

Article

Strategic talent acquisition through student admission management: evidence from Indonesian Islamic universities

Mohamad Erihadiana^{1, *}, Ilham Nurjaman², Aldy Rialdy Atmadja³, Rosihon Anwar⁴, Khafka Fadillah Wibawa³

¹Postgraduate Program, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati, Bandung 40292, Indonesia

²Faculty of Economic and Islamic Business, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati, Bandung 40292, Indonesia

³Faculty of Science and Technology, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati, Bandung 40292, Indonesia

⁴Faculty of Ushuluddin, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati, Bandung 40292, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: Mohamad Erihadiana, erihadiana@uinsgd.ac.id

CITATION

Erihadiana M, Nurjaman I, Atmadja AR, et al. Strategic talent acquisition through student admission management: evidence from Indonesian Islamic universities. *Human Resources Management and Services*. 2026; 8(3): 5949. <https://doi.org/10.18282/hrms5949>

COPYRIGHT



Copyright © 2026 by author(s).

Human Resources Management and Services is published by PiscoMed Publishing Pte. Ltd. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Abstract: This study examines student admission management as a strategic talent acquisition capability in Indonesian Islamic higher education. A qualitative comparative case study was conducted at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung and UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews with 18 institutional participants, non-participant observations, institutional documents, and official admission statistics. Thematic and cross-case analyses showed that both universities integrate enrollment planning, multi-channel communication, competency-based selection, digital administration, and cross-unit coordination. However, their approaches differ because institutional mission, historical development, accumulated reputation, stakeholder networks, and organizational resources shape how each university defines and attracts talent. UIN Sunan Gunung Djati places greater emphasis on mission-aligned religious and academic competencies, whereas UIN Sunan Kalijaga adopts a broader, multidimensional approach to applicant potential. The study introduces the concepts of institutionally embedded talent acquisition and institutional talent acquisition capability, thereby extending strategic HRM beyond employee recruitment. The findings also show that application volume and selectivity are insufficient indicators of recruitment success without longitudinal evidence of student performance. Universities should strengthen admission personnel competencies, applicant-centered digital services, enrollment analytics, and post-admission outcome evaluation. The study is limited by its two-case design, the absence of student participants and longitudinal outcome data, and potential researcher positionality.

Keywords: strategic talent acquisition; student admission management; human resource management; human capital development; strategic enrollment management; higher education; academic quality; Indonesian Islamic universities

1. Introduction

Competition among higher education institutions has transformed student admission from a routine administrative activity into a strategic organizational function. Universities compete not only for enrollment volume but also for applicants whose academic potential, values, and future capabilities can strengthen institutional performance [1,2]. From a Human Resource Management (HRM) perspective, student admission resembles strategic talent acquisition because it involves identifying, attracting, evaluating, and selecting individuals who may become valuable future human capital [3–5].

Strategic talent acquisition differs from conventional recruitment because it aligns the acquisition of people with long-term organizational priorities [4,6,7]

Although this concept has been developed primarily in employment settings, universities also depend on the quality of the individuals they attract. Incoming students influence learning environments, institutional reputation, graduate quality, and the future capacity of universities to contribute to society [2,8]. Student admission can therefore be understood as the entry stage of a broader human capital development process [9,10].

This perspective is particularly relevant to Indonesian State Islamic Universities (Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri, PTKIN), which are expected to combine academic excellence, Islamic values, social responsibility, and equitable access [11,12]. UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung and UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta operate under comparable national admission regulations but employ different institutional pathways, promotional channels, and selection criteria. Their comparison provides an opportunity to examine how common regulatory requirements are interpreted through different missions, histories, reputations, and organizational resources.

UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung and UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta provide analytically comparable cases because both operate within the same national admission policy while differing in institutional history, organizational development, recruitment strategy, and educational mission. Their comparison therefore enables examination of how common regulatory requirements are interpreted through different institutional capabilities [11,13].

Previous studies have examined admission through the lenses of educational policy, governance, marketing, and digital information systems [1,2,14–17]. These studies demonstrate the importance of transparency, technology, and regulatory compliance, but they rarely explain admission as an HRM capability. In particular, limited attention has been paid to the competencies of admission personnel, cross-functional coordination, applicant experience, institutional branding, and the relationship between recruitment architecture and future human capital outcomes [6,18].

Understanding student admission through an HRM perspective is important because recruitment principles developed for workforce acquisition may also explain how universities identify, attract, and develop future human capital. Strategic HRM emphasizes the alignment of people-management systems with organizational objectives, rather than treating recruitment as an isolated administrative activity [19]. Similarly, Ulrich [20] argues that HR functions create organizational value when they contribute directly to strategy implementation and capability development. Empirical HRM research also indicates that coherent systems of recruitment, development, and performance management can influence organizational productivity and effectiveness [21]. In higher education, this implies that admission management should be assessed not only by the number of applicants recruited but also by its contribution to the development of strategically valuable human capital.

Although previous studies have contributed to understanding admission governance, digital transformation, and university marketing, three important gaps remain. First, student admission has rarely been conceptualized as a strategic talent acquisition capability within Human Resource Management [4,22]. Second, limited attention has been given to how institutional mission, historical development, organizational resources, and stakeholder relationships shape recruitment architecture under identical national policy frameworks [10,13]. Third, existing studies predominantly describe admission procedures rather than explaining the organizational mechanisms through which recruitment contributes to long-term institutional capability [3,5]. Addressing these gaps provides the theoretical rationale for the present study.

This study addresses that gap by examining how student admission management operates as strategic talent acquisition in two Indonesian Islamic universities. It asks how recruitment planning, communication, selection, digital systems, and organizational coordination differ between the two institutions; why these differences arise; and what they imply for talent acquisition and HRM theory.

The study makes three contributions. First, it extends strategic talent acquisition beyond employee recruitment by conceptualizing prospective students as future institutional human capital [9,10]. Second, it introduces institutionally embedded talent acquisition, which explains how mission, history, legitimacy, resources, and stakeholder networks shape recruitment architecture. Third, it develops the concept of institutional talent acquisition capability, defined as the organizational capacity to integrate planning, branding, applicant engagement, selection governance, digital infrastructure, and staff competence into a coherent recruitment system [4,13].

