

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT FOR STRENGTHENING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF STATE ISLAMIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN LAMPUNG

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze strategic management in strengthening the competitiveness of State Islamic Elementary Schools in Lampung Province, focusing on MIN 1 Bandar Lampung, MIN 1 South Lampung, and MIN 3 Bandar Lampung. It examines principals' leadership strategies, learning innovation, and human resource development as key factors in improving institutional competitiveness. In addition, this study seeks to develop a contextual and sustainable strategic management model based on Islamic educational values and national madrasah education policies. This study uses a qualitative multi-site field research design conducted at MIN 1 Bandar Lampung, MIN 1 Lampung Selatan, and MIN 3 Bandar Lampung. Madrasah principals served as the main informants, supported by vice principals, teachers, administrative staff, school committee members, and parents selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis, and analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through triangulation and member checking to strengthen the credibility of the findings. The findings indicate that principals implement vision-based strategic planning, quality culture strengthening, and participatory decision-making. Learning innovation is carried out through technology integration, character education reinforcement, and creative learning models. Human resource development is conducted through continuous training, academic supervision, and professional competency improvement. Supporting factors include leadership commitment, stakeholder collaboration, and a conducive work culture, while constraints involve limited facilities and resistance to change. In conclusion, integrated strategic leadership management combined with learning innovation and human resource development significantly enhances the competitiveness of State Islamic Elementary Schools in Lampung Province.

Keywords

Human Resource Development, Learning Innovation, Madrasah Competitiveness, Principal Leadership, Strategic Management.



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INTRODUCTION

On the national education quality map, the position of State Elementary Madrasahs (MIN) in Lampung Province still faces competitive challenges when compared to madrasahs in other provinces in Indonesia. National assessment ranking data and the Education Report Card publication from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia show that literacy and numeracy achievements of elementary education units in several districts/cities in Lampung are still in the moderate and developing categories (Education, 2024). Meanwhile, madrasah accreditation data released by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia shows that although some MIN have achieved A accreditation, the quality and consistency of academic and non-academic performance, as well as institutional governance, are not yet fully equitable. Other indicators such as Academic Ability Test (TKA) results, participation and achievement in national-level competitions, and the public satisfaction index with educational services also indicate a competitiveness gap compared to leading madrasahs in other provinces. This condition indicates that strengthening strategies to increase the competitiveness of MIN in Lampung is an urgent and strategic need (Directorate of Madrasah KSKK, 2026).

Theoretically, the competitiveness of educational institutions is influenced by various internal and external factors, especially leadership, learning innovation, and human resource development. The concept of competitive advantage proposed by (Amzul et al., 2024) emphasizes that innovation is the main source of organizational competitiveness in facing competition. In line with this, the view (Rangkuti & Rozzaq, 2025) emphasizes the importance of adaptive and innovative capabilities as the foundation for the sustainability of institutional excellence. In the context of education, a meta-analysis conducted by (Wasila & Triwiyanto, 2024) shows that effective and innovative learning practices have a significant impact on improving student learning outcomes, which are the main indicators of a school's quality and reputation. (Buchori et al., 2024) emphasized that leaders who are able to inspire, build a shared vision, and develop the capacity of subordinates will significantly improve organizational performance. In the realm of educational leadership, research (Irvansyah & Wijayanti, 2025) This study proves that principal leadership oriented toward teacher professional development has a direct impact on improving the quality of learning and student academic achievement. Thus, innovation in learning and human resource development has been empirically and theoretically proven to be important determinants of the competitiveness of educational institutions.

There is a gap between the empirical conditions for MIN's competitiveness in Lampung and the conceptual ideals offered by theory and previous research. Although the concepts of transformational leadership, learning innovation, and madrasah-based management have been widely studied, the concrete implementation of madrasah principal leadership management strategies in the specific context of MIN in Lampung Province has not been comprehensively analyzed. It is unclear which strategies are most effective, how they are integrated into institutional practices, and to what extent they have a real impact on increasing competitiveness. A study of the strategic leadership of principals of State Elementary Madrasahs in Lampung Province is important. Studies at MIN 1 Bandar Lampung, MIN 1 South Lampung, and MIN 3 Bandar Lampung show that a planned strategy, based on needs analysis, and combining transformational leadership, learning innovation, and human resource development, can encourage a real and sustainable increase in madrasah competitiveness.

