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Talent Management in Academic Human Resource Development: A Comparative Study of Public and Private Higher Education Institutions in Gorontalo, Indonesia

Tety Thalib, Ellys Rachman

Universitas Bina Taruna Gorontalo, Jl. Jaksa Agung Suprapto No. 34, Limba U Dua, Kecamatan Kota Selatan, Kota Gorontalo, Provinsi Gorontalo 96138, Indonesia

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CORRESPONDENCE

Name: Tety Thalib
Email: tetythalib72@gmail.com

A B S T R A C T

This study examines and compares the implementation of talent management in academic human resource development between public and private higher education institutions in Gorontalo Province, Indonesia. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were gathered from 20 informants at five institutions through semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis, and analyzed thematically across four talent management dimensions: talent identification, competency development, performance appraisal, and retention. Findings reveal consistent structural disparities between institutional types: public universities benefit from digital HR systems, dedicated funding, and structured incentives, while private institutions remain constrained by limited budgets, fragmented data management, and conservative organizational cultures. These disparities directly impede faculty motivation, retention, and research productivity. By analyzing these four dimensions concurrently within a single regional setting, the study extends context-sensitive talent management theory by showing how institutional governance arrangements and organizational culture interact with, and partly explain, resource-based disparities in talent management outcomes a relationship that has received limited empirical attention in Eastern Indonesia's higher education sector. The study recommends integrated digital HR systems, transformational leadership, and inter-institutional collaboration as priority interventions for regional academic quality improvement.

INTRODUCTION

In an era of accelerating global competition, higher education institutions are increasingly recognized as knowledge intensive organizations whose competitive advantage depends fundamentally on the quality and commitment of their academic human resources. Talent management defined as the systematic process of identifying, developing, and retaining high-performing personnel aligned with organizational goals has emerged as a central governance agenda for universities worldwide (Collings & Mellahi, (2009); Kaliannan dkk., (2023); Thunnissen dkk., (2013). Globally, universities in the United Kingdom, Australia, and the Netherlands have documented significant correlations between structured talent development programs and improvements in research output, accreditation outcomes, and institutional resilience (Van Woerkom dkk., 2023; Becker dkk., (2001); Wahda dkk., (2019). In Southeast Asian contexts including Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines the adoption of competency-based development frameworks has similarly produced measurable gains in faculty performance and institutional reputation (Przytuła dkk., 2024). These international findings establish a compelling foundation for examining talent management in the Indonesian higher education system.

In Indonesia, talent management in higher education has attracted growing policy attention. National programs including lecturer certification (sertifikasi dosen), the LPDP scholarship scheme, research grant competitions, and accreditation reform collectively underscore the government's recognition that academic talent is the primary driver of institutional quality Andriani dkk., (2024); Yuliani dkk., (2025). Nevertheless, implementation remains markedly uneven across regions. Institutions in Eastern Indonesia including those in Gorontalo Province face disproportionate resource constraints, infrastructure deficits, and restricted access to professional development networks, creating a persistent quality gap relative to universities in Java and western Indonesia (Ariani, 2024; Blass & Hayward, 2014; Hidayat, 2022; Ahmad, 2007). This disparity underscores the urgency of examining how talent management is operationalized within resource-constrained regional contexts.

The central research problem of this study concerns the tension between escalating institutional demands and limited organizational capacity. Higher education institutions in Gorontalo Province are expected to produce competent graduates, strengthen research performance, and meet national accreditation standards yet many lack systematic mechanisms for talent identification, structured competency development, objective performance appraisal, and evidence-based retention. This structural gap risks a widening misalignment between institutional mandate and actual human resource capability (Cheng dkk., 2024; Sunarsi dkk., 2026; Bej dkk., 2025; Saleh & Atan, 2021; Boney & Sarchahani, 2019). The problem is compounded by significant disparities between public and private universities in terms of budget allocation, technological infrastructure, and organizational readiness for reform disparities that have not been adequately examined in the existing literature.

