

RISK MITIGATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO ACADEMIC SUSTAINABILITY

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify and formulate a risk mitigation model for human resource management (HR) in Indonesian universities with a focus on academic sustainability. Using a qualitative approach and Grounded Theory, data were collected through in-depth interviews with key informants from various higher education institutions. The analysis process was conducted through the stages of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to build a theoretical model based on the data. The results of this study indicate that universities in Indonesia face various structural and systemic HR risks, such as dependence on senior lecturers, weak regeneration and retention policies, and workload imbalances. Based on the findings, a risk-mitigation model was developed based on a proactive approach that includes succession planning, continuous training systems, work flexibility, and integration of risk management into institutional governance. This model has practical implications for the formulation of adaptive and long-term HR policies. This study contributes to the development of HR risk management theory in the higher education sector and provides a policy reference for educational institutions to improve academic resilience and sustainability. Further research is recommended to test this model in various types of institutions and in the context of digital transformation in higher education.

Keywords: Human Resource Management, Risk Mitigation, Academic Sustainability, Higher Education, Grounded Theory.

INTRODUCTION

The challenge of academic sustainability in Indonesian higher education is a complex and multi-dimensional strategic issue. Academic sustainability includes the continuity of the teaching and learning process, research, community services, human resources, and institutional management that is adaptive to changing times. In Indonesia, this challenge is becoming increasingly apparent amidst the dynamics of globalization, development of digital technology, economic pressures, changes in higher education regulations, and increasing demands on the quality and accountability of educational institutions. (Directorate General of Higher Education, (2021)

One of the main challenges is the disparity in quality and capacity between universities. Many private universities, especially in these regions, face limitations in terms of infrastructure, highly qualified teaching staff, and financial support for academic development. Meanwhile, more established state universities are not free from problems, such as rigid bureaucracy, limited research budgets, and high administrative burdens for lecturers. This disparity hinders equal access to quality education and weakens the sustainable academic ecosystem nationally. (Hasibuan, MSP (2017).

Another challenge comes from human academic resources. Many universities have difficulty recruiting and retaining quality lecturers, especially in strategic fields, such as technology, science, and medicine. The slow regeneration of lecturers, caused by a lack of incentives, an unbalanced workload, and an inflexible career system, exacerbates this condition. Potential young lecturers often do not get adequate development space,

while senior lecturers are faced with work fatigue and a lack of motivation. This has a direct impact on academic productivity and innovation in the campus environment. (Mulyasa, E. (2020).

Furthermore, rapid digital transformation present challenges. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has driven the massive adoption of online learning technologies, many universities are not yet systemically ready to fully integrate technology into their curriculum, learning management, or other academic services. This causes dependence on conventional learning methods to remain high, thus hampering the competitiveness of graduates and institutions globally. OECD. (2021)

The challenges of academic sustainability are closely related to institutional governance and leadership. Many universities do not yet have an adequate risk management system, especially for the management of human resources and academic quality. Unpreparedness in facing changes in national policies, such as regulations on accreditation, performance-based funding, and campus autonomy, can cause instability in operations and strategic planning. In addition, limited collaboration between the academic world, industry, and society is an obstacle to the sustainability of the tridharma of higher education. (Permendikbud No. 3 2020).

Thus, academic sustainability in Indonesian universities faces both major internal and external challenges. To address these challenges, a proactive and strategic approach is required, particularly in human resource management, institutional transformation, and innovation in governance and learning. Only through holistic and continuous efforts can Indonesian universities remain relevant, competitive, and contribute to the nation's progress in the global era. (Rivai V. and Sagala, EJ (2019).

Human resource management (HR) plays a crucial role in creating and maintaining academic stability and quality in university environments. Universities as higher education institutions have the main mission of producing quality graduates, conducting impactful research, and serving communities. These three main missions are highly dependent on the competence, motivation, and performance of lecturers and education personnel who are part of the academic organizational structure. (Sallis, E. (2014) Therefore, HR management does not merely function as an administrative arrangement, but must be seen as a strategic instrument that determines the direction, sustainability, and competitiveness of the institution in the long term.

In this context, the role of HR management is not only limited to the recruitment and selection process of qualified teaching staff but also includes capacity development through continuous training, fair and transparent academic career development, and the provision of incentive systems that encourage productivity and innovation. These strategies greatly affect academic quality because lecturers and staff who are professionally and personally facilitated tend to be more motivated to contribute optimally to the learning process, research, and community service. In addition, proactive HR management can anticipate and mitigate potential risks, such as workload imbalances, low retention of young teaching staff, or internal conflicts that can disrupt the operational stability of higher education institutions. (Sugiyono. (2019)

Furthermore, the role of HR management is related to how institutions respond to external dynamics, such as changes in higher education policies, digitalization challenges, and globalization demands. To deal with this, HR management must be able to create an adaptive and collaborative work climate, strengthen an ethical and quality-oriented academic organizational culture, and encourage visionary and participatory leadership transformation. When HR management succeeds in positioning humans as strategic assets, education institutions will be better prepared to face various challenges and consistently maintain the sustainability of academic quality. (Sulisworo & Toifur, M. (2021)

Thus, the role of HR management in higher education is not merely an administrative function but also a key element in orchestrating the stability and overall quality of academic institutions. Well-managed HR not only ensures operational continuity, but also becomes the main foundation for achieving sustainable academic excellence. Therefore, efforts to strengthen the HR management system must be a strategic priority for higher education governance in Indonesia.

