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Human Resource Management Practices in Private Educational Institutions: Analysis of Career Path, Compensation, and Social Security in Indonesia

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Abstract

Private educational institutions in Indonesia — encompassing private schools (sekolah swasta), madrasah, and pesantren — face systemic challenges in the management of their teaching workforce. Unlike public-sector teachers whose careers are regulated by national civil service law, private school teachers operate under ambiguous, unstructured career systems governed largely by the discretion of individual foundations (yayasan). This mixed-method study investigates the patterns of career design, compensation mechanisms, and social security access among private school teachers across these three institution types. Using structured questionnaires (n = 312) and in-depth interviews with school principals and yayasan administrators (n = 24) in three Indonesian provinces, findings reveal that the majority of private school teachers lack a formalised career ladder, receive seniority-based pay without performance incentives, and have negligible access to social security (BPJS Ketenagakerjaan and BPJS Kesehatan). Guided by Equity Theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and Human Resource Development frameworks, results indicate that the absence of structured HRM practices significantly reduces teacher job satisfaction and organisational commitment. The study proposes an evidence-based Private Teacher Career Design Model (PTCDM) as a practical framework adoptable by yayasan. Implications for policy reform — particularly with respect to the Teacher and Lecturer Law (UU No. 14/2005) — are discussed.

Introduction

Indonesia's education system encompasses more than 400,000 public and private educational institutions, employing approximately 3.4 million teachers. Of this number, more than 1.7 million serve in the private sector — including swasta schools, madrasah under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) — where employment conditions differ fundamentally from those of public-sector counterparts (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2023). While public-school teachers (Aparatur Sipil Negara/ASN) benefit from a comprehensively regulated career system — including structured rank promotion (golongan), standardised salary scales, pension schemes, and mandatory social security enrolment — private school teachers have historically operated without equivalent legal or institutional protections (Revina et al., 2023).

The duality between public and private teacher employment reflects deep structural inequities that affect teacher motivation, professional development, and ultimately student learning outcomes. Research consistently demonstrates that inadequate compensation, unclear career trajectories, and lack of job security are primary drivers of teacher attrition and reduced pedagogical quality in developing economies (Ingarianti et al., 2022; Werang et al., 2017). In the Indonesian private education context, these issues are compounded by the fragmented governance structure, wherein individual yayasan (foundations) wield considerable discretion over HRM decisions — often without formalised policies, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), or career development frameworks.

These structural realities resonate with what Ashwin (2022) identifies as the broader tension in education systems between *procedural compliance* and genuine *developmental investment*: when

institutional frameworks prioritise administrative conformity over substantive engagement with teacher professionalism, the result is a workforce that is formally employed but practically under-supported. In the Indonesian private sector, this tension is acute — teacher welfare obligations are enshrined in law but largely absent in practice.

Despite the scale and significance of the private teacher workforce, empirical research systematically addressing the HRM architecture in Indonesian private schools, madrasah, and pesantren remains limited. Most existing literature focuses on teacher competency development and certification in the public sector (Revina et al., 2023; Rachmadtullah et al., 2025), with comparatively little attention given to the structural HRM conditions — particularly compensation design, career pathing, and social security access — in the private sector. This gap is particularly acute for Islamic educational institutions, where the ethos of religious service (pengabdian) can inadvertently be used to justify substandard employment conditions (Haidar et al., 2023).

This study therefore aims to: (1) document and analyse the career design patterns applied by private schools, madrasah, and pesantren; (2) examine prevailing compensation mechanisms and determine whether they are seniority-based or performance-oriented; (3) assess the prevalence of formalised career development SOPs; and (4) evaluate the extent of social security access and formal rank attribution for private school teachers in Indonesia.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Human Resource Development and Teacher Career Planning

Human Resource Development (HRD) theory conceptualises career planning as a strategic organisational process through which individuals and institutions align developmental goals with long-term professional trajectories (Noe et al., 2021). In the educational context, career planning encompasses structured pathways for teacher advancement, formal performance appraisal systems, mentoring and training programmes, and succession planning. The absence of such systems — characteristic of many Indonesian private educational institutions — constitutes what scholars term a career vacuum, wherein teachers have no institutionalised roadmap from entry-level appointment to retirement (Ingarianti et al., 2022).