Rather than treating admission as an administrative procedure, this study conceptualizes it as an institutionally embedded talent acquisition capability. The study therefore extends strategic talent acquisition theory into higher education by demonstrating that recruitment architecture is shaped not only by labor-market considerations but also by institutional mission, legitimacy, governance, and organizational resources [4,13]. This conceptual extension represents the principal novelty of the present research.

Understanding student admission through an HRM perspective is important because recruitment principles developed for workforce acquisition may also explain how universities identify and develop future human capital. Consequently, this study contributes not only to higher education management but also to broader discussions on strategic talent acquisition, organizational capability, and human capital development.

The value of prospective students does not arise solely from their individual attributes at the point of admission. Human capital resources emerge through interactions among individual knowledge, skills, social relationships, and organizational systems [22]. Accordingly, universities require institutional capabilities that can identify applicant potential and subsequently convert that potential into collective academic and organizational value.

The findings are expected to contribute theoretically by extending strategic talent acquisition into educational organizations, methodologically by applying comparative qualitative analysis to admission management, and practically by providing evidence-based recommendations for university leaders and policymakers seeking to strengthen institutional competitiveness through strategic enrollment management.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the theoretical foundations of strategic talent acquisition and human capital development. Section 3 describes the qualitative comparative methodology. Section 4 presents the empirical findings, followed by analytical discussion in Section 5. The final sections outline study limitations, conclusions, and implications for theory and practice.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Strategic talent acquisition

Strategic Talent Acquisition (STA) refers to the systematic process of identifying, attracting, selecting, and engaging individuals whose competencies support long-term organizational objectives rather than merely filling immediate vacancies [4,6]. Contemporary HRM literature emphasizes that talent acquisition integrates employer branding, workforce planning, recruitment communication,

competency-based assessment, digital recruitment, and organizational capability into a coherent strategic process [3,5].

Although STA has traditionally been examined in corporate employment contexts, its underlying principles are equally relevant to higher education. Universities compete to attract academically capable students who subsequently become institutional human capital. Student admission therefore represents the first stage of talent acquisition in which institutions identify individuals whose competencies, motivations, and values correspond with long-term educational objectives. From this perspective, admission management extends beyond administrative enrollment toward strategic capability development.

However, existing STA literature has largely overlooked educational institutions. Most previous studies conceptualize talent acquisition as employee recruitment, providing limited explanation of how universities strategically identify, attract, and develop future talent. This limitation creates an important theoretical opportunity to extend STA into higher education.

2.2. Human capital development

Human Capital Theory proposes that organizational performance depends upon investments in individuals' knowledge, skills, and competencies [9]. Universities similarly invest substantial resources in developing admitted students through teaching, research, mentoring, and academic support. Consequently, admission decisions influence the quality of future graduates, institutional reputation, and organizational sustainability.

Nevertheless, recruitment alone cannot create organizational advantage. Human capital becomes strategically valuable through emergence processes in which individual knowledge, skills, and interactions develop into organizational capabilities [10,22,23]. As emphasized by Wright and McMahan [10] and Ployhart [10,22], human capital generates value only when organizations possess complementary systems capable of developing acquired talent. Accordingly, admission should be understood as the beginning of a broader human capital development process rather than an end in itself.

2.3. Strategic enrollment management

Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) integrates recruitment, admission, retention, graduation, and institutional planning into a coordinated organizational strategy [1,2]. Unlike conventional admission management, SEM emphasizes strategic alignment among recruitment communication, enrollment planning, institutional branding, applicant services, and data-driven decision making.

Recent developments in digital recruitment further highlight the importance of integrated information systems, recruitment analytics, and applicant experience [16]. These developments demonstrate that effective enrollment management depends not only on technology but also on organizational coordination and staff competencies.

2.4. Institutional context and organizational capability

Institutional Theory suggests that organizational practices emerge through interactions among regulatory requirements, institutional missions, historical development, organizational legitimacy, and stakeholder expectations. Although Indonesian Islamic universities operate under common national admission regulations, each institution interprets these policies differently according to its mission, organizational resources, and historical trajectory.

Similarly, the Resource-Based View [13] argues that sustainable competitive advantage originates from valuable organizational capabilities rather than isolated organizational activities. Applied to university admission, competitive advantage derives not merely from selecting talented applicants

but from developing organizational capabilities that integrate strategic planning, recruitment communication, digital infrastructure, stakeholder collaboration, and competency-based selection into coherent institutional systems.

This perspective suggests that differences in recruitment architecture between universities cannot be explained solely by policy compliance but also by institution-specific organizational capabilities.

2.5. Institutional talent acquisition capability (the proposed framework)

Building upon Strategic Talent Acquisition, Human Capital Theory, Strategic Enrollment Management, Institutional Theory, and the Resource-Based View, this study proposes the concept of Institutional Talent Acquisition Capability (ITAC).

Institutional Talent Acquisition Capability refers to the organizational capacity to integrate strategic planning, institutional mission, employer branding, recruitment communication, digital infrastructure, competency-based selection, stakeholder collaboration, and continuous evaluation into a coherent talent acquisition system capable of attracting and developing future institutional human capital.

Unlike previous studies that conceptualize admission primarily as an administrative procedure, the present study argues that student admission constitutes a dynamic organizational capability embedded within institutional contexts. This capability explains why universities operating under identical national regulations adopt different recruitment architectures and selection strategies.

The proposed framework also extends strategic talent acquisition beyond employee recruitment by positioning prospective students as future organizational assets whose value emerges through long-term educational development.

3. Methods and data analysis

3.1. Research design

This study employed a qualitative comparative case-study design following Yin [24] (pp. 15–18) to examine student admission management as a strategic talent acquisition capability. The design enabled an in-depth analysis of organizational practices within their institutional contexts and a systematic comparison between UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung and UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. The cases were selected because both institutions operate under comparable national admission regulations but differ in institutional history, mission articulation, recruitment communication, and university-managed selection pathways.

3.2. Participants and sampling

Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants with direct responsibility for planning, implementing, or evaluating student admission. Eligibility required involvement in at least one complete admission cycle, substantive knowledge of admission policy or operations, and willingness to provide informed consent. Eighteen institutional participants were interviewed: 10 from UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung and eight from UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. The first group comprised one vice rector, one head of admission, two admission coordinators, two faculty representatives, one information-system manager, and three administrative officers. The second comprised one vice rector, one head of admission, two admission coordinators, two faculty representatives, and two administrative officers.