The literature proposes several broad strategies to address these challenges. Integrated Human Resource Management Information Systems (HRMIS) have been shown to enhance the accuracy and efficiency of talent identification across diverse institutional contexts Przytuła dkk., (2024); Tahir dkk., (2025); Rohayati, (2024); Rachida, (2020); Telukdarie & Munsamy, (2019). Continuous competency development programs encompassing technical training, postgraduate study support, and research facilitation are consistently associated with improved academic productivity and motivation (Al Ariss dkk., 2014; Sullivan & Al Ariss, 2021; Hilmy dkk., (2022). Furthermore, transparent and technology-enabled performance appraisal systems linked to reward mechanisms are identified as critical for

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talent retention (Collings & Mellahi, (2009); Kaliannan dkk., (2023). These solutions, however, have predominantly been validated in well-resourced institutional settings, leaving their applicability in constrained regional contexts insufficiently tested.

Within this broader picture, talent mapping and competency-based development stand out as the most foundational levers for academic human resource management. Thunnissen dkk., (2013); Guerra & Valle, (2024), emphasize that talent mapping must be embedded within an integrated and sustainable data management system to produce actionable insights. Van Woerkom dkk., (2023) further argue that HR development programs that combine pedagogical training with research capacity building yield the greatest impact on individual performance and institutional competitiveness. In the Indonesian context, Tahir dkk., (2025) demonstrate that digitalization of HR processes even at modest scales substantially improves the responsiveness of talent development to institutional needs. These studies collectively point toward a model of talent management that is data-driven, contextually adaptive, and aligned with the professional aspirations of academic staff.

On performance appraisal and retention, the literature converges on the importance of continuous, feedback-rich evaluation systems supported by clear career pathways and equitable incentive structures. Collings & Mellahi, (2009) contend that effective appraisal must be adaptive and linked to real-time development needs rather than confined to periodic administrative review. Becker dkk., (2001); Wahda dkk., (2019) similarly argue that data-driven HR decision-making is a hallmark of high-performing institutions. In Gorontalo's private universities, the absence of structured incentive mechanisms and unclear career trajectories contribute to higher academic staff turnover, as documented by Thalib dkk., (2024); Thalib & Asna Aneta, (2025), who found that institutional governance quality and leadership inclusivity are integral to sustaining academic talent pipelines in resource-constrained settings.

To systematically map the intellectual landscape and confirm the research gap, a bibliometric analysis was conducted on the Scopus and Google Scholar databases for the period 2014–2024, using the Boolean search string ("talent management" AND ("higher education" OR university)) applied to article title, abstract, and keyword fields. Records were limited to peer-reviewed journal articles and conference papers written in English or Indonesian; duplicates, non-academic sources, and items unrelated to academic human resource management were excluded following title-abstract screening. This procedure yielded a final corpus of 187 publications, which was imported into VOSviewer (version 1.6.20) for co-occurrence and overlay visualization using full-counting, a minimum keyword occurrence threshold of three, and default association-strength normalization. The resulting visualizations, summarized in Figures 1–3, are interpreted below to identify thematic clusters and temporal trends, and are subsequently supplemented with a narrative synthesis of the most directly relevant studies to substantiate the research gap with qualitative interpretation rather than visualization alone.

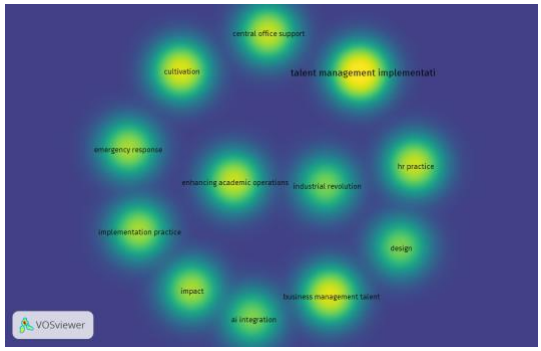


Figure 1. VOSviewer Density Visualization of Keyword Clusters in Talent Management Research (2014–2024)

Figure 1 reveals that the cluster anchored by 'talent management implementation' constitutes the most densely studied thematic area, while nodes such as 'AI integration' and 'industrial revolution' represent emerging frontiers. Critically, the density map exposes a gap: implementation practice in specific regional and developing-country contexts remains underexplored despite its theoretical significance.