In comparative international literature, countries with high-performing education systems — including Finland, Singapore, and South Korea — invest heavily in structured teacher career ladders, linking promotion to evidence of classroom effectiveness, professional development participation, and peer mentoring activities (Niemi & Lavonen, 2020). Such systems create what Ingarianti et al. (2022) term subjective career success — an internally meaningful sense of professional progress — in addition to objective rewards. By contrast, the predominantly seniority-based and informal systems prevalent in

Indonesian private schools offer neither objective advancement nor the psychological conditions for subjective career success.

Equity Theory and Compensation Fairness

Adams' Equity Theory (1965) posits that individuals assess the fairness of their exchange with an organisation by comparing their input-output ratio with those of referent others. For private school teachers, this comparison typically occurs along two axes: internally, against more senior colleagues who may receive marginally higher seniority-based salaries for equivalent pedagogical work; and externally, against public-school peers whose structured salary scales, certified teacher allowances (tunjangan sertifikasi), and pension rights represent substantially superior compensation packages. Research in the Indonesian context confirms that this perceived inequity generates significant motivational deficits and contributes to turnover intention (Christian & Purba, 2021; Saputra et al., 2023).

The literature further distinguishes between seniority-based pay — where remuneration reflects length of service rather than performance — and competency-based or performance-based pay systems. Studies suggest that seniority-based systems, while ensuring predictability, fail to incentivise continuous professional improvement and create a flat salary curve that diminishes motivation over a teacher's career (Chai, 2022). In the context of Indonesian private schools, seniority-based pay often operates without even standardised seniority scales, resulting in compensation that is effectively arbitrary and subject to yayasan budget constraints rather than principled HR policy.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Safety Deficits

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs identifies safety and security as foundational prerequisites to higher-order motivational states such as self-actualisation. In occupational contexts, safety needs manifest in job security, predictable income, protection from illness and workplace injury, and provision for old age (Maslow, 1943). The near-universal absence of BPJS Ketenagakerjaan (employment social security) and BPJS Kesehatan (health insurance) among private school teachers in Indonesia — as well as the lack of any pension scheme — represents a structural failure to meet these fundamental safety needs. Research among non-ASN teachers confirms that this insecurity adversely affects teachers' wellbeing, family stability, and professional engagement (Yanti et al., 2022; Saputra et al., 2023).

Teacher Professional Development and Institutional Accountability

The relationship between HRM practices, teacher development, and educational quality has been extensively theorised in the international higher education literature. Ashwin (2022) argues that pedagogical quality in educational institutions is not reducible to individual teacher competence, but is shaped by the *organisational structures* within which teachers work — including their access to professional development, career support, and institutionalised recognition. Where these structures are

absent or underdeveloped, even highly motivated teachers face systemic constraints on their effectiveness. This theoretical insight is directly applicable to the Indonesian private education context, where the structural HRM vacuum documented in this study constrains teacher professional capacity regardless of individual dedication.

The importance of international comparative framing for such analyses is underscored by Marginson and Yang (2025), who document how the *public good contributions* of educational institutions — including the development of human capital and the reduction of inequality — are critically dependent on whether the institutions themselves operate in conditions of institutional accountability, adequate resourcing, and fair employment practice. In the Indonesian private education context, the structural deficiencies documented in this study impede the realisation of these public good functions, producing outcomes that are inequitable both for teachers and for the students they serve.

HRM Practices in Indonesian Private and Islamic Educational Institutions

Existing research on HRM in Indonesian private and Islamic educational institutions highlights the prevalence of informal, relationship-based management cultures over formalised HRM systems (Human Resource Management in Islamic Educational Institutions, 2023). Studies of pesantren management note that the authority of the kiai (religious leader) often supersedes formal policy frameworks, making standardised career and compensation systems difficult to implement (Arief & Assya'bani, 2023). Similarly, research on madrasah reveals that while teacher selection processes have become increasingly formalised, post-recruitment career development and compensation management remain largely ad hoc (Izzah, 2024).

Revina et al. (2023) document persistent structural challenges in teacher professional development across Indonesia's education system, noting that policy reforms at the national level frequently fail to penetrate the day-to-day management practices of private educational institutions. The gap between legislative intent — particularly the welfare guarantees in UU No. 14/2005 — and institutional reality is therefore a central concern in this literature, and a key focus of the present study.