3.3. Data collection and interview protocol

Data were collected between February and May 2025 through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, document analysis, and official admission statistics. Interviews were conducted face-to-face or through

video conferencing, lasted approximately 45–90 minutes, and were audio-recorded with permission before verbatim transcription. The interview guide addressed: (1) alignment between admission planning and institutional strategy; (2) quota determination; (3) recruitment channels and target groups; (4) selection criteria and implementation; (5) competencies required of admission personnel; (6) organizational challenges; and (7) perceived contributions to institutional quality and competitiveness. Follow-up questions were used to clarify examples and explore differences between policy and practice.

Semi-structured interviews were used because they provide a consistent set of guiding questions while allowing participants to elaborate on their experiences, interpretations, and institutional practices [25] (pp. 3–4).

3.4. Document analysis

The documentary corpus included university admission regulations, rectoral decrees on admission committees, institutional strategic plans, admission guidelines, promotional materials, university websites, annual admission reports, applicant and capacity statistics, and national operational manuals for SPAN-PTKIN and UM-PTKIN. Documents were screened for relevance, source, date, and institutional origin. Relevant passages and numerical data were extracted into a structured matrix organized by recruitment planning, communication, selection, digital administration, staffing, and outcomes. Documentary evidence was compared with interview and observational data to identify convergence, divergence, and gaps.

3.5. Thematic and cross-case analysis

Analysis followed the six phases of thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke [26] (pp. 86–93). First, researchers read transcripts, field notes, and documents repeatedly to become familiar with the dataset. Second, meaningful segments were assigned open codes, including quota planning, mission alignment, school outreach, digital communication, selection diversity, staff competence, applicant services, and outcome monitoring. Third, related codes were grouped into conceptual categories. Fourth, categories were developed into preliminary themes and compared across institutions. Fifth, the themes were reviewed against the complete dataset for coherence and distinctiveness. Sixth, the final themes were defined and named. The cross-case stage examined not only whether practices differed but also how institutional mission, history, reputation, resources, and stakeholder networks could explain those differences.

Coding was undertaken initially by the first author and independently reviewed by two co-authors. The researchers compared coding decisions, discussed alternative interpretations, and revised the codebook until consensus was reached. This researcher triangulation reduced dependence on a single analyst and strengthened the explanatory comparison.

3.6. Trustworthiness and researcher positionality

Credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability were established following the trustworthiness criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba [27] (pp. 289–331). Credibility was supported through triangulation across interviews, observations, documents, and official statistics. Selected interview summaries were returned to participants for member checking, and peer debriefing was used during code and theme refinement. Dependability and confirmability were strengthened through an audit trail containing coding decisions, analytical memos, document matrices, and theme revisions. Contextual descriptions were provided to support analytical transferability.

All authors are affiliated with UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, one of the cases studied. This position provided contextual access but created a risk of institutional familiarity and favorable interpretation. To address that risk, the

researchers maintained reflexive notes, analyzed the UIN Sunan Kalijaga dataset before undertaking the cross-case comparison, required multi-researcher review of the coding framework, and grounded claims in convergent evidence rather than personal knowledge. The study did not include prospective or newly admitted students; consequently, its findings primarily represent the institutional side of talent acquisition.

The methodological procedures described above provide a rigorous basis for examining how strategic talent acquisition is implemented within two Indonesian Islamic universities. By integrating multiple sources of evidence, systematic thematic analysis, and cross-case comparison, the study seeks to generate an analytically grounded understanding of how institutional planning, recruitment communication, selection mechanisms, and organizational capabilities shape student admission management. The findings derived from this methodological approach are presented in the following section.

4. Results

4.1. Strategic talent acquisition planning

The findings indicate that both universities position student admission as a strategic organizational function integrated into institutional planning rather than merely an administrative enrollment process. Annual admission planning is conducted before each admission cycle through coordination among university leaders, faculties, admission committees, and relevant administrative units. Participants reported that quota allocation considers institutional capacity, accreditation requirements, previous admission outcomes, and projected educational demand.

At UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, student intake is distributed across several admission pathways. Approximately 25% of available places are allocated through SPAN-PTKIN, 45% through UM-PTKIN, and 30% through institution-managed admission pathways. The university also participates in SNBP and SNBT while maintaining specialized recruitment schemes, including Qur'an memorization (Tahfidz), Qirā'at al-Kutub, academic achievement, non-academic achievement, school recommendation, and international admission.

One admission coordinator explained:

"The admission quota is determined through annual coordination involving university leadership, faculties, and admission committees. Besides national regulations, we also consider program capacity, accreditation status, and institutional priorities." (Participant A3)

At UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, approximately 20% of admission capacity is allocated through SPAN-PTKIN, 50% through UM-PTKIN, and 30% through institutional admission. Similar to UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, the university also participates in SNBP and SNBT while operating independent admission mechanisms. Institutional pathways include computer-based testing, paper-based examinations, portfolio assessment, and non-test admission for selected applicant groups.

A participant stated:

"We provide multiple admission pathways because applicants come from diverse educational backgrounds. Different pathways allow us to assess applicants using different forms of evidence while maintaining institutional quality standards." (Participant B2)

Table 1 summarizes the comparative characteristics of strategic admission planning implemented by both universities.

Table 1. Comparison of strategic talent acquisition planning.

Aspects	UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung	UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta
SPAN-PTKIN Quota	25%	20%
UM-PTKIN Quota	45%	50%
Independent Admission Quota	30%	30%
SNBP Quota	30%	20%
SNBT Quota	40%	50%
Socialization Media	School visits, social media, advertisements	Print media, television, YouTube, WhatsApp
Information Portal	pmb.uinsgd.ac.id	admisi.uin-suka.ac.id

4.2. Strategic enrollment management

Both universities implement integrated enrollment management systems comprising applicant registration, document verification, selection, announcement, and student registration. Participants consistently described admission as a coordinated organizational process involving admission committees, academic faculties, information technology units, public relations offices, and administrative staff.

At UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, recruitment activities emphasize direct engagement through school visits, educational exhibitions, Islamic community networks, and digital promotion. Official university websites, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp are used extensively to distribute admission information.