In an era of increasingly rapid and complex change, human resource (HR) management has become a strategic aspect of the sustainability of organizations, including higher education institutions. HR is not only considered an administrative support factor, but also the main driving force in achieving the vision, mission, and strategic goals of the institution. Amid the dynamics of globalization, digital transformation, and post-pandemic challenges, universities in Indonesia face various risks in HR management, which, if not anticipated, can disrupt the operational stability, quality of academic services, and institutional competitiveness. Therefore, a risk-mitigation approach for HR management is crucial for ensuring academic continuity and sustainability. (Law of the Republic of Indonesia, No. 12,2012).

Risk mitigation in the context of HR management refers to the process of identifying, analyzing, and controlling potential threats that can hinder the performance or integrity of HR systems in an organization. Within the scope of higher education, these risks can cover many aspects, such as excessive dependence on

senior lecturers approaching retirement, shortage of skilled education personnel, resistance to changes in digital work systems, burnout due to high academic workloads, and weak job succession planning systems. Without a good mitigation mechanism, these risks have the potential to cause managerial dysfunction, loss of institutional knowledge, and decline in the quality of learning and research. (Aguinis et al., (2019)

The need for risk mitigation is becoming increasingly urgent, considering that the work environment in higher education tends to be complex and dynamic, where demands on the performance of lecturers and staff are increasing along with increasing accreditation standards, scientific publications, and demands for innovation. The risk of workload imbalances, recruitment delays, or conflicts of interest in career management can have a systemic impact on work morale and HR productivity. In this context, proactive mitigation strategies, such as continuous competency development, periodic HR risk mapping, and adaptive organizational structure arrangements, are very important for creating a resilient and competitive work environment. (Barney, JB, and Hesterly (2019)

In addition, HR risk mitigation has a sustainability dimension relevant to the long-term existence of higher education. Higher education is not only an institution that produces graduates but also a scientific community that must continue to regenerate and develop. Without good risk-mitigation planning in HR management, institutions will have difficulty maintaining the continuity of study programs, research sustainability, and institutional capacity development. For example, the unavailability of replacement lecturers with equivalent qualifications when senior lecturers retire, or the younger generation's low interest in becoming teaching staff, are risks that must be anticipated early through measurable HR planning and management strategies. (Cascio, WF, & Aguinis, H. (2019)

Thus, risk mitigation in HR management is no longer an additional option but an integral part of the good governance of higher education institutions. Universities can build resilient, adaptive, and sustainable HR systems through a proactive and risk-based approach. This approach not only helps institutions respond quickly to crises but also prepares HR to face a future full of uncertainty with high readiness, competence, and innovative spirit. (Charmaz, K. (2014) Within this framework, strengthening HR managerial capacity and implementing contextual mitigative policies are the main keys to answering the challenges of academic sustainability in Indonesian universities.

Higher education institutions in Indonesia face major challenges in maintaining quality academic sustainability amid increasingly complex internal and external environmental dynamics. Human resource (HR) management play a central role in ensuring sustainable implementation of education, research, and community service processes. However, various risks in HR management, such as high rates of lecturer turnover, workload inequality, lack of academic regeneration, burnout, conflicts of interest, and minimal adaptive strategies to regulatory and technological changes, are obstacles to the stability of higher education institutions. Unfortunately, most universities in Indonesia still apply a reactive HR management approach, so risk management is often carried out after problems arise rather than being prevented beforehand. (Dessler (2020).

Within this framework, it is necessary to examine in depth how universities in Indonesia can develop more proactive and systematic approaches to HR risk management. Through a qualitative approach using the grounded theory method, this study aims to explore, understand, and form a new theoretical construction of HR risk mitigation strategies that can strengthen academic sustainability. In an effort to maintain academic sustainability, universities in Indonesia face various complex challenges originating from human resource (HR) management. (Gunawan et al.(2017)

The complexity includes internal dynamics, such as the unequal distribution of lecturers' workloads, minimal academic regeneration, limited managerial competence, and externalities, such as changes in national policies, technological developments, and global competitive pressures. Unfortunately, in many cases, these risks have not been fully mapped and addressed systematically, resulting in serious effects on the quality of education and institutional stability. Therefore, this study poses several fundamental questions as problem formulations to explore these issues in depth. First, what are the types of risks faced by Indonesian universities in managing their human resources? Second, what are the HR risk-mitigation strategies that have been or have the potential to be implemented proactively in the university environment? Third, what is the relationship between these HR risk-mitigation strategies and the academic sustainability of higher education institutions? Fourth, what kind of conceptual model can be formulated to represent effective HR risk mitigation practices to support academic sustainability in the higher education environment? These questions form the basis for exploration in this study through a qualitative approach based on the grounded theory method.

In line with the formulation of the above problem, this study aims to build a deep, structured, and field-based understanding of risk mitigation practices in human resource management in higher education environments in Indonesia. This study explores and develops a new theoretical model based on empirical data

through a grounded theory approach, which can explain how HR risk mitigation strategies can be proactively formulated, implemented, and integrated into the institutional system of higher education. More specifically, this study aims to: first, identify and map various types of risks inherent in HR management, both in terms of structure, organizational culture, and daily operational aspects; second, explore risk mitigation strategies that have been implemented or have the potential to be further developed by higher education institutions, both through institutional policies and managerial innovation; third, explain conceptually the relationship between risk mitigation strategies and the level of academic sustainability of higher education institutions, both in the short and long term; and fourth, formulate a conceptual model that can represent relevant and applicable HR risk mitigation practices in the context of Indonesian higher education institutions. The results of this study are expected to not only contribute to the development of science in the field of HR management and risk management, but also to practical ideas that can be applied by university managers to strengthen the resilience, toughness, and competitiveness of higher education institutions in the long term.