Internal and external factors greatly influence the success of implementing strategic management by madrasah principals. Internal factors include teacher competence and commitment, religious organizational culture, availability of infrastructure, and a collaborative work climate (Ambiya et al., 2021). At MIN 1 Bandar Lampung, the support of relatively young, technology-adaptive teachers is a key strength, but maintaining consistent quality amid high community expectations remains a challenge. At MIN 1 South Lampung, the dominant internal factors are a strong family culture and religious values, but data-driven management needs to be strengthened. At MIN 3 Bandar Lampung, infrastructure readiness is a supporting factor, though challenges arise in equitably distributing teacher digital competencies. External factors include parental and committee support, Ministry of Religious Affairs policies, competition with public and private elementary schools, and the socio-economic dynamics of the surrounding community. All three madrasahs benefit to some extent from high public trust, but still face stiff competition from leading public schools. Management of these factors is carried out through SWOT analysis, strengthening strategic partnerships, ongoing supervision, and performance-based evaluation, so that the strategic management of madrasah principals is not only responsive to challenges but also proactive in creating opportunities for sustainable competitiveness.

Study (Zahdi, 2025) shows that the transformational leadership of the madrasah principal has a significant influence on improving teacher performance and school work culture, but has not yet been directly linked to the indicators of institutional competitiveness of madrasahs; the gap in

this research lies in the unmeasured strategic implications for increasing the number of applicants and the image of the institution, while the novelty of this research is integrating strategic leadership variables with indicators of madrasah competitiveness quantitatively and qualitatively. This research (Khosiyono et al., 2022) found that digital-based learning innovations improve student motivation and learning outcomes in madrasas, but have not analyzed the role of strategic management of madrasa principals as drivers of innovation; the gap is in the aspect of strategic leadership, while this study presents a novelty by placing learning innovation as part of a grand leadership strategy. (Saihu, 2020) concluded that madrasah-based management (MBM) increases teacher and committee participation, but has not yet tested its synergy with human resource development and external competitiveness; this research addresses this gap through an integrative model of three main variables. (Riyadi et al., 2022) confirms that the full-day school program and strengthening religious character increase public trust, but has not been studied from the perspective of the madrasah principal's strategic management; the novelty of this research lies in its comprehensive analysis of the formulation and implementation of strategy evaluation.

Next, research (Najib & Maunah, 2022) shows that religious organizational culture influences teacher loyalty but does not link it to learning innovation or institutional competitiveness; the research gap is the absence of an external competitive dimension, whereas this study links organizational culture with madrasah positioning. (Lastini et al., 2024) stated that the improvement in the quality of graduates is influenced by the academic supervision of the madrasah principal, but has not included the variable of human resource development systematically; the novelty of this research is the inclusion of human resource development management for teachers and education personnel as a strategic variable. (Riyatno & Kusumaningsih, 2024) found that branding superior madrasas increases public interest but does not sufficiently highlight their internal processes of leadership and learning innovation; this study fills this gap by analyzing internal transformational processes. (Ummah & Yulianingsih, 2024) concluded that digitalization of administration and learning improves the efficiency of educational services, but has not been linked to long-term leadership strategies; this study presents novelty by combining digital transformation and strategic management of madrasah principals within a competitiveness framework.

Furthermore, research (Abidin & Alfatani, 2023) shows that ongoing training through MGMP improves teachers' pedagogical competence, but this has not been studied from the perspective of institutional strategic management and its impact on madrasah competitiveness. This

gap is addressed through a systemic approach that links human resource development with competitive advantage. (AS & Ulum, 2025) found that madrasah collaboration with external stakeholders strengthens the institution's image, but has not been analyzed in an integrated manner with learning innovation and transformational leadership; The novelty of this study lies in the development of a synergy model that integrates strategic leadership, learning innovation, human resource development, and internal–external factors to enhance the competitiveness of State Islamic Elementary Schools (MIN) in Lampung Province. Previous studies have tended to examine these variables separately and have not presented an integrative model of strategic leadership by madrasah principals that simultaneously connects learning innovation, human resource development, and institutional competitiveness. Therefore, this study contributes a more comprehensive strategic management model that integrates these key elements and tests it across three leading MINs in Lampung Province, representing highly competitive madrasahs.