According to one participant:

“Direct school engagement remains important because students often seek information from teachers and school counselors before deciding where to apply.”
(Participant A5)

UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta similarly combines digital communication with conventional media, including television, printed brochures, educational fairs, institutional partnerships, and email communication. Participants emphasized that multiple communication channels enable wider dissemination of admission information across different geographical regions.

Institutional documents further indicate that both universities have expanded the use of digital admission systems to support registration, document submission, verification, and applicant communication (**Table 2**).

Table 2. Comparison of strategic enrollment management.

Aspects	UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung	UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta
National Achievement Pathway	SPAN-PTKIN, SNBP	SPAN-PTKIN, SNBP
National Test Track	UM-PTKIN, SNBT	UM-PTKIN, SNBT
Independent Pathway	CBT, <i>Tahfidz</i> , <i>Qiro'atul Kutub</i> , Achievement, Invitation, Overseas	CBT, Paper-Based Test, Non-Test/Performance, Portfolio
Registration Portal	damba.uinsgd.ac.id	admisi.uin-suka.ac.id
Self-Test Variations	More focus on religious-based and international tests	Offers a variety of digital and manual-based test formats

4.3. Talent selection implementation

Both universities employ competency-based selection procedures while maintaining compliance with national admission regulations. National admission pathways follow standardized assessment mechanisms, whereas

institution-managed pathways allow additional assessment criteria reflecting institutional priorities.

At UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, independent admission examinations include academic literacy, mathematical reasoning, Islamic studies, Qur'anic competence, and institutional values. Applicants entering specialized pathways are additionally evaluated according to pathway-specific competencies, including Tahfidz, Qirā'at al-Kutub, academic achievement, and non-academic achievement.

Academic achievement refers to documented accomplishments attained by senior secondary school students through outstanding academic performance, including high school grade point averages (report cards), subject-specific academic competitions, and officially recognized scholastic awards such as Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Language, and other academic Olympiads or equivalent competitions at the regional, national, or international levels. Non-academic achievement refers to officially recognized accomplishments attained by senior secondary school students in extracurricular fields that are not directly related to academic performance, including achievements in sports, arts, music, cultural activities, leadership, and other talent-based competitions at the regional, national, or international levels.

One committee member explained:

“Applicants entering through special pathways must demonstrate competencies that correspond with the objectives of each pathway rather than relying solely on general academic examination.” (Participant A7)

At UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, applicant assessment includes computer-based testing, Arabic and English language assessment, Islamic studies, portfolio evaluation, and non-test admission for designated categories. Depending on the admission pathway, applicants are evaluated using written examinations, previous educational achievement, portfolios, or combinations of these approaches (Table 3).

Table 3. Comparison of talent selection implementation.

Aspects	UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung	UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta
SPAN-PTKIN	Report card-based invitation without exam	Report card-based invitation without exam
UM-PTKIN	The online test covers religious, math, and verbal literacy	Online test using ESS (Electronic Selection System) application
SNBP	Report card-based invitation without exam	Report card and portfolio-based invitations
SNBT	Computer-based tests according to Ministry of Education and Culture rules	Computer-based tests in two waves
Independent Pathway	CBT with Islamic, math, and reading materials	CBT with language, Dirasah Islamiyah, and science/IPS materials
Additional Independent Pathway	Academic and non-academic achievements Academic achievements: Excellent school grades (report cards), subject Olympiads, and regional, national, or international academic competitions. Non-academic achievements: Achievements in sports, arts, music, cultural activities, leadership, or other extracurricular competitions not directly related to academic performance.	Portfolio

4.4. Talent acquisition outcomes

Official admission statistics for the 2024 admission cycle indicate that both universities attracted applicant numbers substantially exceeding available enrollment capacity across multiple admission pathways.

Figure 1 presents comparative applicant numbers, available seats, applicant-to-seat ratios, and independent admission outcomes for the two institutions.

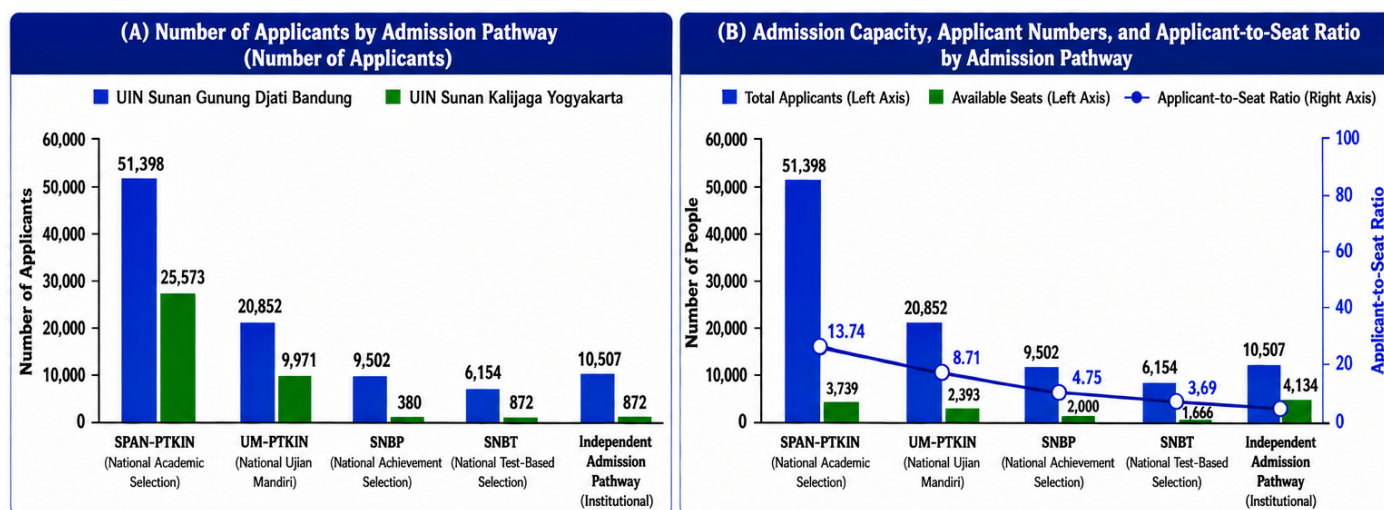


Table 1. Precise Applicant Numbers, Admission Capacity, and Applicant-to-Seat Ratios by Admission Pathway (2024)