This research has theoretical and practical significance in the context of human resource management (HR) in Indonesian higher education environments. From a theoretical perspective, this research is expected to contribute to the development of concepts and theories on risk mitigation in HR management, which has thus far been limited to the context of higher education, especially in Indonesia. Through the Grounded Theory approach, this research not only confirms existing theories but also has the potential to produce new theories that are born from empirical realities in the field. Thus, the results of this research will enrich the literature in the fields of HR management, risk management, and academic sustainability as well as open up opportunities for the development of more contextual and applicable HR risk management models in the higher education sector.

From a practical perspective, this study has strategic value for policy makers in higher education, both at the university leadership and faculty levels, in designing a resilient and adaptive HR management strategy. In an era of disruption and high uncertainty, including changes in education policy, technological developments, and socio-political dynamics, higher education faces various potential risks that can disrupt the sustainability of the academic process and quality of education. Therefore, the findings of this study can guide the development of proactive policies, an early detection system for HR risks, and a more resilient and sustainable work environment. This study is also relevant for HR management practitioners in educational institutions who want to build risk-mitigation strategies systematically and based on evidence.

This study is limited to the focus of the study on risk mitigation in the aspect of human resource management that is directly related to academic sustainability in the higher education environment in Indonesia. The main focus is on how higher education institutions respond to and anticipate risks that arise from human resource management, including aspects of recruitment, competency development, retention of teaching and education personnel, and sustainability of the strategic role of lecturers in carrying out the tridharma of higher education. This study does not cover aspects of general risk management in higher education, such as financial, technological, or reputation risk, unless they are directly related to human resource management.

The geographical scope of the study is limited to several universities in Indonesia, both state and private, which were purposively selected based on certain criteria such as the level of complexity of HR management, diversity of organizational structures, and institutional readiness to support research implementation. Using the Grounded Theory approach, this study relies on empirical data obtained from key informants with direct experience in HR management in universities, such as academic leaders, heads of HR units, senior lecturers, and education staff. Therefore, the findings produced are contextual and are not intended to be generalized widely but rather to build a deep understanding and initial theorization that can be a basis for further studies. In addition, due to time and resource constraints, this study does not examine aspects of national policy in depth but still considers external policies as a context in the analysis.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Qualitative Approach and Rationale for Use

The qualitative approach is a research approach emphasizes an in-depth understanding of social phenomena in a natural and holistic context. Using this approach, researchers seek to explore the meanings, patterns, and interpretations that emerge from the perspective of participants who directly experience the events or issues being studied. This approach not only focuses on numbers and statistics but also on subjective and descriptive interpretations that are rich in context, experience, and social nuances. (Corbin J. And Strauss (2015))

The use of a qualitative approach in research on risk mitigation in human resource management (HRM) in Indonesian universities is based on the need to explore the dynamics and complexities that occur behind HRM managerial practices in higher education institutions in depth. Issues such as academic sustainability, staffing uncertainty, policy changes, and internal crises require a comprehensive understanding of the experiences, strategies, and perceptions of key actors in the system, including university leaders, lecturers, educational staff, and HRM managers. (Creswell, JW, & Poth, CN (2018)

Qualitative approaches allow researchers to explore the various forms of risk and proactive responses undertaken by institutions within the context of organizational culture and national higher education policies. Data collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation provide an opportunity to capture ongoing processes and not just end results. As such, this approach is highly relevant for building a theoretical understanding that emerges from real empirical contexts, especially in situations that are still poorly explained by existing theories. (Glaser BG, Strauss AL (1967).

2. Grounded Theory: Characteristics, Stages, and Relevance

Grounded Theory is a qualitative research method that aims to develop a theory sourced directly from field data. The theory that is built is not based on an initial hypothesis or an established theoretical framework but is developed inductively from patterns that emerge in the process of data collection and analysis. Grounded Theory was first introduced by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967 through their classic work *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. This approach is designed to answer the need for a theory sourced from actual and dynamic social reality. (Lincoln et al., EG (1985)

The main characteristics of Grounded Theory include: (1) a theoretical process that develops as data are collected (theoretical sensitivity); (2) the use of open, axial, and selective coding to identify categories and relationships between concepts; (3) the use of memos and systematic recording in the data analysis process; and (4) a theoretical sampling process, where data collection is continued until theoretical saturation is achieved, namely a condition where no new information is found that is significant to the categories that have been formed. (Miles, MB, Huberman, AM, Saldaña, J. (2014)

The stages in Grounded Theory include (1) open coding, which is the initial stage in which data are sorted into small units of meaning and labeled with initial categories based on content; (2) axial coding, which is the stage of grouping these categories into more organized dimensions and linking them to subcategories; and (3) selective coding, which is the stage where the researcher chooses one core category as the main axis, then explains the relationship between categories to form a substantive theory. These stages do not occur linearly, but rather iteratively and dynamically, following the development of data and the researcher's understanding.

The relevance of using Grounded Theory in this study is high because the issue of risk mitigation in human resource management in higher education has not been explained in depth in the Indonesian context. Using Grounded Theory, researchers can uncover complex empirical realities and develop theoretical models that accurately reflect field conditions. This is important because each university has different cultural characteristics, organizational structures, and internal policies, so the theory that is built needs to represent the real context and not just adopt a conceptual framework from the outside. Grounded Theory, with its strength in connecting concepts that emerge from real practices, has the potential to produce an applicable, relevant, and contextual HR risk mitigation model for academic sustainability in Indonesian universities.

3. Location and Subject of Research

This study was conducted at several universities in Indonesia that represent geographical diversity, institutional status (state and private), and institutional characteristics with the aim of obtaining a holistic picture of risk mitigation strategies in human resource management (HR) in the context of higher education. The selection of locations was carried out purposively, considering the availability of access, the diversity of HR problems faced, and the willingness of institutions to become study subjects. (Patton, MQ (2015).

