactions and discussions, while leadership and responsibility are developed through extracurricular and student organizational activities. The continuous involvement of individuals in these activities provides opportunities for experiential learning, allowing soft skills to develop through practice and reflection rather than through theoretical instruction alone. This supports previous research emphasizing that experiential learning environments are highly effective in fostering communication, leadership, and problem-solving competencies (Liu et al., 2024; Suarni, 2022; Yalçinkaya et al., 2021). The results therefore suggest that the successful development of soft skills requires their integration into everyday educational experiences rather than their treatment as separate training programs.

Another important aspect is the role of the learning environment and school culture in facilitating soft skills development. A collaborative and supportive environment encourages interaction among teachers and students, creating opportunities for the development of communication, teamwork, and leadership competencies (Kolodner et al., 2003; Spatioti et al., 2022). Through regular participation in collaborative activities, individuals learn to negotiate, cooperate, and assume responsibility within social contexts. These results reinforce previous studies demonstrating that collaborative learning environments positively influence interpersonal competencies and leadership development (Blyznyuk & Kachak, 2024; Lin et al., 2022; Roziqin et al., 2024). This indicates that school culture functions not only as a contextual factor but also as an active mechanism that shapes the development of human resource competencies within educational institutions.

Furthermore, the implementation of structured professional development programs, including teacher training, academic supervision, and student development initiatives, provides a systematic framework for strengthening soft skills. Such programs create continuous opportunities for improving communication, collaboration, professionalism, and leadership capacities. The effectiveness of these initiatives reflects the importance of sustained professional development in supporting educational quality improvement. This interpretation aligns with previous studies that emphasize the positive relationship between continuous professional development, teacher performance, and institutional effectiveness (Jusoh et al., 2024; Setiawati et al., 2023; Warren, 2021). Therefore, soft skills management can be considered an integral component of human resource development strategies within Islamic educational institutions.

The paper highlights the importance of institutional policies and strategic planning in ensuring the sustainability of soft skills development. Long-term planning enables schools to integrate soft skills into educational programs, professional development activities, and organizational practices in a consistent manner. Clear policies provide direction and continuity, ensuring that competency development becomes part of the institution's strategic objectives. The effectiveness of soft skills management depends not only on individual initiatives but also on the extent to which it is embedded within institutional strategies and supported by long-term organizational commitment.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that soft skills management serves as a strategic mechanism for enhancing educational quality and human resource competency at MTs Sunan Ampel Kamal Kuning. The integration of leadership, communication, collaboration, discipline, and responsibility into educational activities, professional development programs, and organizational culture contributes to strengthening teacher professionalism, fostering student character development, and improving institutional performance. The results highlight that soft skills are not merely individual attributes but constitute an integrated management approach that supports sustainable educational improvement through adaptive leadership and a collaborative school culture. The study is limited to a single institutional context and employs a qualitative approach, which restricts the generalizability of the results. Future research is therefore encouraged to involve broader educational settings, incorporate multiple stakeholders, and utilize mixed-methods designs to examine further the relationship between soft skills management, leadership practices, organizational culture, and educational outcomes.

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