Admission Pathway	UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung			UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta		
	Applicants (people)	Available Seats (people)	Applicant-to-Seat Ratio*	Applicants (people)	Available Seats (people)	Applicant-to-Seat Ratio*
SPAN-PTKIN (National Academic Selection)	51,398	3,739	13.74	25,573	3,739	6.84
UM-PTKIN (National Ujian Mandiri)	20,852	2,393	8.71	9,971	2,393	4.17
SNBP (National Achievement Selection)	9,502	2,000	4.75	380	2,000	0.19
SNBT (National Test-Based Selection)	6,154	1,666	3.69	872	1,666	0.52
Independent Admission Pathway (Institutional)	10,507	4,134	2.54	872	4,134	0.21
TOTAL	98,413	13,932	7.07*	37,668	13,932	2.70*

Notes: SPAN-PTKIN = National Academic Selection for Islamic Higher Education; UM-PTKIN = National Ujian Mandiri Selection for Islamic Higher Education;

SNBP = National Achievement Selection; SNBT = National Test-Based Selection; Independent Admission Pathway = Institutional admission conducted by the university independently.

* Overall applicant-to-seat ratio across all pathways.

Source: Processed from official admission statistics of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung and UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta (2024).

Figure 1. Comparative applicant numbers, admission capacity, and applicant-to-seat ratios across admission pathways at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung and UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta (2024).

At UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, SPAN-PTKIN received 25,699 first-choice applicants, with total applications exceeding 51,000 across all study programs. Sharia Financial Management was among the programs recording the highest applicant demand.

At UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, SPAN-PTKIN recorded 25,573 applicants competing for 575 available seats across 25 undergraduate study programs.

Across UM-PTKIN, SNBP, SNBT, and institution-managed admission pathways, frequently selected programs included Management, Psychology, Informatics Engineering, and Sharia Financial Management.

Institutional admission also attracted considerable applicant interest. UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung recorded more than 10,000 applicants through independent admission, while UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta reported applicant numbers substantially exceeding institutional admission capacity. **Figure 1** summarizes these admission outcomes.

Figure 2 is based on official 2024 admission statistics reported by the two universities. UIN Sunan Gunung Djati recorded 25,699 first-choice SPAN-PTKIN applicants and more than 51,000 applications in total. Sharia Financial Management was among its most competitive programs. UIN Sunan Kalijaga recorded 25,573 applicants competing for 575 places across 25 programs

in the corresponding reported pathway.

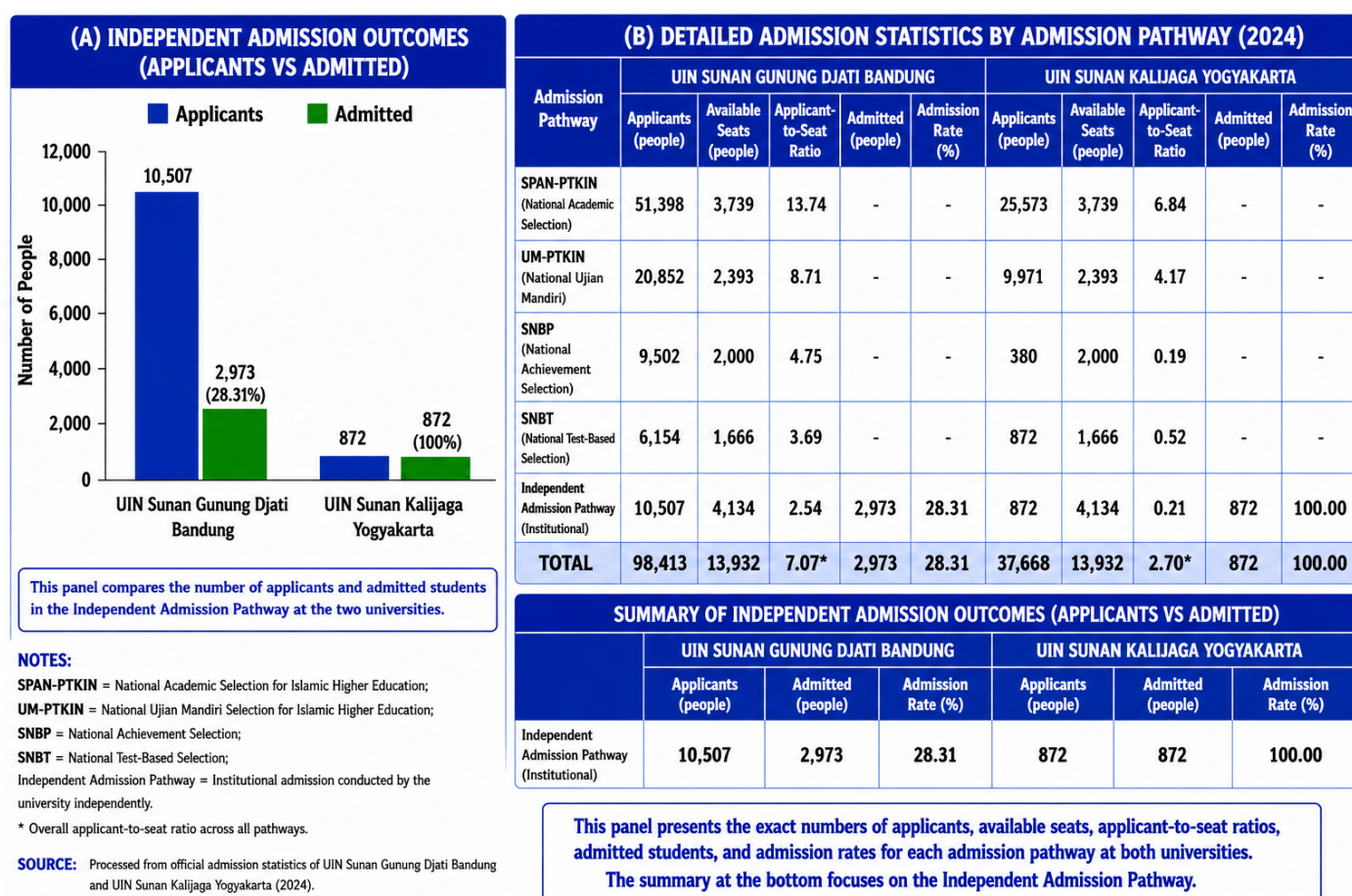


Figure 2. Independent admission outcomes and detailed admission statistics for UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung and UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta (2024).