In addition, the strengthening of policies and other relevant theoretical discourses can be referred to the Regulation of the Minister of Religion Number 90 of 2013 concerning the Implementation of Madrasah Education, which emphasizes the standards of management, curriculum, and educational staff in madrasahs as the basis for strategic governance. (Religion, 2013) This policy provides normative legitimacy for the madrasah principal to exercise managerial authority in designing superior programs based on local needs and characteristics. From the perspective of quality management theory, the idea of Total Quality Management (TQM) (Madhakomala et al., 2025) is also relevant, as increasing madrasa competitiveness requires continuous improvement, data-driven quality control, and the involvement of all members of the madrasa community. This discourse reinforces the argument that the strategic management of madrasah principals cannot be incidental but must be structured, measurable, and long-term oriented.

In the context of learning innovation, strengthening the constructivist theory of the (Vygotsky & Cole, 2018) provides a foundation for understanding that innovation is not simply the use of technology but a transformation of pedagogical approaches that encourage active participation and meaningful learning. This aligns with the policy direction of the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes learning differentiation and strengthening the profile of Pancasila students. Therefore, learning innovation in madrasahs must be understood as a differentiation strategy that confers competitive advantage, not simply as a means of fulfilling curriculum

requirements. This additional discourse broadens the research's analytical framework from managerial aspects to the integration of strategic leadership and pedagogical transformation.

Meanwhile, in human resource development, the theory of capacity building and organizational learning (Senge, 1997) emphasizes that a competitive madrasah is one that is capable of collective learning, adapts to change, and encourages continuous reflection. This is reinforced by the teacher competency development policy in Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, which requires professionalism grounded in pedagogical, professional, social, and personality competencies (Indonesia, 2005). With this additional perspective, the research not only captures the relationship between variables empirically, but also places it within the framework of national policies and primary theories of management, leadership, quality, innovation, and human resource development, thereby emphasizing the conceptual contribution and novelty of the leadership strategy management model of madrasah principals in increasing the competitiveness of State Elementary Madrasahs in Lampung Province.

Based on the problem background, this study aims to obtain an in-depth understanding of the strategic leadership management of principals in State Islamic Elementary Schools in Lampung Province, particularly at MIN 1 Bandar Lampung, MIN 1 South Lampung, and MIN 3 Bandar Lampung, in formulating, implementing, and evaluating policies to enhance madrasah competitiveness amid increasingly dynamic educational competition. This research analyzes how principals develop vision-based strategic planning, promote adaptive learning innovation, and manage the sustainable development of teachers and educational staff. It also examines the synergy among these aspects as an integrated management system. By integrating empirical findings and theoretical perspectives on strategic management, transformational leadership, educational innovation, and learning organization development, this study aims to formulate a contextual and sustainable strategic leadership model. The model is grounded in Islamic educational values and national madrasah education policies, contributing to strengthening institutional governance, improving educational service quality, and enhancing the competitiveness of State Islamic Elementary Schools in Lampung Province.

METHOD

This research method uses a qualitative approach with a multi-site study design conducted at three State Elementary Madrasahs in Lampung Province, namely MIN 1 Bandar Lampung, MIN

1 South Lampung, and MIN 3 Bandar Lampung. This approach was chosen to obtain a deep, holistic, and contextual understanding of the leadership strategy management of madrasah principals, learning innovation, and human resource development (HRD) in increasing madrasah competitiveness. The research is based on a constructivist paradigm and a descriptive-analytical research design, aiming to comprehensively explore the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of strategies carried out by madrasah principals, as well as to analyze synergies among variables in the context of each research location.