The research subjects consisted of three main groups that play a central role in HR management in the university environment: lecturers, education staff (Tendik), and institutional leaders (such as deans, heads of study programs, heads of HR bureaus, or vice chancellors for human resources). The selection of informants was carried out purposively and in stages (purposive stratified sampling), considering their experience, job position, and direct involvement in HR management and strategic decision-making processes. The lecturers selected were those who had worked for at least five years and had been involved in important structural or academic activities to provide reflective and in-depth views. The education staff interviewed included administrative and managerial staff who were actively involved in human resource management in the faculty or bureau. Meanwhile, leaders who were key informants were selected because they had the authority to

determine the direction of HR policies and a comprehensive understanding of the challenges of academic sustainability.

4. Data Collection Techniques

The data collection technique in this study was adjusted to a qualitative approach based on Grounded Theory, which emphasizes in-depth and systematic exploration of experiences, perceptions, and managerial practices related to HR risk mitigation in higher education. The three main techniques used in this process were in-depth interviews, limited participant observation, and documentation studies. (Punch & KF (2014)

In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner with a flexible interview guide to allow for the exploration of previously unidentified issues relevant to the research focus. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and was conducted either in person or online depending on the situation and availability of the informant. During the interview, the researcher not only recorded verbal information but also observed the informants' expressions, nuances, and body language to enrich the interpretation of the data. The information obtained was recorded (with permission) and transcribed verbatim for further analysis through a coding process. (Saldaña, J. (2021)

Observations are conducted in a limited manner in the context of relevant academic or administrative activities such as coordination meetings, HR training sessions, and internal discussions of the institution. This observation aims to observe the dynamics of the organization directly and understand how HR policies are implemented and carried out in daily practice. (Silverman, D. (2020).

Documentation was used as a supporting data to strengthen the findings of the interviews and observations. The documents reviewed include personnel guidelines, HR policy documents, employee performance evaluation reports, meeting minutes, and various strategic documents such as institutional strategic plans and accreditation documents. Analysis of these documents helps researchers gain a stronger contextual understanding and triangulate the data to increase the validity of the findings. Through the combination of these three techniques, the data collected are expected to reflect empirical reality in depth and comprehensively, thus allowing the formation of valid and grounded theoretical concepts based on the actual experiences of actors in the higher education environment.

5. Data Analysis Techniques

In qualitative research using a Grounded Theory approach, data analysis techniques are a central stage that aims to develop a theory that truly represents empirical data. Data analysis was carried out systematically and repeatedly in three main stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. These three stages are interconnected and form a deep conceptualization process for the data collected. (Sugiyono. (2017)

a. Open Coding

This stage is the initial process of data analysis that aims to identify and label (code) meaningful data units, such as words, sentences, or paragraphs, from interviews and observations. In open coding, researchers carefully and repeatedly read data transcripts to identify the initial concepts that emerge. Each fragment of data that is considered important is assigned an open code that represents the idea or phenomenon found. For example, from an informant's statement about "lack of HR training" can be given the code "inadequate training" inadequate training'. This process produces hundreds to thousands of codes that are then arranged into initial categories. (Yin, RK (2016)

b. Axial Coding

After open coding, the axial coding stage aims to connect the categories based on the cause-effect relationships, context, conditions, strategies, and consequences contained therein. Here, researchers organize the categories into a more systematic framework, identify relationships between categories, and group related codes into parent categories and sub-categories. For example, the category "inadequate training" can be linked to the category "decreased lecturer competence" decreased lecture competence'. Thus, axial coding structures the data in a more complex and meaningful manner. (Charmaz, K. (2014).

c. Selective Coding

This final stage is the process of selecting a core category that represents the main phenomenon of the research, and then integrating and validating the relationships between other categories into the core category. Selective coding serves to build a coherent and comprehensive theory that represents the overall findings. For example, a core category could be "HR risk mitigation strategies for academic sustainability. All other categories were explained and connected to the core category to form a complete and in-depth theory. The

Grounded Theory method emphasizes the iterative data analysis cycle, meaning that data are collected, analyzed, and compared repeatedly until saturation is reached, where no new findings emerge. (Creswell, JW, & Poth, CN (2018)

6. Data Validity Test

In qualitative research, especially using Grounded Theory, the validity and reliability of data are not measured by statistical numbers as in quantitative research. Therefore, special procedures are required to ensure the validity of data and findings. Commonly used techniques include triangulation, member checking, and audit trails. (Glaser, BG, & Strauss, AL (1967).

a. Triangulation

Triangulation is a data examination technique that uses multiple data sources, data collection methods, or researcher perspectives to reduce bias and increase the validity of findings. (Lincoln, YS, & Guba, EG (1985) In the context of this research, triangulation can be done by:

Triangulation of data sources: Collecting data from various informants (lecturers, education staff, and leaders).

Triangulation method: Combining interviews, observations, and documentation.

Researcher triangulation: More than one researcher is involved in data analysis to gain a more objective perspective.

If $D_1, D_2, D_3, \dots, D_n$ are data from different sources, then the agreement of the findings from the various data will increase the validity. Simply put, triangulation validity can be illustrated using the data alignment equation

$$V = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n S_i}{n}$$

where $S_i = 1$ if the data from source i support the findings, and $S_i = 0$ otherwise. A V value approaching 1 indicates high validity.

b. Member Checking

This technique involves research informants confirming the accuracy of the data and the researcher's interpretation. After the interview transcripts or initial analysis results were completed, the researcher returned them to the informant for feedback. (Lincoln, YS, & Guba, EG (1985) Thus, potential misinterpretations or biases can be corrected, thereby increasing the credibility of the research results. Moleong et al., (2019)

c. Audit Trail

An audit trail is a complete and systematic documentation of the entire research process, including data collection, analysis, and reporting findings. This document included field notes, interview transcripts, codes used, analysis memos, and researcher reflections. An audit trail allows others (e.g., supervisors or reviewers) to trace and verify the research process, which increases transparency and trust in the research results. (Patton, MQ (2015) Overall, systematic data analysis techniques and validity testing procedures ensure that the theory built by grounded theory is truly rooted in empirical data and can be academically justified.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