Source: Processed from official admission statistics of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung and UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta (2024).

High applicant-to-seat ratios were also observed in UM-PTKIN, SNBP, SNBT, and institutional admission. Frequently selected programs included Management, Psychology, Informatics Engineering, and Sharia Financial Management. The independent pathway attracted more than 10,000 applicants at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati, while UIN Sunan Kalijaga maintained a highly selective institutional intake, with limited available places relative to applicant demand.

4.5. Organizational outcomes of strategic talent acquisition

Participants consistently reported that strategic admission management involved organizational processes extending beyond applicant selection.

First, respondents described strengthened coordination among university leadership, faculties, admission committees, information technology units, and administrative staff during admission implementation.

Second, institutional documents indicated increased utilization of digital systems for applicant registration, document verification, examination administration, and announcement procedures.

Third, participants explained that multiple recruitment communication channels expanded institutional outreach to prospective applicants and secondary schools.

Finally, participants reported that annual admission planning facilitated alignment between enrollment targets, available academic resources, and

institutional development priorities.

A participant summarized this process as follows:

“Admission management requires coordination across many university units. The process involves planning, communication, technology, academic units, and administrative services working together throughout the admission cycle.”
(Participant B6)

5. Discussion

5.1. Student admission management as strategic talent acquisition

The comparison demonstrates that admission strategies are institutionally embedded rather than uniform responses to national policy. Both universities operate within similar regulatory structures, yet their recruitment architectures differ because policy is mediated by institutional mission, historical development, accumulated legitimacy, stakeholder relationships, and organizational resources. UIN Sunan Gunung Djati’s specialized religious pathways indicate a stronger emphasis on mission alignment, whereas UIN Sunan Kalijaga’s wider assessment formats indicate a broader conception of applicant potential.

Institutional history helps explain these patterns. A university with established national recognition can rely more extensively on reputation and standardized pathways, whereas an institution seeking to deepen its position in particular applicant markets may invest more heavily in school relationships, religious networks, and specialized selection. These explanations should be interpreted as analytical inferences supported by the comparative evidence rather than as direct causal tests.

The two approaches also imply different talent acquisition trade-offs. Mission-specific recruitment may strengthen person-institution fit and reduce the distance between incoming competencies and institutional expectations, but it may narrow the range of applicant profiles. Broader competency-based recruitment may increase diversity and widen the talent pool, but it may require stronger post-admission orientation to develop shared institutional values. Neither architecture is universally superior; its value depends on strategic objectives and subsequent student development.

These findings are consistent with Maringe [2], who argued that student recruitment reflects institutional positioning rather than merely admission administration. Similarly, Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka [1] demonstrated that universities adopt differentiated recruitment strategies according to their competitive environments and institutional identities. However, the present study extends these perspectives by showing that, within the same national regulatory framework, institutional mission, historical development, stakeholder networks, and organizational resources produce different talent acquisition architectures. This finding suggests that regulatory uniformity does not necessarily lead to organizational homogeneity because institutional capability mediates policy implementation.

5.2. Human capital development, access, and institutional performance

The large applicant pools observed at both universities increased selection discretion, but selectivity should not be treated as equivalent to quality. Human Capital Theory explains why institutions invest in promising individuals [9], yet the value of that investment emerges only through development and post-entry performance. Without longitudinal evidence on retention, academic progress, graduation, employability, and institutional contribution, the present study cannot determine which admission model produces stronger human capital outcomes.

A further tension concerns selectivity and equitable access. Highly targeted criteria can improve mission alignment but may disadvantage applicants whose

potential is not captured by conventional academic or religious indicators. Conversely, broader pathways can recognize diverse forms of potential but may increase administrative complexity and inconsistency. Strategic admission therefore requires transparent criteria, multiple valid indicators, reasonable accommodation, and continuous equity monitoring.

The present findings also complement the work of Ployhart [22], who emphasized that the value of human capital cannot be inferred solely from recruitment success but must be evaluated through subsequent development and organizational contribution. Likewise, Wright and McMahan [10] argued that human capital becomes strategically valuable only when organizational systems support its development. Consequently, applicant volume and admission selectivity should be interpreted as preliminary indicators of recruitment effectiveness rather than evidence of institutional quality.

5.3. Theoretical contribution

The study offers four theoretical contributions that extend beyond applying existing theories to a new context. First, it demonstrates that strategic talent acquisition can encompass individuals who enter an organization as learners rather than employees. Second, it introduces institutionally embedded talent acquisition, which explains recruitment architecture as the product of mission, history, legitimacy, resources, and stakeholder networks. Third, it distinguishes a mission-alignment orientation from a talent-pool expansion orientation. These orientations are not mutually exclusive, but they direct attention to different definitions of talent and different recruitment outcomes. Fourth, the study develops the concept of institutional talent acquisition capability: the capacity to integrate strategic planning, branding, applicant engagement, selection governance, digital infrastructure, staff competence, and outcome monitoring.

Islamic values influence this capability by shaping which competencies are recognized as strategically relevant. At UIN Sunan Gunung Djati, religious literacy and Qur'anic achievement are incorporated explicitly into institutional pathways. This illustrates that talent is not a context-free category; organizations define it through their normative commitments as well as their performance requirements.

The proposed concept of *institutionally embedded talent acquisition* extends the strategic talent management framework developed by Collings and Mellahi [4] by emphasizing that talent identification is embedded within institutional mission, governance, and socio-cultural context. Unlike corporate organizations that recruit employees primarily to address workforce requirements, universities recruit prospective students whose capabilities will be cultivated over several years before generating organizational value. This temporal dimension distinguishes higher education talent acquisition from conventional recruitment models.

Furthermore, the concept of *institutional talent acquisition capability* complements the Resource-Based View [13] by conceptualizing recruitment capability itself as a strategic organizational resource. Rather than viewing talent solely as an individual attribute, the present study argues that organizational capability emerges from the integration of strategic planning, institutional branding, digital recruitment, stakeholder engagement, and competency-based selection.