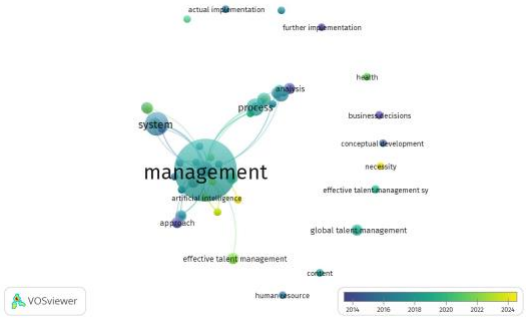


Figure 2. VOSviewer Overlay Visualization Showing Research Trends in Talent Management Literature (2014-2024)

Figure 2 traces a temporal shift: publications from 2014-2018 focused on foundational management processes and system design, while those from 2022-2024 foreground artificial intelligence, global talent management, and context-sensitive approaches. This trajectory signals an urgent need for studies bridging foundational frameworks with contemporary institutional realities in underrepresented geographic settings.

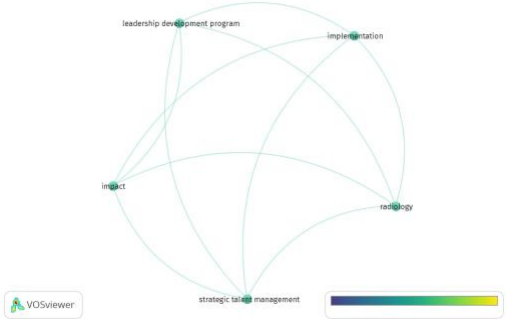


Figure 3. VOSviewer Co-occurrence Network: Strategic Talent Management and Related Constructs (2014–2024)

Figure 3 confirms that strategic talent management is consistently examined in relation to leadership development and implementation outcomes. However, no established cluster addresses talent management implementation in regional higher education institutions in developing countries confirming the gap this study seeks to fill (Wijaya & Harahap, 2021; Thalib dkk., 2024).

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Taken together, the literature reviewed above establishes three points clearly: first, what is already known is that talent management instruments HRMIS, structured competency development, adaptive appraisal, and incentive-linked retention improve institutional and individual performance, predominantly evidenced in well-resourced, urban, or Western institutional settings; second, what remains unknown is how these same instruments are actually operationalized, and with what comparative consequences, inside resource-constrained public and private universities operating side by side within a single regional system in Eastern Indonesia, where prior Gorontalo-focused studies have examined isolated aspects such as women's leadership (Thalib dkk., 2024) or governance inclusivity (Thalib & Asna Aneta, 2025) but not the full talent management cycle comparatively; and third, this study addresses that gap by empirically tracing all four talent management dimensions concurrently across both institutional types within the same provincial system, thereby linking resource-based explanations of disparity to the governance and leadership mechanisms that sustain them.

The study analyzes talent management through four dimensions talent identification, competency development, performance appraisal, and retention rather than alternative frameworks such as the resource-based view or the AMO (Ability-Motivation-Opportunity) model, for two reasons. First, these four dimensions correspond directly to the sequential talent management cycle articulated by Collings and Mellahi (2009) and operationalized in subsequent higher-education-specific work (Thunnissen dkk., 2013; Gallardo-Gallardo dkk., 2020), making them the most established and comparable analytical lens for cross-institutional benchmarking. Second, unlike resource-based or motivational frameworks, which treat antecedents (resources, ability, motivation) as the primary unit of analysis, the four-dimensional cycle foregrounds institutional practice and process, which is the empirical focus of this qualitative study. Within this cycle, institutional capacity, governance arrangements, leadership style, and organizational culture are treated not as separate, free-standing constructs but as contextual moderators that shape how each of the four dimensions is practiced: institutional capacity and governance determine the resources and authority available for talent identification and competency development, while leadership style and organizational culture determine how appraisal and retention mechanisms are experienced and accepted by academic staff. This conceptual positioning is revisited in the Discussion, where these moderating factors are shown to explain why nominally similar policies produce divergent outcomes across public and private institutions.