1. HR Risk Categories in Higher Education

In this study, through a data analysis process based on a grounded theory approach consisting of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding stages, the researcher successfully identified several main categories of human resource (HR) risks that significantly affect academic sustainability in Indonesian universities. Based on the results of in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document reviews in a number of universities, four main risk categories were found that are major challenges in HR management, namely: the risk of lecturer rotation, academic staff burnout, lack of HR regeneration, and dependence on senior lecturers. These four risks do not stand alone but are interrelated and form a systemic pattern that can weaken academic stability and quality if not proactively mitigated.

- a. Lecturer rotation risk, especially related to transfers, assignments, and resignations due to external factors, is a major risk in higher education human resource management. In many cases, established lecturers in one study program or faculty are administratively transferred to another unit, without proper transition planning. This has a direct impact on continuity of learning, student mentoring,

and research continuity. From interviews with faculty leaders, it is known that this rotation is often triggered by structural pressure, institutional needs, or internal conflicts of interest. This condition is exacerbated by the absence of an effective knowledge management system to maintain the continuity of the academic process when lecturers change their positions.

- b. **Academic burnout:** The risk of burnout or emotional and professional exhaustion in lecturers was also an important finding in this study. Lecturers in higher education, especially those in private institutions or regions with limited resources, often have to perform various roles simultaneously, such as teachers, researchers, community service workers, and even administrators. High workloads, unrealistic performance targets, and lack of organizational support contribute to mental and physical stress. One informant stated that “in one semester I once taught 24 credits while leading two community service programs and being the head of a study program.” In the long term, such conditions not only reduce productivity but can also cause lecturer turnover, which ultimately disrupts the sustainability of the study program.
- c. **Lack of Human Resource Regeneration** The next finding is related to the weak academic staff regeneration system in many universities. Universities, especially those outside metropolitan areas, have difficulty recruiting competent and highly motivated lecturers. Some of the reasons are the low economic attractiveness of the teaching profession, limited scholarships for further studies (masters/doctoral), and rigid recruitment bureaucracy. In this context, the imbalance between the number of lecturers who retire and those who are recruited causes a stagnation in the quality and quantity of human resources. Without a planned regeneration strategy, many institutions are trapped in a cycle of dependence on old teaching staff, while the spirit of innovation and the adoption of new learning technologies stagnates.
- d. **Dependence on Senior** Another risk factor is the structural and operational dependence on senior lecturers, both in academic decision-making and the implementation of tridharma activities. Senior lecturers are often central figures who hold various important roles, ranging from the head of the study program to the person in charge of the curriculum to the main supervisor. This dependence raises institutional risks when senior lecturers retire, resign, or remain inactive for health reasons. This study noted that, in several study programs, the absence of senior lecturers caused a vacuum in academic leadership, resulting in chaos in accreditation, curriculum development, and student supervision. In the long term, this phenomenon creates an imbalance in competence between generations of lecturers and hinders academic sustainability.

Thus, the four categories of HR risks indicate that Indonesian universities face serious challenges in ensuring academic sustainability. The unpreparedness of institutions in anticipating lecturer rotation, burnout, weak regeneration, and dependence on senior lecturers indicates the need for a more strategic and proactive risk-management approach. These findings will be used as a basis for developing a grounded theory-based HR risk-mitigation model, which will be described in the next section.

B. Proactive Mitigation Strategy

The results of the research conducted using the Grounded Theory approach revealed that universities in Indonesia face various forms of risks in human resource (HR) management, both structural, functional, and cultural. These risks include dependence on senior lecturers who will retire in the near future, minimal regeneration of academic leadership, weak development of educational staff capacity, and decreased motivation and productivity owing to high workloads and rigid management systems. In an effort to answer these challenges, most of the universities that are the objects of the research have begun to develop proactive risk mitigation strategies. These strategies are not merely reactive but are designed to prevent or minimize the impact of risks before they develop into a crisis. The three main forms of proactive mitigation strategy identified in this study are succession planning, ongoing training, and flexible work policies.

First, the succession-planning strategy emerged as a response to concerns about the reduction in competent lecturers and academic leaders in the near future. In in-depth interviews, several faculty leaders revealed that the sustainability of study programs is highly dependent on several senior lecturers approaching retirement age. In this situation, institutions that have a succession-planning system tend to be better prepared. They identified potential young lecturers to be mentored and empowered as potential replacements, either through gradual structural assignments or by giving them broader academic responsibilities. This process takes place in stages, is long-term oriented, and is structured, including coaching leadership, and managerial and academic competencies. This strategy is considered effective in reducing the risk of organizational stagnation and loss of institutional knowledge.

Second, continuous professional development is an important factor in mitigating HR. From the results of open and axial coding, it was found that institutions that routinely carry out competency training tend to

have a higher level of adaptability to changes in higher education regulations, developments in learning technology, and the dynamics of student needs. This training is not only limited to developing the pedagogical competence of lecturers but also includes digital skills training, collaborative research, conflict management, and even mental health. In addition, education personnel are also trained in modern administration and information technology-based academic services. This practice is an indicator that institutions do not simply carry out training as an administrative obligation but as a real strategy to increase the competitiveness and resilience of HR to change. This finding is reinforced by selective coding, which links continuous training with increased loyalty, job satisfaction, and overall institutional performance.