The research data sources consisted of primary and supporting informants. Primary informants included the madrasah principal as a key actor in strategic management, while supporting informants included the vice-principal, teachers, education staff, the madrasah committee, and parents. Informants were selected for this study using a purposive sampling technique based on their level of involvement and relevance to strategic programs and strengthening the madrasah's competitiveness. Teachers were selected for their roles in academic coordination, curriculum development, or flagship programs; education staff were selected for their involvement in administrative services and quality management; madrasah committees were selected for their active involvement in policy support and program oversight; and parents were selected for their active participation and representation of diverse class backgrounds. If in-depth data analysis was required, snowball sampling was used to gather additional relevant informants, ensuring the data collection process was systematic and in accordance with qualitative research procedures.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with each selected informant, allowing for in-depth data collection without bringing all participants together in one forum. Participatory observation was limited to the principal's managerial activities, coordination meetings, and classroom learning processes and flagship programs to capture strategic practices directly. Furthermore, documentation studies focused on strategic planning documents, work programs, evaluation reports, achievement data, and madrasah policy archives. The combination of these three techniques enabled in-depth data collection, was time-efficient, and still met the standards of qualitative research procedures without the use of focus group discussions.

Data analysis was conducted interactively and continuously from the data collection process to the conclusion-drawing stage, using an interactive analysis model that includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The analysis was conducted at each site to identify the characteristics of the strategy in each madrasah, then continued with cross-site analysis to identify

patterns, similarities, differences, and effective leadership strategy management models for madrasah principals to increase competitiveness. The final result of this study is the formulation of an integrative and contextual strategy management model as a theoretical and practical contribution to strengthening the competitiveness of State Elementary Madrasahs in Lampung Province.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This research is based on the understanding that the competitiveness of State Islamic Elementary Schools is influenced not only by students' academic achievements but also by the quality of principals' strategic leadership, learning innovation, and the systematic, sustainable management of human resource development. In the increasingly competitive landscape of elementary education in Lampung Province, madrasahs are expected not only to meet national education standards but also to demonstrate institutional differentiation, service excellence, and a strong public image. The data in this study are systematically presented based on field findings at MIN 1 Bandar Lampung, MIN 1 South Lampung, and MIN 3 Bandar Lampung, focusing on how principals formulate, implement, and evaluate strategies to enhance madrasah competitiveness. The analysis emphasizes vision-based strategic planning, adaptive learning innovation, and sustainable human resource development, as well as the synergy among these aspects within an integrated management system. In addition, the study identifies internal and external factors influencing the success of these strategies in the dynamic context of primary education. The findings are analyzed to reveal patterns, relationships among strategic variables, and best practices, which are then formulated into a contextual and sustainable strategic leadership management model aligned with Islamic educational values and national madrasah education policies.

Strategic Management of Madrasah Principal Leadership in Increasing Competitiveness

Based on observations, interviews, and document analysis at MIN 1 Bandar Lampung, MIN 1 South Lampung, and MIN 3 Bandar Lampung, this study found that the three madrasahs improve competitiveness through an integrated strategic approach that involves leadership, learning and innovation, and human resource development. All three institutions apply a modern management model characterized by systematic planning, targeted implementation, and continuous evaluation to enhance institutional quality. They also demonstrate adaptability to educational competition and societal demands while maintaining Islamic identity as their core characteristic. Competitiveness is

understood not merely as increasing student numbers, but as strengthening service quality, teacher professionalism, and institutional reputation.

In strategic management, madrasah principals act as visionary leaders who formulate policies based on internal and external analyses and translate them into measurable programs. Learning innovation is developed through the integration of Islamic values, active and project-based learning methods, and the strengthening of 21st-century competencies to improve students' learning experiences. Meanwhile, human resource development focuses on competency mapping, continuous training, academic supervision, and professional character building for teachers and staff. Overall, the synergy between visionary leadership, learning innovation, and human resource development forms the foundation for improving madrasah quality and competitiveness. The findings indicate that institutional competitiveness is built through a holistic, sustainable management system rather than through partial or short-term programs.