This study therefore aims to analyze the implementation of talent management in academic human resource development across higher education institutions in Gorontalo Province, with three specific objectives: (1) to examine talent identification, competency development, performance appraisal, and retention mechanisms; (2) to identify supporting and inhibiting factors shaping implementation effectiveness; and (3) to generate evidence-based recommendations for regional higher education contexts. While prior Gorontalo-based research has examined individual aspects of academic human resource governance, this study is, to the authors' knowledge, among the first to analyze all four talent management dimensions concurrently and comparatively across public and private institutions within a single provincial system, integrated with bibliometric evidence situating local findings within global scholarly trends. Theoretically, the study extends context-sensitive talent management theory (Thunnissen dkk., 2013; Gallardo-Gallardo dkk., 2020) by demonstrating empirically how governance arrangements and organizational culture moderate the relationship between institutional resources and talent management outcomes a mechanism that the existing literature has theorized but rarely traced within a single comparative regional case. By addressing a geographically and institutionally underrepresented context, this study contributes both theoretical refinement and practical guidance for policymakers, university leaders, and HR practitioners committed to advancing academic quality in Eastern Indonesia.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach with a multiple case study design to explain the mechanisms through which interactions between formal and informal institutions shape BUM Desa governance and produce governance failure. This approach was selected because it enables an in-depth and contextual understanding of complex governance processes that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measurement, particularly when institutional practices, power relations, and actor behavior are central to the analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2013). The use of multiple case studies also strengthens analytical rigor through logical replication and cross-case comparison across research sites (Yin, 2016).

This study adopted a descriptive qualitative research design to generate an in-depth understanding of how talent management is implemented in the development of academic human resources across higher education institutions in Gorontalo Province. A qualitative approach was selected because the phenomenon under investigation is embedded in complex institutional, cultural, and organizational contexts that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measurement alone Creswell & Guetterman, (2025); Tisdell dkk., (2025). This design enables the researcher to explore contextual variations, uncover underlying mechanisms, and interpret meaning as constructed by participants within their natural institutional settings an epistemological stance consistent with the interpretive tradition in organizational and educational research (Haq & Yasin, 2025).

The five institutions were selected from the population of accredited higher education institutions operating in Gorontalo Province using four inclusion criteria: (1) formal BAN-PT institutional accreditation at the time of data collection, ensuring a functioning quality-assurance and HR governance structure; (2) operation for at least ten years, ensuring an established human resource management track record rather than a newly founded unit; (3) willingness of institutional leadership to grant research access to personnel records and staff; and (4) collectively representing the variation in institutional type, size, and disciplinary profile that characterizes the province's higher education landscape. Applying these criteria identified two public universities and three private universities, a ratio that mirrors the actual public–private composition of higher education institutions in Gorontalo Province and supports the analytic generalizability, though not statistical generalizability, of the comparison.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, a strategy that maximizes informational richness by targeting individuals with direct and substantive involvement in the phenomenon being studied (Tisdell dkk., 2025). The final sample

comprised 20 informants drawn from five higher education institutions in Gorontalo Province, encompassing both public and private universities. Informant categories included university leaders (rectors and vice-rectors), heads of human resource units, faculty leaders (deans and heads of study programs), and lecturers actively participating in competency development programs. Table 1 summarizes the composition of the sample by institution type, role, gender, and years of professional experience. This multi-level sampling strategy ensured that perspectives from both policy-formulating and program-implementing actors were systematically represented (Thunnissen dkk., 2013; Gallardo-Gallardo dkk., 2020).