Third, flexible work policies are a relatively new but highly relevant mitigation strategy, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the work paradigm in the higher education sector. Several universities have begun implementing flexible work time and place policies, including a hybrid system (a combination of online and offline), reducing the teaching load during certain periods, and providing selective sabbatical leave. This policy has been proven to reduce the risk of burnout, improve work-life balance, and maintain the motivation of lecturers and staff. In practice, this flexibility remains framed in a measurable performance monitoring and evaluation system, so that institutional productivity can be maintained. The following is a table representation of the research findings from the "Proactive Mitigation Strategy" in HR management in Indonesian universities.

Table 1. Proactive Mitigation Strategies for Human Resources in Higher Education

Strategy	Main Focus	Implementation of Practices in the Field	Measurable Positive Impact
1. Succession Planning	Regeneration of academic leadership & senior lecturers	Identification of young leaders, mentoring, gradual assignment, leadership training	Prevent organizational stagnation, maintain academic structural continuity
2. Ongoing Training	Strengthening the competence of lecturers & education staff	Pedagogical training, digital, collaborative research, modern academic services, mental health	High adaptability to change, loyalty & increased performance
3. Flexible Work Policy	Work-life balance, productivity, burnout prevention	Hybrid work system, adaptive workload, sabbatical leave, flexible working hours	Improve staff motivation & retention, maintain institutional performance

Overall, proactive mitigation strategies in the form of succession planning, continuous training, and flexible policies not only serve as a response to internal HR risks but also demonstrate the long-term strategic orientation of the institution to maintain academic sustainability. This finding is then formulated in the core category of selective coding as "institutional strategies for HR risk mitigation in the context of academic sustainability". Thus, it can be concluded that higher education institutions that have the awareness and capacity to implement proactive risk mitigation strategies have a greater chance of maintaining organizational stability, academic quality, and adapting to external disruptions and internal dynamics.

C. New Model or Theory Formed (Final Result of Grounded Theory)

After going through an intensive process of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, this study succeeded in formulating a new conceptual model that represents risk-mitigation strategies in human resource management (HR) to maintain academic sustainability in Indonesian universities. This model is the result of a synthesis of categories found in the field through an in-depth analysis of empirical data collected from key informants, such as permanent lecturers, education staff, faculty leaders, and HR management units in the university environment.

The grounded theory model formed is named as "Proactive HR Risk Mitigation Model for Academic Sustainability" (hereinafter abbreviated as MRSP-KA Model). This model is built on one core category, namely "Proactive HR Risk Mitigation Strategy, which connects five other main categories as constituent factors: (1) Organizational Structural Risk, (2) Individual Competency Risk, (3) Work Culture Risk, (4) Managerial Response Strategy, and (5) Institutional Support Mechanism. The relationship between these categories is dynamic, and contextually influences each other.

The first category, Organizational Structural Risk, covers issues such as dependence on senior lecturers, the minimal regeneration of teaching staff, and unsustainable management rotation. When the organizational structure is not adaptive, the risk of workload imbalance and academic stagnation increases, which, in turn,

disrupts the sustainability process of the tri dharma of higher education. This risk interacts with the second category, Individual Competence Risk, which includes lack of training, scientific stagnation, and inability to adapt to digital transformation. Both reinforce each other and give rise to the need for a mitigation strategy based on capacity-building.

The third category, Work Culture Risk, is a bridge between the structural and individual factors. A feudalistic work culture, resistance to change, and low cross-unit collaboration are challenges. Such a culture can exacerbate the effects of structural and competency risks, especially if it is not balanced by transformative leadership.

To address these challenges, the fourth category, the Managerial Response Strategy, emerged as a form of active intervention from university management. This strategy includes a participatory approach to HR decision-making, a merit-based recruitment system, adaptive training, and performance-based incentives. However, the effectiveness of this managerial strategy is largely determined by support from the fifth category, namely the Institutional Support Mechanism, which includes long-term oriented HR policies, an integrated HR management information system, and the existence of an active and responsive HR development unit.

These five main categories interact within a proactive risk mitigation action framework. This means that the actions taken are not only aimed at solving problems that have already occurred (reactive) but also seek to anticipate and prevent the emergence of new risks. In this context, proactive strategy refers to a series of systematic and integrated efforts that place academic sustainability as the main goal of HR management.

Visually, the model can be depicted as an inverted pyramid, where the core category of “Proactive HR Risk Mitigation Strategy” is at the top, supporting academic sustainability as the final focus. Below are the five main categories that reinforce each other, forming the strategic foundation of the mitigation process. The relationship between these categories is circular and open to feedback, meaning that the success of managerial strategies affects structural risks and work culture, and vice versa. Here, is the visual diagram of the model.