5.4. Implications for human resource management

The findings have implications beyond higher education. Recruitment effectiveness depends on the alignment of talent criteria with organizational mission, the quality of applicant communication, and the capacity of multiple units to coordinate the recruitment journey. HRM practitioners should therefore treat talent acquisition as a cross-functional capability rather than an isolated

recruitment activity.

The comparison also identifies competencies required of admission and recruitment personnel: strategic workforce or enrollment planning, digital literacy, data interpretation, stakeholder communication, applicant relationship management, policy implementation, ethical judgment, and cross-unit coordination. These competencies can be developed through structured induction, simulation-based training, digital-system certification, periodic calibration of selection criteria, and post-cycle learning reviews.

Organizations should evaluate recruitment through more than application volume. Relevant indicators include applicant quality and diversity, process fairness, applicant experience, conversion and acceptance rates, early retention, post-entry performance, and long-term contribution. This multidimensional approach is applicable to public institutions, private enterprises, and mission-driven organizations.

These findings are consistent with Allal-Chérif et al. [6], who argued that effective talent acquisition increasingly depends on the integration of digital technology, organizational branding, and strategic workforce planning. Similarly, Nikolaou [16] demonstrated that digital recruitment systems improve recruitment efficiency only when supported by competent HR professionals and organizational readiness. The present study extends these insights by demonstrating that similar principles operate within higher education institutions, where admission personnel perform strategic talent acquisition functions comparable to HR recruiters in corporate organizations.

The competencies identified in this study also align with Breagh [3], who emphasized that recruitment effectiveness depends on recruiter expertise, communication quality, and organizational coordination. However, the present findings suggest that in higher education these competencies additionally require understanding of educational policy, institutional mission, and student development objectives.

5.5. Practical recommendations

University administrators should establish cross-functional enrollment teams, define competency profiles for admission personnel, conduct annual pathway and equity audits, and integrate applicant-service data with post-entry performance indicators. Policymakers should provide interoperable data standards, minimum transparency requirements, and guidance for balancing selectivity with equitable access. HRM practitioners in educational institutions should incorporate recruitment analytics, competency development, applicant-experience management, and evidence-based workforce planning into admission operations.

These data demonstrate recruitment reach and selectivity, but they do not establish the subsequent quality or performance of admitted students. Application volume and admission ratios are therefore treated as proximal recruitment indicators rather than definitive evidence of human capital outcomes. Overall, both universities generated substantial applicant interest through diversified pathways, thereby expanding the pool from which candidates could be selected.

These recommendations are consistent with Strategic Enrollment Management literature [1] which emphasizes that sustainable enrollment outcomes require coordinated planning, data-informed decision-making, and continuous evaluation rather than isolated recruitment activities.

5.6. Unexpected findings

An important and somewhat unexpected finding of this study is that a more diversified admission architecture did not necessarily result in a substantially larger applicant pool. Although UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta implemented a broader range of institutional admission pathways, UIN Sunan

Gunung Djati Bandung attracted considerably higher numbers of applicants across several admission schemes. This finding suggests that the diversity of admission mechanisms alone is insufficient to explain talent attraction. Rather, institutional reputation, historical development, stakeholder trust, and accumulated organizational legitimacy appear to exert a stronger influence on prospective students' application decisions.

This interpretation is consistent with previous studies indicating that institutional image and perceived educational quality often outweigh procedural diversity in shaping university choice [1–2]. The findings therefore extend existing knowledge by demonstrating that recruitment architecture functions most effectively when embedded within broader institutional capabilities and strategic positioning.

5.7. Practical implications for Islamic universities and higher education institutions

The findings have practical implications that extend beyond the two universities examined in this study. For Islamic higher education institutions and other universities operating in increasingly competitive environments, strategic talent acquisition should be viewed as an integrated organizational capability rather than a routine administrative function. Effective admission management requires the alignment of strategic planning, institutional branding, digital communication, competency-based selection, stakeholder engagement, and cross-functional coordination.

University leaders should strengthen the competencies of admission personnel, invest in digital recruitment systems, and integrate admission planning with broader institutional development strategies. At the policy level, greater institutional flexibility within national admission frameworks may enable universities to respond more effectively to changing demographic conditions, labour market expectations, and evolving educational demands while maintaining transparency, accountability, and equitable access.

5.8. Resource-based view and sustainable competitive advantage

From the perspective of the Resource-Based View [13], the admission practices identified in this study should not be regarded as inherently inimitable. Individual recruitment activities, including digital promotion, competency-based selection, or diversified admission pathways, can be replicated by competing institutions. Sustainable competitive advantage emerges instead from the unique configuration through which these practices are integrated with institutional mission, governance, organizational culture, stakeholder networks, digital capability, and accumulated organizational experience.

These institution-specific resources are developed over time through organizational learning and are therefore considerably more difficult to imitate than isolated recruitment practices. Accordingly, this study proposes the concept of Institutional Talent Acquisition Capability, which conceptualizes strategic student admission as a distinctive organizational capability that aligns recruitment processes with long-term human capital development and institutional competitiveness. This conceptual refinement represents the principal theoretical contribution of the present study by extending strategic talent acquisition theory from employee recruitment to the higher education context.

6. Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, its two-case design provides contextual depth but limits statistical and institutional generalizability. The findings should therefore be interpreted as analytically transferable propositions rather than universal conclusions. Second, the study did not include objective longitudinal data linking admission practices to student achievement, retention,

graduation, employability, or institutional performance. Application numbers and selectivity consequently indicate recruitment reach, not demonstrated educational effectiveness. Third, all authors are affiliated with UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. Although reflexive notes, documentary triangulation, and multi-researcher coding were used, institutional familiarity may have influenced access and interpretation. Fourth, the cross-sectional design does not capture changes across admission cycles. Fifth, prospective and newly admitted students were not interviewed, so the study cannot directly explain how applicants learned about the institutions, what influenced their choices, or how they experienced admission procedures.

Because the objective of this study was to explain organizational talent acquisition capability, institutional decision-makers rather than applicants were selected as the primary unit of analysis. Consequently, applicant perspectives fall outside the analytical scope of this study and are recommended for future research.

7. Conclusion

Student admission management at the two Indonesian Islamic universities functions as an institutionally embedded talent acquisition capability. Although both institutions operate under comparable national regulations, they configure recruitment and selection differently because their missions, histories, reputations, stakeholder networks, and resources differ. UIN Sunan Gunung Djati places greater emphasis on mission-aligned religious and academic competencies, whereas UIN Sunan Kalijaga employs broader, multidimensional assessment formats.