Table 1. Composition of Research Informants by Institution Type, Role, Gender, and Years of Experience (N = 20)

Institution Type	Participant Role	n	Gender (M/F)	Years of Experience (range)
Public (n = 2 institutions)	Rector / Vice-Rector	2	1/1	12-20 years
	Head of HR Unit	2	1/1	8-15 years
	Dean / Head of Study Program	2	1/1	10-18 years
	Lecturer (HR development participant)	4	2/2	4-14 years
Private (n = 3 institutions)	Rector / Vice-Rector	3	2/1	9-22 years
	Head of HR Unit	3	1/2	5-12 years
	Dean / Head of Study Program	2	1/1	7-16 years
	Lecturer (HR development participant)	2	1/1	3-11 years
Total		**20**	**10/10**	**3-22 years**

Data were collected through three complementary methods, combining primary and secondary sources. Primary data were gathered via semi-structured interviews and field observations. Semi-structured interviews were the principal instrument, allowing in-depth exploration of talent identification practices, development strategies, appraisal mechanisms, and retention challenges while preserving flexibility for informants to elaborate on contextually relevant issues Kvale & Brinkmann (dalam, Skjott Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Field observations were conducted at selected institutions to corroborate interview accounts with direct evidence of practice. Secondary data were obtained through systematic document analysis of personnel files, career development guidelines, internal quality assurance reports, and institutional HR policy documents materials that provided an institutional baseline against which interview data could be triangulated (Bowen, 2009).

Data analysis followed the six-phase thematic analysis framework proposed by Braun & Clarke, (2006), proceeding from familiarization with the data, through systematic code generation and theme identification, to pattern interpretation and report writing. This inductive approach allowed emergent themes related to talent management implementation including supporting and inhibiting factors to be identified directly from the data rather than imposed through a predetermined framework. Coding was conducted manually using a structured coding matrix in Microsoft Excel: interview transcripts were first read line-by-line to generate open codes (e.g., "manual recap reporting," "real-time HR dashboard," "no protected research time"); related open codes were then grouped into axial categories through constant comparison, and axial categories were finally mapped onto the four a priori talent management dimensions identification, competency development, appraisal, and retention while codes that did not fit this structure (for example, leadership style and organizational culture) were retained as a separate emergent category rather than discarded. Two members of the research team coded the first five transcripts independently and compared results to calibrate the coding matrix before one researcher completed coding of the remaining transcripts; disagreements during calibration were resolved through discussion and used to refine code definitions, supporting coding consistency across the dataset. To ensure trustworthiness, data validity was established through source triangulation (cross-checking evidence across informant categories), technique triangulation (comparing interview, observation, and document data), and member checking, whereby key interpretations were returned to selected informants for verification and feedback (Braun & Clarke, 2006); (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Member checking was conducted with 8 of the 20 informants (two per institution, prioritizing HR unit heads and faculty leaders), who received a two-page summary of preliminary themes for their institution roughly four weeks after their interview; six confirmed the interpretations without changes, while two requested clarification one noting that a described incentive scheme had since been revised and one requesting that an anonymized quotation be reworded to avoid identifying their unit, both of which were incorporated into the final analysis. The overall research process, summarized in Figure 4, is presented primarily to document the sequencing and trustworthiness procedures (sampling, triangulation, and member checking) described in this section for readers assessing the study's methodological rigor, rather than to introduce new analytical content.