Table 1. Strategic Management of Madrasah Principal Leadership

Location	Strategy Formulation	Strategy Implementation	Strategy Evaluation
MIN 1 Bandar Lampung	Internal analysis (teacher competency, work infrastructure, student character) and external analysis (government policy, community demands, school competition). Formulation through participatory work meetings.	Policies are translated into operational programs through cross-sector coordination and academic supervision.	Monthly & semi annual evaluation; program improvement and strengthening of promotional strategies.
MIN 1 South Lampung	Quality needs-based planning and strengthening the role of teachers.	Academic supervision, teacher mentoring, ongoing motivation, flagship programs (literacy, tahfidz).	Reflection on learning and monitoring teacher performance.
MIN 3 Bandar Lampung	Adaptive strategy based on differentiation and competitive advantage.	Strengthening of typical madrasah programs and intra-extracurricular integration.	Systematic evaluation based on achievement data and follow-up improvements.

Source: MIN 1 Bandar Lampung, MIN 1 South Lampung, MIN 3 Bandar Lampung, 2026

Learning Innovation Strategy to Improve Service Quality and Competitiveness

The learning innovation strategies at MIN 1 Bandar Lampung, MIN 1 South Lampung, and MIN 3 Bandar Lampung show strengthening in three aspects: innovation focus, implementation, and institutional impact. The madrasahs maintain their Islamic identity while adapting to the demands of 21st-century education. Each madrasah develops its own differentiation. Some emphasize integrating Islamic values and character education, others focus on varied learning

methods and improving teacher competencies, while others strengthen 21st-century skills and flagship programs. This differentiation helps build each madrasah's unique identity and competitiveness.

In practice, innovation is implemented through active learning approaches, project-based learning, simple technology-based media, religious habituation, and practice-based extracurricular activities. These strategies increase student participation, enrich learning experiences, and strengthen public trust in the quality of madrasah services. These findings are consistent with the educational literature, which states that competitive institutions can integrate core institutional values with relevant learning innovations. The three madrasahs demonstrate that innovation can reinforce rather than replace Islamic identity by offering more contextually and meaningfully grounded learning. Consequently, learning innovation not only improves instructional quality but also strengthens the madrasah's institutional image, public trust, and sustainable competitiveness.

Table 2. Learning Innovation Strategies

Location	Innovation Focus	Implementation Form	Impact on Competitiveness
MIN 1 Bandar Lampung	Integration of Islamic values & character	Active learning, Quran literacy, religious habits	Increase public trust
MIN 1 South Lampung	Variation of methods & teacher competencies	Project Based Learning, simple technology-based media	Learning is more interesting and meaningful
MIN 3 Bandar Lampung	Differentiation & 21st century competencies	Excellent extracurricular activities, practice-based learning	Increasing interest and positioning of madrasahs

Source; MIN 1 Bandar Lampung, MIN 1 South Lampung, MIN 3 Bandar Lampung, 2026

Table 2 shows that the learning innovation strategies at MIN 1 Bandar Lampung, MIN 1 South Lampung, and MIN 3 Bandar Lampung demonstrate complementary differentiation in improving service quality and institutional competitiveness. MIN 1 Bandar Lampung emphasizes the integration of Islamic values and character building through active learning and religious practices, thereby strengthening public trust. MIN 1 South Lampung focuses on varied learning methods and improving teacher competencies through Project-Based Learning and simple technology-based media, making learning more engaging and participatory. Meanwhile, MIN 3 Bandar Lampung prioritizes program differentiation and the strengthening of 21st-century competencies through practice-based learning and flagship extracurricular activities. Overall, these strategies show that learning innovation not only improves the quality of the learning process but also strengthens the identity and competitive advantage of each madrasah.

Human Resource Development Management for Teachers and Education Personnel

The research findings show that human resource (HR) development is a strategic pillar in improving the quality and competitiveness of madrasahs. At MIN 1 Bandar Lampung, MIN 1 South Lampung, and MIN 3 Bandar Lampung, HR development is planned through competency mapping, identification of improvement needs, and alignment with the institutional vision. The madrasah principal directs policy, while vice principals and coordinators ensure effective implementation.