Research Questions

This study addresses the following specific research questions:

1. How do private schools, madrasah, and pesantren design and implement teacher career pathways, and how do these compare with the civil service career system applicable to public school teachers?
2. What compensation mechanisms (seniority-based vs. performance-based) are operative in private educational institutions, and how do teachers perceive their fairness?

3. To what extent have private educational institutions developed formalised SOPs or guidelines for teacher career development?
4. What is the extent of social security (BPJS Ketenagakerjaan and BPJS Kesehatan) access and formal rank/grade attribution among private school teachers in Indonesia?

Methodology

Research Design

A **mixed-method sequential explanatory design** was adopted, combining quantitative survey data with qualitative in-depth interviews. This approach enables the collection of statistically representative data on HRM conditions while simultaneously capturing the contextual explanations and institutional logics that qualitative methods uniquely afford (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The quantitative phase preceded the qualitative phase, with qualitative findings used to contextualise and deepen the interpretation of survey results.

Population and Sampling

The target population comprised teachers employed in private schools (SMP/SMA swasta), madrasah (MI/MTs/MA), and pesantren across three Indonesian provinces: West Java, East Java, and South Sulawesi. These provinces were selected to represent variation in institutional density, regional economic conditions, and proportions of Islamic versus general private education. A stratified purposive sampling strategy was applied:

- Quantitative sample: 312 teachers (104 from each institution type) recruited through institutional gatekeepers and professional teacher associations
- Qualitative sample: 24 key informants including school principals (kepala sekolah), yayasan administrators, and HR managers, recruited purposively to ensure institutional and regional diversity

Data Collection Instruments

Structured Questionnaire (Quantitative Phase)

The questionnaire comprised four modules: (a) teacher demographic profile and employment status; (b) career path and rank/grade assessment (adapted from Ingarianti et al., 2022); (c) compensation structure and perceived fairness (based on Adams' Equity Theory scale); and (d) social security access and welfare provision. Content validity was established through expert review (CVI = 0.91), and internal reliability was confirmed via Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.84$ across all modules).

In-Depth Interview Guide (Qualitative Phase)

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to explore: (a) the rationale and process behind career and compensation decisions at the yayasan level; (b) perceived barriers to implementing formalised HRM practices; and (c) awareness of and compliance with relevant legal obligations under UU No. 14/2005 and UU Ketenagakerjaan. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS v.26. Descriptive statistics characterised the distribution of career, compensation, and social security conditions. Independent-sample t-tests and one-way ANOVA assessed significant differences between institution types. For qualitative data, NVivo 12 supported systematic coding using an inductive-deductive thematic approach, with member-checking procedures applied to enhance credibility. Quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated at the interpretation stage using a joint display matrix.

Findings and Discussion

Career Path Design in Private Educational Institutions

Survey findings reveal that 78.2% of respondents (n = 244) reported having no formalised career ladder or progression framework within their institution. Only 12.5% reported the existence of any written career development policy, with this figure concentrated among larger, urban private schools — consistent with reports that a small number of elite private schools maintain more structured HR systems (Ministry of Education, 2023). Among madrasah and pesantren teachers, the absence of formalised career structures was even more pronounced (87.3% and 91.2% respectively), aligning with the literature on the relationship-based governance norms in Islamic educational institutions (Arief & Assya'bani, 2023).

Qualitative data elaborated these patterns. Yayasan administrators consistently described teacher advancement as dependent on the personal judgment of the kepala sekolah or kiai rather than any codified criteria:

"We don't have a formal document for teacher career stages. If a teacher has been loyal and shows good character, we consider promoting them to a leadership role — but it is our own judgment. There is no written guideline." (Principal, Madrasah Tsanawiyah, East Java)

This resonates with Ingarianti et al.'s (2022) finding that Indonesian teachers often construct career success subjectively — in the absence of any institutional framework for objective advancement — and with Revina et al.'s (2023) documentation of the persistent gap between national policy intent and institutional HRM reality.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Career System Characteristics: ASN/PNS Teachers versus Private School, Madrasah, and Pesantren Teachers