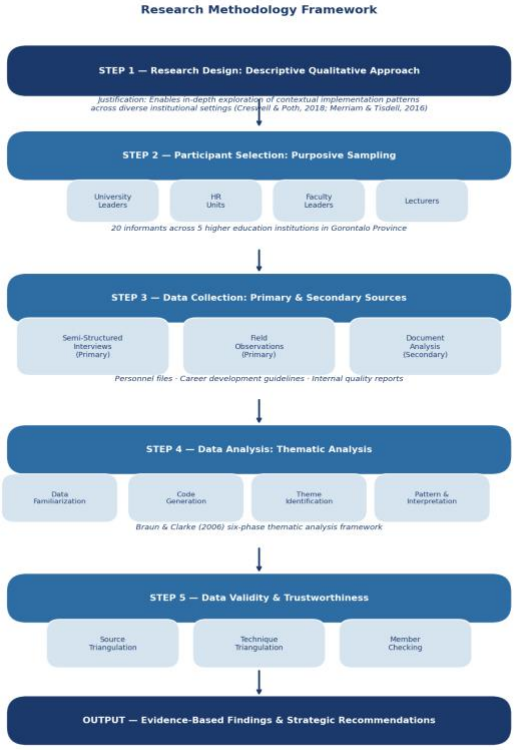


Figure 4. Research Methodology Framework

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and interprets findings from the thematic analysis of interview data, field observations, and documentary sources collected across five higher education institutions in Gorontalo Province. The findings are organized around four interconnected dimensions of talent management: talent identification and mapping, competency development, performance appraisal, and retention. Before presenting the comparative findings, it is necessary to clarify the basis of the numerical scores reported in Table 2 and Figure 5, since the study is qualitative rather than psychometric in design. For each of the four dimensions, the two coders independently rated each institution on a five-point ordinal scale (1 = largely absent/ad hoc, 5 = fully institutionalized and technology-supported) using a coding rubric derived inductively from the thematic categories (for example, for talent identification: presence of a digital HRMIS, frequency of data updating, and existence of a centralized competency database); institution-level scores were then averaged within each institutional type to produce the public and private means reported below, and discrepancies between the two coders' ratings (none exceeding one scale point) were resolved through discussion and cross-checked against documentary evidence during member checking. These scores are therefore best read as a structured, transparent summary of the qualitative evidence presented narratively in this section, intended to aid comparison across institutions, rather than as an independently validated quantitative instrument. Table 2 and Figure 5 provide this comparative overview of implementation quality across public and private institutions, illustrating the structural disparities that constitute the central analytical concern of this study.

Table 2. Comparative Overview of Talent Management Implementation in Public and Private Higher Education Institutions, Gorontalo Province

Talent Management Dimension	Public Universities	Private Universities	Key Supporting Reference
Talent Identification & Mapping	Digital HRMIS; real-time monitoring; centralized database	Manual periodic reports; fragmented data; no integration	Przytuła dkk., (2024); Thunnissen dkk., (2013)
Competency Development	Internal funding; postgraduate scholarships; structured research support	Individual initiatives; external training; limited research funding	Al Ariss dkk., (2014); Van Woerkom dkk., (2023)
Performance Appraisal	Technology-based; continuous monitoring; constructive feedback loops	Annual administrative reviews; limited feedback; non-standardized	Collings & Mellahi, (2009); Prowse & Prowse, (2009)
Retention & Incentives	Promotions, allowances, academic awards; clear career pathways	Absent incentive structures; unclear career paths; high turnover	Al-Qarshoubi, (2020); (2020); Becker dkk., (2001)

Source. Summary derived from thematic coding of semi-structured interview data and document analysis (N = 20 informants, 5 institutions, 2024).

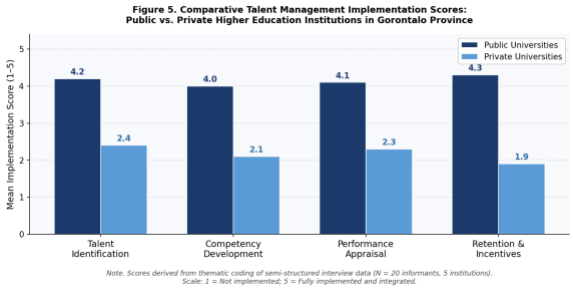


Figure 5. Comparative Talent Management Implementation Scores: Public vs. Private Higher Education Institutions in Gorontalo Province
Source.

Talent Identification and Mapping Systems

All five institutions in this study have established talent identification mechanisms grounded in the performance assessment framework of the tri dharma of higher education teaching, research, and community service reflecting alignment with the national policy architecture governing Indonesian academic HR management Andriani dkk., (2024). However, as illustrated in Table 2 and Figure 5, the scope, systematicity, and technological underpinning of these mechanisms differ substantially between institutional types, with public universities recording a mean implementation score of 4.2 compared to 2.4 for private institutions on a five-point scale.