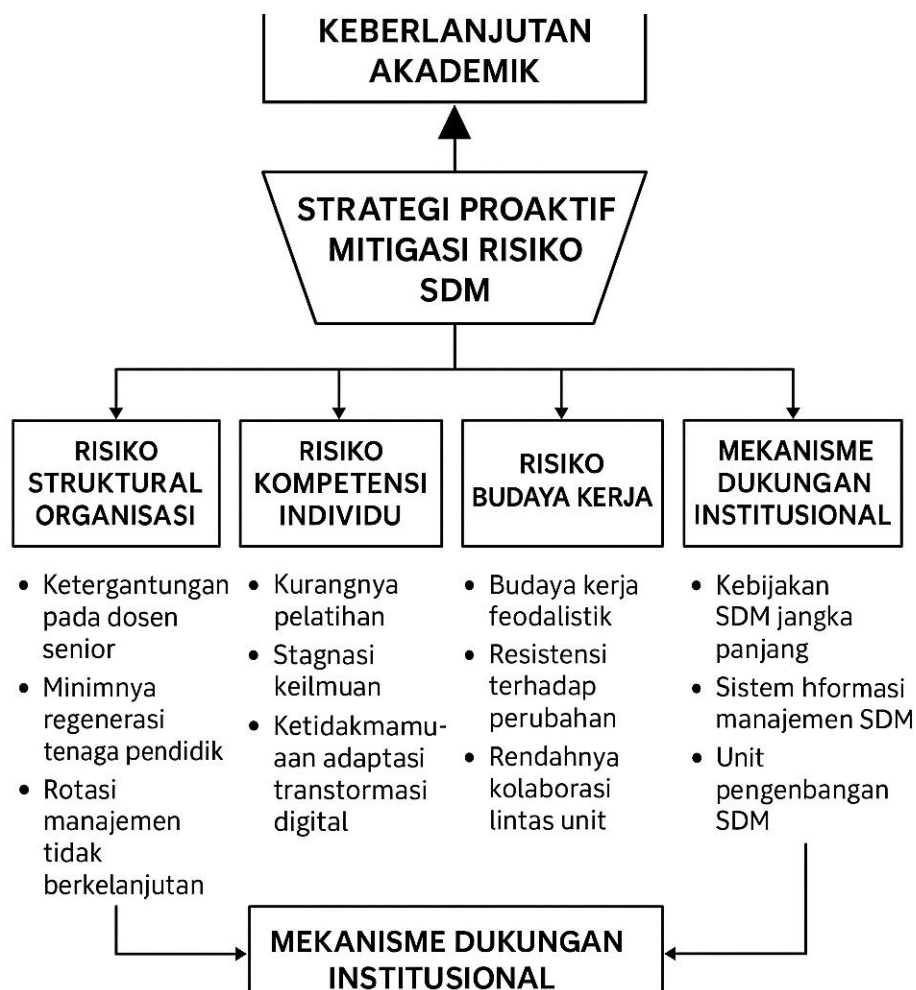


Image 1. Visual diagram of the New Model or Theory that is Formed

Thus, the MRSP-KA Model not only explains the risk phenomenon in higher education human resource management but also offers a theoretical framework that can be used by higher education institution managers to design sustainable human resource development policies and programs. This model provides a new theoretical contribution to the study of human resource management in the Indonesian higher education sector and opens up space for further testing in quantitative and cross-institutional contexts.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In the context of this study, which highlights risk mitigation in human resource (HR) management in Indonesian universities through a Grounded Theory approach, the findings show a close and meaningful relationship with several previous studies. The findings indicate that the main risks in academic HR management include the low regeneration of lecturers, lack of continuous training, overload of administrative work, and weak academic leadership succession planning. The proactive strategies found in this study, such as internal mentoring systems, strengthening training based on institutional needs, compiling HR competency databases, and strengthening and at the same time expanding existing theories.

The findings on the importance of lecturer succession and regeneration planning are in line with those of Gmelch and Buller (2015), who stated that the sustainability of leadership and quality lecturers is highly dependent on structured long-term HR planning. In various studies, including Bolden et al. (2012), higher education institutions must develop evidence-based leadership development programs to avoid stagnation in academic performance due to dependence on aging senior figures. The findings of this study support this view by adding that institutions in Indonesia tend to have minimal documentation and systemization of the regeneration process, thus increasing the risk of organizational unpreparedness when there is a change in core personnel.

In addition, the finding of low needs-based training is also in line with studies by Nadler (1984) and Swanson and Holton (2001), who emphasize that effective training in the context of HR must be based on the real needs of the organization and individuals. In the literature on strategic HR development, training that is not aligned with organizational needs is viewed as an investment that does not produce results. This study found that most universities in Indonesia still carry out training as an administrative formality without a comprehensive mapping of the competency needs of lecturers and education personnel. Therefore, this study strengthens the previous literature while providing a local and actual context on the dynamics of HR management in the Indonesian university environment.

Another important finding concern administrative overload on lecturers, which interferes with their main tasks in teaching and research. This echoes the findings of Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley (2009), who stated that lecturers in many developing countries are burdened by administrative responsibilities due to weak institutional managerial structures. In the Indonesian context, this study shows that workload imbalance can be categorized as an organizational risk because it reduces lecturer motivation and productivity and increases the chances of turnover or burnout. Therefore, the proposed mitigative solutions—such as the preparation of adaptive job descriptions and administrative delegation to educational staff—can be considered as contextual responses that support the literature, while expanding it with a grounded approach based on empirical data.

Furthermore, the systemic approach through the use of HR competency database and risk mapping shows a strong link with the concept of Human Capital Risk Management (HCRM) as explained by Becker, Huselid, and Ulrich (2001). This study emphasizes the importance of utilizing information technology and HR information systems to identify and manage human-based risks. This finding strengthens the literature stating that HR management can no longer be purely administrative but must be strategic and data-driven. Thus, the theory and practice of strategic HR management in Indonesian universities must be aligned with an adaptive and analytical-based organizational risk management approach.

Based on the overall findings, it can be concluded that the results of this study are not only consistent with the existing literature, but also provide enrichment by presenting a new theoretical framework rooted in the local context of Indonesia. This also shows the empirical and theoretical contributions of this study in expanding the horizon of knowledge on HR risk mitigation in the higher education sector. Based on the entire theory of the coding process in the Grounded Theory approach, this discussion reflects the integration between field findings and established theories and proposes theoretical updates that are relevant to the needs of the times and the geographical context of the study.

The findings in this study indicate that human resource management (HR) in Indonesian higher education environments faces various forms of multidimensional risk. These risks include institutional dependence on senior permanent lecturers, absence of a structured regeneration system, minimal ongoing training programs, and weak retention policies for high-performing education personnel. The data analysis process carried out

using the Grounded Theory approach, especially at the open coding, axial coding, and selective coding stages, resulted in a theoretical model of HR risk mitigation that prioritizes a proactive approach as the main strategy. This model not only represents a theoretical construction based on empirical data but also provides practical contributions to HR management policies and implementation in higher education, especially in supporting academic sustainability.