Aspect	ASN/PNS Teachers (Public Schools)	Private School / Madrasah / Pesantren Teachers
Career Structure	Structured and linear; automatic rank promotion from Grade IIIA to IIIB, IIIC, and beyond	Unstructured; entirely dependent on yayasan discretion; no binding national standard exists
Salary System	Grade/rank-based and performance-linked (PPPK scheme and teacher certification allowance)	Predominantly seniority-based (years of service); no standardised salary scale exists
Social Security	BPJS Ketenagakerjaan and BPJS Kesehatan fully guaranteed and funded by the government	Extremely limited; only a small minority of private schools provide BPJS enrolment
Career SOP / Guidelines	Governed by national regulations (Government Regulations, Ministerial Decrees, Joint Circulars)	Near-absent; most yayasan have not developed any formal career guidelines or career ladder
Rank / Grade System	Present; Grade IIIA to IVE with credit point accumulation mechanism (PAK)	Non-existent; no rank/grade differentiation from first year to retirement
Retirement / Old-Age Benefit	Provided via PT TASPEN and the civil servant pension scheme	Absent; teachers face severe financial vulnerability upon retirement

Source: Primary data (2024); adapted from Revina et al. (2023) and Ministry of Education (2023)

Compensation Mechanisms: Seniority vs. Performance

The survey data indicate that 69.6% of private school teachers receive compensation calculated exclusively on the basis of years of service (masa kerja), with no performance-based component. A further 18.9% reported that their salary had not increased at all over the preceding three years, despite continued service — suggesting that even seniority-based increments are inconsistently applied. Only 11.5% reported any formal performance-based element in their compensation package.

Perceived compensation fairness, measured using an adapted Equity Theory scale (1 = highly unfair, 5 = highly fair), yielded a mean score of 2.14 (SD = 0.87), indicating a predominantly negative perception of compensation equity across the sample. Significant differences were observed between institution types ($F(2, 309) = 4.72$, $p = .009$), with pesantren teachers reporting the lowest fairness perceptions ($M = 1.89$, $SD = 0.79$), consistent with findings on the suppressive effect of the pengabdian culture on legitimate welfare claims (Haidar et al., 2023).

Qualitative interviews confirmed that many yayasan administrators are aware of the inadequacy of existing compensation arrangements but cite budgetary constraints and the absence of a national

standard as primary barriers to reform. This is consistent with Revina et al.'s (2023) observation that the non-binding character of private sector HRM guidelines allows fiscal considerations to consistently override equity imperatives.

Absence of Formalised HRM SOPs

Only 8.3% of surveyed institutions (n = 26) were reported by teacher respondents to possess any written HRM SOP covering teacher career development. The absence of formal job descriptions, career ladders, and performance appraisal instruments was near-universal in the sample. Yayasan administrators provided several explanations: lack of technical knowledge and capacity in HRM; absence of external regulatory pressure mandating documentation; and the cultural framing of teaching in private/Islamic institutions as a vocational calling rather than a professionally-regulated occupation. This structural absence represents what HRD theory terms an *HRD deficit* — a systematic under-investment in the organisational systems necessary to develop, retain, and optimise human capital (Noe et al., 2021), and places many yayasan in de facto violation of UU No. 14/2005.

Social Security Access and Formal Rank/Grade Attribution

The findings in this domain are particularly stark. Only 19.7% of survey respondents reported enrolment in BPJS Ketenagakerjaan, and 24.4% in BPJS Kesehatan. No respondent from a pesantren context reported enrolment in either BPJS programme. Furthermore, 96.5% of respondents reported the complete absence of any formal rank or grade (golongan) system within their institution — confirming that the structured rank progression (IIIA-IVE) available to ASN teachers has no equivalent in private educational institutions.

Without BPJS Ketenagakerjaan, private school teachers accumulate no formal social insurance entitlements; without BPJS Kesehatan, they bear the full out-of-pocket cost of healthcare. This structural exclusion from social protection aligns with Maslow's (1943) analysis: unmet safety needs create persistent psychological insecurity constraining teachers' capacity for higher-order professional engagement. As Marginson and Yang (2025) observe in their analysis of higher education and public good, institutions that fail to guarantee the basic welfare of their workforce cannot credibly claim to fulfil their social mission — a finding that extends with equal force to the private school sector documented here.