Public universities in Gorontalo have adopted digital Human Resource Management Information Systems (HRMIS) that enable real-time data monitoring and centralized competency profiling of academic staff. This technological infrastructure affords these institutions significant advantages in the speed and precision of talent-related decision making, consistent with the argument advanced by Przytuła dkk., (2024) that information technology integration in HR management fundamentally enhances an organization's capacity to identify and leverage talent strategically. By contrast, private universities continue to rely on manual data collection through periodic evaluation forms and disaggregated reports, a practice that introduces latency and inconsistency into the talent identification process. The present findings thus extend those of (Tahir dkk., 2025), who documented analogous digitalization disparities across Indonesian higher education institutions, by demonstrating that these gaps are particularly acute in the resource-constrained eastern regional context.

Competency mapping the systematic aggregation of academic achievements, professional certifications, and disciplinary expertise was implemented comprehensively in only two of the five institutions studied, both of which are public universities that have constructed centralized relational databases for HR data management. The remaining three institutions, all private, manage competency data in a fragmented, department level fashion that impedes cross-institutional analysis and strategic workforce planning (Cheng dkk., 2024). This finding resonates with the theoretical position advanced by Thunnissen dkk., (2013); Harsch & Festing, (2020) who contend that effective talent mapping is contingent not merely on data availability but on the organizational capacity to govern data within an integrated and longitudinally sustainable system. The absence of such capacity in Gorontalo's private universities represents a foundational constraint on their ability to implement evidence-based HR development strategies.

These patterns were directly evident in informants' own accounts. A head of the HR unit at a public university described the centralized system as follows: "Every semester we update the dashboard ourselves; the rector can see who is due for a degree program and who is overdue for publication, in real time" (HR Unit Head, Public University A). By contrast, a dean at a private university described a markedly different process: "We still recap everything manually at the end of the year... by the time the report is finished, the data is already a year old" (Dean, Private University C). This contrast illustrates the underlying mechanism connecting institutional resources to talent management performance: it is not the absence of policy intent both institution types formally commit to systematic talent mapping but the absence of delegated budget authority and dedicated technical staff at private institutions that prevents intent from being translated into a functioning system, consistent with the institutional-capacity moderation proposed in the Introduction.

Strategies for Developing Academic Human Resource Competencies

Competency development constitutes the second dimension of the talent management framework examined in this study. All five institutions expressed a normative commitment to professional development; however, Figure 5 reveals a pronounced implementation gap, with public universities scoring 4.0 compared to 2.1 for private institutions. Public universities benefit from dedicated internal budget allocations that sustain structured training programs, postgraduate scholarships *(both domestic and international)*, and protected time for research and publication activities (Ariani, 2024; Berg, 2019; Kardoyo dkk., 2020; Stensaker dkk., 2017). These conditions are consistent with the institutional prerequisites for successful talent development identified by Al Ariss dkk., (2014); Whysall dkk., (2019), who argue that resource availability and organizational time investment are non-negotiable enablers of meaningful competency enhancement.

Private universities in the study, by contrast, are constrained to rely predominantly on lecturers' individual initiatives and opportunistic engagement with externally organized, often non-sequential training programs. This pattern of fragmented, non-institutionalized development has been associated in the broader literature with limited durability of competency gains and reduced organizational learning capacity (Al-Qarshoubi, 2020). The finding that private universities struggle to provide structured research facilitation in terms of internal funding, journal access, and conference participation is particularly consequential given that scientific publication is an internationally recognized indicator of higher education quality and institutional competitiveness (Nijs dkk., 2024). Institutions that fail to invest systematically in research capacity therefore risk perpetuating cycles of low research output, diminished accreditation performance, and weakened capacity to attract and retain talent, a dynamic this study traces in detail within the Gorontalo context.

A lecturer at a public university captured the institutionalized nature of this support: "The campus pays the conference registration and gives me a month of reduced teaching load before submission deadlines" (Lecturer, Public University B). A lecturer at a private institution described the opposite reality: "If I want training, I pay for it myself and use my own annual leave" (Lecturer, Private University D). Rather than simply confirming that funding and training matter—a point well established in the existing literature—the Gorontalo case extends this knowledge by showing that the disparity is mediated specifically by budgetary autonomy: public universities benefit from protected, line-item HR development budgets embedded in national funding mechanisms, whereas private universities depend on discretionary foundation (yayasan) allocations that compete directly with operational costs, making competency development the first item curtailed during financial shortfalls.