In practice, HR development is carried out through workshops, In-House Training (IHT), participation in KKG and MGMP, continuous training, and managerial supervision. These activities aim to strengthen teachers' pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies. Evaluation is conducted periodically through performance monitoring and reflection on training outcomes. The impact is reflected in improved learning quality, stronger work discipline, higher institutional commitment, and increased public trust. Thus, effective HR development management becomes a key strategy for building sustainable educational quality and madrasah competitiveness..

Table 3. Human Resource Development Management

Location	Human Resource Planning	HR Implementation	Evaluation & Impact
MIN 1 Bandar Lampung	Mapping of teacher and education personnel competencies	Workshop, IHT, KKG, MGMP	Increased professionalism and loyalty
MIN 1 South Lampung	Quality needs-based development	Ongoing training & managerial supervision	Improved performance and discipline
MIN 3 Bandar Lampung	HR as a competitive strategy	Development of pedagogical, professional and social competencies	Improve public image and trust

Source; MIN 1 Bandar Lampung, MIN 1 South Lampung, MIN 3 Bandar Lampung, 2026

Table 3 shows that human resource development management at MIN 1 Bandar Lampung, MIN 1 South Lampung, and MIN 3 Bandar Lampung is implemented through systematic stages, starting from planning, implementation, and impact evaluation. MIN 1 Bandar Lampung emphasizes mapping the competencies of teachers and education personnel as the basis for developing programs such as workshops, IHT, KKG, and MGMP, which aim to increase professionalism and loyalty. MIN 1 South Lampung develops human resources based on quality needs through continuous training and managerial supervision, thereby improving performance and work discipline. Meanwhile, MIN 3 Bandar Lampung positions human resources as a primary competitive strategy by fostering pedagogical, professional, and social competencies, thereby

improving the madrasah's image and public trust. Overall, the table confirms that human resource development is not merely a supporting program but a core strategy for maintaining the quality of educational services and strengthening the institution's competitiveness sustainably.

Synergy of Leadership, Learning Innovation, and Human Resource Development

Increasing the competitiveness of madrasas is not determined by a single factor, but rather by strategic synergy among leadership, organizational management, and human resource development. At MIN 1 Bandar Lampung, MIN 1 South Lampung, and MIN 3 Bandar Lampung, the madrasah principal's leadership serves as a strategic control center, directing the vision, policies, and work culture of the institution. The madrasah principal serves not only as an administrator but also as a visionary leader, capable of driving change, building collective commitment, and fostering a culture of innovation within the madrasah. This role is strengthened by the deputy principal's coordination, which bridges strategic policies with field implementation, ensuring each program aligns with the direction of institutional development.

This synergy is strengthened through sustainable human resource development, stakeholder support, and adaptive management of supporting and inhibiting factors. Training, supervision, and character building are key instruments for maintaining and improving service quality. On the other hand, limited infrastructure, budget constraints, and resistance to change present challenges that require effective change management strategies. This research shows that when visionary leadership, structural coordination, and human resource development are integrated, organizational stability and program sustainability can be maintained, enabling madrasahs to enhance their competitiveness amid the dynamics of educational competition sustainably.

Table 4. Strategic Synergy in Increasing Competitiveness

Synergy Aspect	Key Findings	Contribution to Competitiveness
Visionary Leadership	The principal of the madrasah as a policy director and driver of change	Cultivating an innovative culture
Deputy Head Coordination	Policy liaison and technical implementation	Effectiveness of program implementation
Human Resources Development	Training, supervision, character building	Improving service quality
Supporting Factors	Leadership commitment, collaboration, stakeholder support	Stability and sustainability of the program
Inhibiting Factors	Limited infrastructure, budget, resistance to change	Need for adaptive strategies and change management

Source: MIN 1 Bandar Lampung, MIN 1 South Lampung, MIN 3 Bandar Lampung, 2026

Table 4 demonstrates that strategic synergy in enhancing competitiveness at MIN 1 Bandar Lampung, MIN 1 South Lampung, and MIN 3 Bandar Lampung is achieved through the integration of visionary leadership, effective structural coordination, and sustainable human resource development. The principal acts as a policy director and driving force for change, fostering a culture of innovation. In contrast, the deputy principal ensures that these policies are implemented effectively, technically, and operationally. Human resource development through training, supervision, and character building serves as the foundation for improving service quality, further strengthened by leadership commitment, internal collaboration, and stakeholder support. On the other hand, limited infrastructure, budget, and resistance to change present challenges that must be addressed through adaptive strategies and planned change management. Overall, the table confirms that madrasa competitiveness stems from the synergistic, sustainable integration of various managerial aspects.