The study extends HRM theory by showing that talent acquisition can involve future institutional members who initially enter as learners. It also demonstrates that effective recruitment requires the integration of strategy, branding, applicant engagement, technology, selection governance, staff competence, and outcome monitoring. For practice, universities should strengthen professional development for admission personnel, improve applicant-centered digital services, evaluate access and fairness, and connect admission data with post-entry outcomes.

Future research should test the proposed concepts quantitatively, compare a wider range of public and private Islamic universities, incorporate prospective-student and first-year-student perspectives, and follow admitted cohorts longitudinally. Such research is necessary to determine whether particular admission architectures produce sustained improvements in student development and institutional performance.

Author contributions: Conceptualization, ME and IN; methodology, ME; formal analysis, ME and IN; investigation, ME, IN, ARA, RA, KFW; resources, ME; writing—original draft preparation, ME and KFW; writing—review and editing, ME, IN, ARA, RA; supervision, ME and RA. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Ethical approval: This study was conducted as an independently funded social field study. Although formal ethics committee approval was not obtained, the study protocol was reviewed by the Admissions Office of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung and UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta and supervised by the Departement for Research and Community Service of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. All procedures adhered to research ethic principles.

Informed consent statement: Informed consent was obtained from the Admissions Office of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung and UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta prior to data collection. Admissions at both universities received

an explanation of the study's purpose and procedures from the researcher and provided written informed consent.

Data availability statement: The data supporting this research are partially available on the Admissions Office websites of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung and UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, but not all are publicly available due to participant privacy concerns. Summary data are presented in tables and figures in the manuscript with clear and verifiable sources. The complete dataset can be obtained from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Hemsley-Brown J, Oplatka I. University choice: What do we know, what don't we know and what do we still need to find out? *Int J Educ Manag.* 2015;29(3):254–74. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-10-2013-0150>
- [2] Maringe F. University and course choice: Implications for positioning, recruitment and marketing. *Int J Educ Manag.* 2006;20(6):466–79. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09513540610683711>
- [3] Breugh JA. Employee recruitment: Current knowledge and important areas for future research. *Hum Resour Manag Rev.* 2008;18(3):103–18. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2008.07.003>
- [4] Collings DG, Mellahi K. Strategic talent management: A review and research agenda. *Hum Resour Manag Rev.* 2009;19(4):304–13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2009.04.001>
- [5] Phillips JM, Gully SM. *Strategic staffing* (3rd ed.). Pearson; 2015.
- [6] Allal-Chérif O, Aránega AY, Sánchez RC. Intelligent recruitment: How to identify, select, and retain talents from around the world using artificial intelligence. *Technol Forecast Soc Change.* 2021;169:120822. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2021.120822>
- [7] Cappelli P. *Talent on demand: Managing talent in an age of uncertainty.* Harvard Business Press; 2008.
- [8] Korhonen V. Academically engaged or not? An exploratory study on modelling and assessing the engagement of first-year students at a research-intensive university in Finland. *Assess Eval High Educ.* 2021;46(7):1048–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2020.1841095>
- [9] Becker GS. *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education.* University of Chicago Press; 1964.
- [10] Wright PM, McMahan GC. Exploring human capital: Putting “human” back into strategic human resource management. *Hum Resour Manag J.* 2011;21(2):93–104. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-8583.2010.00165.x>
- [11] Kooli C, Abadli R. Could education quality audit enhance human resources management processes of higher education institutions? *Vision.* 2022;26(4):482–90. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09722629211005598>
- [12] Rahman F, Anam MS, Sodik A. Pattern of PTKIN Ma'had Al-Jami'ah education management system in East Java and its role in mainstreaming religious moderation in Indonesia. In. 2023. p. 135–54. Available from: https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-044-2_15
- [13] Barney J. Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *J Manag.* 1991;17(1):99–120. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639101700108>
- [14] Hertantyo B, Andani M, Raihan M. Perancangan Sistem Informasi Penerimaan Siswa Metode RAD Berbasis Web. *Kohesi J Sains Dan Teknol.* 2024;5(8):21–30. <https://doi.org/10.3785/kohesi.v5i8.8440>
- [15] Mahlangu VP. Rethinking student admission and access in higher education through the lens of capabilities approach. *Int J Educ Manag.* 2020;34(1):175–85. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-05-2019-0185>
- [16] Nikolaou I. What is the role of technology in recruitment and selection? *Span J Psychol.* 2021;24:e2. <https://doi.org/10.1017/SJP.2021.6>
- [17] Setiawati ND, Rahaju T. Implementasi Kebijakan Sistem Zonasi PPDB Di Sekolah Menengah Pertama Negeri 3 Krian Kabupaten Sidoarjo. *Publika.* 2022;10(2):609–20. <https://doi.org/10.26740/publika.v10n2.p609-620>
- [18] Parry E, Tyson S. An analysis of the use and success of online recruitment methods in the UK. *Hum Resour Manag J.* 2008;18(3):257–74. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-8583.2008.00070.x>
- [19] Boxall P, Purcell J. *Strategy and human resource management* (4th ed.). Palgrave Macmillan; 2016.
- [20] Ulrich D. *Human resource champions: The next agenda for adding value and delivering results.* Harvard Business School Press; 1997.
- [21] Huselid MA. The impact of human resource management practices on turnover, productivity, and corporate financial performance. *Acad Manage J.* 1995;38(3):635–72. <https://doi.org/10.2307/256741>
- [22] Ployhart RE. Resources for what? Understanding the value of human capital resources. *Hum Resour Manag Rev.* 2021;31(2):100775. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2019.100775>
- [23] Ployhart RE, Moliterno TP. Emergence of the human capital resource: A multilevel model. *Acad Manage Rev.* 2011;36(1):127–50. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.2009.0318>
- [24] Yin RK. *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Sage; 2018.
- [25] Kvale S, Brinkmann S. *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (3rd ed.). Sage; 2015.
- [26] Braun V, Clarke V. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qual Res Psychol.* 2006;3(2):77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>
- [27] Lincoln YS, Guba EG. *Naturalistic inquiry.* Sage; 1985.