The first implication of this finding is the need to shift the HR policy paradigm from a reactive to a proactive approach. Conventional reactive policies have proven inadequate in responding to long-term challenges because they are generally only formulated after the risk is actually identified, such as the vacancy of a lecturer position due to sudden retirement or structural rotation without proper replacement planning. The model developed in this study emphasizes the importance of strategic HR planning based on risk prediction and institutional anticipation. This includes periodic risk mapping, systematic formulation of mitigation strategies, and development of sustainable HR training and development mechanisms.

The next implication concerns the urgency of developing a succession planning policy. Based on the results of axial coding, it was determined that many universities do not yet have a mechanism for the early identification of potential academic leaders. This condition causes organizational stagnation and the loss of institutional knowledge when senior human resources enter retirement or leave. Therefore, higher education institutions need to adopt a structured succession-planning policy that involves a mentoring process, leadership training, and strengthening individual capacity through competency assessments and medium-to long-term career development.

This study also highlights the need for more flexible work policies and improved human resource welfare to reduce burnout risk. The data show that high administrative burdens, accompanied by intense academic performance pressure, contribute significantly to the decline in the motivation and productivity of lecturers and education staff. Therefore, universities need to formulate adaptive internal policies such as regulating output-based workloads, providing non-financial incentives, and access to job counseling services. These policies are integral to creating a healthy and conducive work ecosystem to support the sustainability of academic activities.

Furthermore, the findings at the selective-coding stage show the importance of integrating risk management into the overall HR governance system. This includes integrating HR risk indicators into the institution's strategic plan, compiling risk reports in performance evaluation forums, and allocating a specific budget to support HR risk-reduction programs. Implementing this strategy requires a change in organizational culture from being oriented only to short-term academic output to an organization with a vision of sustainability and institutional resilience.

Thus, the theoretical model of this research not only offers a conceptual framework regarding HR risk mitigation but also provides a policy basis that can be implemented by university managers in developing responsive, anticipatory, and adaptive HR management strategies for external and internal dynamics. To achieve the effectiveness of this policy, strong institutional commitment, cross-unit coordination, and courage to carry out reforms in future-oriented HR governance are needed. If this policy can be implemented consistently and systematically, universities in Indonesia will have the potential to increase institutional competitiveness and strengthen academic sustainability in the long term.

The emphasis on a proactive approach in HR risk management as produced by this research model is in line with the concept of risk anticipation in strategic management (Hillson, 2002), which emphasizes the need for organizations to not only manage the consequences of risks but also identify and prepare responses before the risks occur. This has become increasingly important in the context of higher education, which is undergoing a transformation towards a world-class university, where academic sustainability is not only determined by individual capabilities but also by the resilience of the institution in managing human resources systematically and sustainably (Altbach & Salmi, 2011).

In a study conducted by Brown and Osborne (2013), public organizations, including universities, must pay attention to the aspect of human risk governance within the framework of good governance. This includes the need for an HR accountability system that focuses on capability development, talent retention, and planning workforce regeneration. This study strengthens the findings of axial coding, which states that unpreparedness in facing the risk of sudden loss of superior academic staff is a form of systemic failure that can be avoided through timely policy intervention.

The findings related to the need for work flexibility and human resource welfare are also supported by research conducted by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), which confirms that the balance between job demands and job resources (job demands–resources model) greatly influences stress levels and work motivation. In the context of higher education, the arrangement of lecturers' workloads that focus too much on administrative

aspects without considering the balance between teaching, research, and community service activities can cause decreased productivity and impact the sustainability of academic quality.

Furthermore, the integration of risk management policies into the HR governance system, as found in the selective coding stage, is relevant to the principle of integrative human capital planning (Wright & McMahan, 2011). This principle states that effective HR management cannot stand alone but must be part of institutional strategic planning that includes risk analysis, workforce needs forecasting, and performance-based monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Thus, it can be concluded that the HR risk-mitigation model based on the proactive approach developed in this study can be used as a basis for developing institutional policies in the context of higher education. The theoretical implication is a contribution to the development of risk-based HR management theory in the education sector, while the practical implication is the provision of strategic references for policy makers in designing resilient, adaptive, and sustainable HR management systems. This is an important step in increasing the capacity of Indonesian higher education institutions to respond to global challenges, encourage organizational innovation, and maintain academic quality and sustainability in the long term.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that risk mitigation in human resource management (HR) at Indonesian universities requires a structured and sustainable proactive approach. Through a qualitative approach using the Grounded Theory method, it was found that risks that threaten academic sustainability, such as dependence on senior lecturers, lack of regeneration and training systems, and weak retention policies for educational staff, can be minimized with mature strategic planning and implementation of adaptive HR policies. The research findings emphasize the importance of transforming the HR policy paradigm from reactive to proactive, including the development of a succession-planning system, increasing work flexibility, and integrating risk management into institutional governance.

The main contribution of this study lies in the development of a theoretical model of HR risk mitigation that can serve as a reference for policy and management practices in higher education. This model encourages higher education institutions to strengthen their internal capacity through measurable and systematic risk management, thereby effectively and efficiently supporting academic sustainability. By implementing policies based on this model, higher education institutions are expected to be able to increase their competitiveness and institutional resilience when facing dynamic challenges in the global higher education environment.

However, this study has limitations in the geographical context and characteristics of the study sample institutions; therefore it is recommended to conduct further research with a wider scope and involve additional variables that have the potential to influence HR risk management. Further research can also explore the application of this risk-mitigation model in the context of the growing digitalization and transformation of higher education.

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