Discussion

The discussion of the results of this study shows that strategic leadership management at MIN 1 Bandar Lampung, MIN 1 South Lampung, and MIN 3 Bandar Lampung aligns well with strategic management theory. (David et al., 2017) which emphasizes three main stages: formulation, implementation, and evaluation of strategy, as well as transformational leadership theory (Bass & Stogdill, 1990), which positions leaders as agents of inspirational and visionary change. Research findings show that madrasah principals conduct internal and external analyses before formulating policies and implement periodic evaluations as part of continuous improvement. This aligns with research (Maolana et al., 2023), which states that school effectiveness is largely determined by the principal's ability to design needs-based strategies. This is also in line with research. (Mubarok et al., 2024) which found that strategic leadership significantly improved the quality of madrasas. In addition, the research (Herlina et al., 2025) emphasizes that continuous evaluation is key to the successful implementation of educational policies. Thus, the results of this study not only confirm the theory but also reinforce previous empirical findings that strategic leadership directly contributes to institutional competitiveness.

In terms of learning innovation, the results of this study align with the theory. (Cahyadi et al., 2025) which emphasizes the importance of relevance and relative advantage in the adoption of innovation, as well as constructivism theory. (Piaget et al., 2025) which emphasizes active, student-centered learning. Innovations such as Project-Based Learning, active learning, character value

integration, and strengthening 21st-century competencies demonstrate the contextual application of these principles. Previous research by (Firman, 2024) shows that innovation in learning methods significantly increases student motivation and learning outcomes. (Imano & Maghfiroh, 2025) also emphasized that differentiating flagship programs strengthens the school's positioning in the public's eyes. Meanwhile, research (Eryandi, 2023) found that integrating character values into learning increased public trust in madrasas. Compared with previous research that emphasized digital technology-based innovation, this study's results demonstrate that contextual innovation grounded in local values and needs is also effective in improving quality and competitiveness.

In the aspect of human resource development, the findings of this study are relevant to the theory (Sinambela, 2021), which states that investment in human resources will increase organizational productivity, as well as the theory of educational quality management (Kholis, 2022), which emphasizes the importance of improving internal capacity as part of Total Quality Management (TQM). The workshop programs, IHT, KKG, MGMP, and academic supervision implemented by the three madrasas demonstrate a continuous investment in teacher competence. This aligns with research (Putri et al., 2024), which found that ongoing training had a positive impact on teacher professionalism. (Hasan & Anita, 2022) also shows that academic supervision effectively improves the quality of learning. In addition, research (Son, 2024) confirms that human resource development significantly improves the image and public trust in educational institutions. Thus, the results of this study reinforce previous theories and findings that human resource quality is the primary foundation of madrasah competitiveness.

In terms of strategic synergy, the results of this study are in accordance with the organizational systems theory (Romy et al., 2022), , which views institutions as integrated, interdependent systems, as well as the theory (Papp, 2023) that emphasizes continuous improvement through the involvement of all organizational components. The synergy between visionary leadership, deputy head coordination, and human resource development demonstrates systemic integrated management practices. (Basari et al., 2026) stated that structural collaboration within school organizations increases program effectiveness. The research (Destiana et al., 2025) also found that stakeholder support is an important factor in maintaining the sustainability of educational quality. Meanwhile, research (Susanti et al., 2025) emphasized that adaptive change management is necessary to overcome internal resistance. This study extends these findings by demonstrating that strategic synergy is not merely a supporting factor but a core mechanism in

building madrasah stability and competitiveness.