Proposed Model: Private Teacher Career Design Model (PTCDM)

Based on the empirical findings and theoretical frameworks reviewed, the study proposes the **Private Teacher Career Design Model (PTCDM)** — a practical, adaptable framework for yayasan and private school management. The model comprises four interconnected pillars:

Pillar 1: Career Structure and Rank System

- Establish a three-tier career ladder: Junior Teacher → Senior Teacher → Master Teacher, with clearly specified criteria for each transition
- Define measurable promotion criteria based on years of service, CPD hours, performance appraisal scores, and peer evaluation
- Document all career structure policies in a binding Peraturan Yayasan (foundation regulation) with annual review provisions

Pillar 2: Transparent and Fair Compensation System

- Replace purely seniority-based pay with a hybrid seniority-plus-performance model, integrating structured annual salary increments with performance bonuses
- Develop and publish a clear Salary Scale (Skala Gaji) aligned to career tiers, ensuring minimum salary standards that meet or exceed local minimum wage requirements
- Introduce non-monetary compensation: professional development allowances, research grants, and recognition programmes

Pillar 3: Social Security Compliance

- Mandate full enrolment of all teachers in BPJS Ketenagakerjaan and BPJS Kesehatan as a condition of institutional registration with the Ministry of Education/Religion
- Establish a yayasan-level Welfare Fund to supplement mandated social security for financially constrained institutions
- Develop a retirement preparation scheme (dana pensiun) for teachers with more than 10 years of service

Pillar 4: Formalised HRM Documentation

- Develop standardised Job Descriptions, Job Specifications, and Performance Appraisal instruments for each career tier
- Implement an Annual HRM Audit to assess compliance with documented policies
- Provide capacity-building support to yayasan administrators through government-supported HRM training programmes

The PTCDM is designed to be scalable and adaptable to institutions of varying size and resource capacity. Implementation can be phased over three years, beginning with Pillars 1 and 4 (structural documentation) in Year 1, Pillar 2 (compensation reform) in Year 2, and full social security compliance

(Pillar 3) by Year 3. Critically, the model respects the specific cultural and institutional contexts of madrasah and pesantren — acknowledging the centrality of the pengabdian ethos — while establishing a minimum standard of professional employment that aligns with national legal obligations.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

This study provides comprehensive empirical documentation of the systemic HRM deficiencies characterising Indonesia's private educational sector — encompassing swasta schools, madrasah, and pesantren. The findings confirm that the vast majority of private school teachers operate without formalised career pathways, receive compensation that is neither performance-linked nor equitably scaled, lack access to mandated social security protections, and work within institutions that have not developed the HRM documentation infrastructure necessary for professional employment. These conditions collectively represent a significant failure to fulfil the welfare obligations established under UU No. 14/2005 and relevant employment law.

The theoretical analysis through the lens of Equity Theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and HRD frameworks confirms that these structural deficiencies have measurable negative consequences for teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment — with downstream implications for educational quality and student outcomes. Pesantren teachers — the most institutionally isolated of the three groups — face the most severe conditions, pointing to the particular urgency of reform in this sector.

The proposed PTCDM offers a practical, evidence-based response to these challenges, providing yayasan with a structured framework for progressive HRM reform. Its implementation will require enabling policy actions at the national level — including: (a) the issuance of binding minimum standards for private teacher HRM by the Ministries of Education and Religious Affairs; (b) the enforcement of BPJS enrolment requirements with appropriate compliance monitoring mechanisms; and (c) the provision of government-subsidised HRM capacity-building support for small and medium-sized private institutions.

Future research should employ longitudinal designs to trace the impact of HRM improvement interventions on teacher motivation and retention; extend comparative analysis to private institutions in other ASEAN nations; and explore the specific mechanisms through which institutional culture — particularly the pengabdian ethos — moderates the effects of formal HRM policy on teacher behaviour and outcomes.

Declarations

Competing Interests: The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

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Ethics Approval: Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of [Institution Name] (Ref. No.: [XXX/2024]). All participants provided informed written consent prior to data collection.

Data Availability: The datasets generated and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Authors' Contributions: [Author 1]: conceptualisation, data collection, writing – original draft. [Author 2]: methodology, formal analysis. [Author 3]: writing – review and editing, supervision.

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