Compared comprehensively, the results of this study demonstrate the integration of strategic management and transformational leadership theories with the practice of learning innovation and human resource development grounded in Islamic values. Previous research tended to examine each aspect separately: leadership, innovation, and human resources, but this study demonstrates a simultaneous interconnection between these variables. These findings expand the body of previous research, such as that conducted by (Khomisah, 2022) and (Iman et al., 2025) each of which highlights one aspect of Islamic education management, by presenting an integrative model that combines the three within a framework of increasing competitiveness.

Theoretically, this study confirms that madrasa competitiveness is formed through the integration of strategic leadership, contextual learning innovation, and sustainable human resource development within a framework of competitive advantage and continuous quality improvement. Empirically, the study's results indicate that Islamic educational institutions that are adaptive to change tend to have higher levels of public trust and are able to maintain their existence amid the dynamics of educational competition. Thus, this study not only strengthens the theoretical construct regarding increasing the competitiveness of educational institutions but also offers a new conceptual synthesis of a management model for increasing madrasa competitiveness based on strategic synergy and Islamic values.

This study has several limitations that require academic scrutiny. First, the study was conducted only at three state madrasahs: MIN 1 Bandar Lampung, MIN 1 South Lampung, and MIN 3 Bandar Lampung. Therefore, the generalizability of the findings remains limited to the context of state elementary madrasahs in the Lampung region and does not extend to private madrasahs or other levels of education. Second, this study used a qualitative approach, including observation, interviews, and documentation, so the results are highly dependent on the depth of field data and the researcher's interpretation. Third, the study emphasizes managerial aspects and has not yet quantitatively measured the impact of increased competitiveness on academic indicators such as grade achievement, competition achievements, or the number of students. Therefore, further research using a mixed methods approach or cross-provincial comparisons is urgently needed to strengthen external validity and expand empirical contributions.

Although this study generally supports theories of strategic management and transformational leadership in improving madrasah competitiveness, several critical findings

emerge. First, the success of strategies is not determined solely by the formal stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation. Still, it is also strongly influenced by organizational culture and the internalization of Islamic values. Second, contrary to theories that prioritize digitalization, the findings show that value-based innovation, character education, and the use of simple technology can still create competitive advantages. Third, while transformational leadership proves effective, a strong reliance on the madrasah principal may create sustainability challenges when leadership changes. Thus, the study suggests that madrasah competitiveness is shaped not only by technocratic and structural management but also by contextual, cultural, and value-based factors.

The novelty of this research lies in its integrative model, which combines strategic leadership, learning and innovation, and human resource development within a synergistic framework to enhance madrasah competitiveness. While previous research has tended to examine these three aspects in isolation, this study offers a conceptual synthesis that positions visionary leadership as the primary driver orchestrating learning innovation and sustainable human resource development. Furthermore, this study emphasizes that madrasah competitiveness is built not only through the adoption of modern management practices but also through the integration of Islamic values as the philosophical foundation of every strategic policy. This values-based strategic synergy model represents a new theoretical contribution to the development of Islamic education management, particularly in the context of public elementary madrasahs in the era of global competition.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study indicate that strategic management to strengthen competitiveness at MIN 1 Bandar Lampung, MIN 1 South Lampung, and MIN 3 Bandar Lampung is implemented through synergy between the strategic leadership of the madrasah principal, contextual learning innovation, and sustainable human resource development within an integrated management system. The madrasah principal acts as a vision formulator, driving program implementation, and controlling ongoing evaluation based on internal and external needs analysis. Learning innovation grounded in Islamic values, active methods, program differentiation, and the strengthening of 21st-century competencies has been proven to improve service quality and public trust. At the same time, human resource development through training, supervision, and professional development enhances institutional performance and image. Thus, it can be concluded that madrasah competitiveness is built through holistic, synergistic leadership and management, not through

partial policies. Therefore, it is recommended that madrasahs strengthen data-based evaluation, increase targeted use of technology, expand collaboration with stakeholders, and build a sustainable institutional system to maintain a consistent competitive advantage.

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