Performance Appraisal Systems and Their Impact on Motivation and Retention

Performance appraisal across all five institutions is formally grounded in the tri dharma framework, incorporating evaluations of teaching quality, research outputs, and community service contributions. However, the depth, frequency, and operational use of evaluation results differ substantially between institutional types (Hilmy dkk., 2022; Masruri dkk., 2024; Sugiarti, 2022; Bungai & Perdana, (2018). Public universities have progressively integrated technology mediated appraisal tools that support continuous monitoring and enable constructive feedback to be delivered in near-real time, reflecting the international best practice model described by Collings & Mellahi, (2009); Caligiuri dkk., (2024); Rožman dkk., (2023) who argue that appraisal systems must be adaptive and ongoing rather than periodic and administrative to meaningfully support talent development. Private universities, in contrast, retain annual administrative evaluations that are structurally disconnected from the day-to-day professional development needs of academic staff (Al-Qarshoubi, 2020), a gap that contributes to lower motivation and diminished sense of institutional investment in individual growth.

The motivational consequences of these appraisal system differences are directly reflected in retention outcomes. Public universities in Gorontalo report higher retention rates among high-performing faculty, attributable to structured incentive mechanisms including promotions, functional allowances, and formal academic recognition awards that provide clear career advancement trajectories (Rachida, 2020). This finding aligns with Becker dkk., (2001) argument that data-driven reward systems are a hallmark of high-performing HR management and a critical lever for institutional talent retention. Conversely, private universities exhibit higher academic staff turnover, driven by the absence of structured incentives and ambiguous career pathways conditions identified by Thunnissen dkk., (2013) as characteristic of talent management failure in resource-constrained organizations. Thalib dkk., (2024), studying governance in Gorontalo's private universities specifically, similarly found that leadership quality and inclusivity are key mediators of talent retention, reinforcing the conclusion that retention cannot be addressed through incentive structures alone but requires holistic institutional reform.

Informants' accounts also point to power relations and leadership practice as underlying mechanisms rather than incidental detail. A vice-rector at a public university explained that appraisal results carry institutional weight because "the rectorate links the score directly to whether your promotion file moves forward" (Vice-Rector, Public University A), illustrating how centralized governance authority allows appraisal outcomes to be enforced through formal incentive channels. At private institutions, several informants instead described appraisal as a

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largely symbolic exercise disconnected from actual decision-making: a head of a study program noted that "the form gets filed, but I have never seen it change anyone's teaching load or salary" (Head of Study Program, Private University C), reflecting a governance structure in which foundation owners, not academic leadership, retain ultimate authority over HR decisions, weakening the organizational learning loop between appraisal and practice. It is in this context that transformational leadership emerged as a salient theme: although it was not established as an a priori analytical category in the study design, it surfaced inductively during axial coding as informants repeatedly attributed functioning HR practices at both public and private institutions to specific leaders who modeled participatory decision-making and protected staff development time, rather than to formal policy alone. This emergent status is acknowledged here explicitly so that its prominence in the Discussion and Conclusion is read as a grounded, if exploratory, finding rather than a confirmed a priori construct.

Challenges, Barriers, and Opportunities in Talent Management Implementation

Across both institutional types, this study identifies a convergent set of structural and cultural barriers that constrain talent management effectiveness, albeit with differing severities. Budget limitations represent the most pervasive constraint, particularly acute in private universities where they directly curtail the continuity of training programs, research funding, and career development initiatives (Hidayat, 2022; Ratnasari dkk., 2024; Lateef dkk., 2025). The scarcity of administrative personnel with specialized expertise in talent management systems compounds this problem, leaving institutions without the technical capacity to design, monitor, or evaluate HR development programs at the level of sophistication required by contemporary accreditation and quality assurance standards (Sunarsi dkk., 2026; Achmadi dkk., 2024; Liang & Abd Rani, 2025).

Organizational culture emerged as a significant and often underestimated barrier. Several institutions exhibited conservative cultures resistant to transparency-demanding reforms, with faculty and administrative staff perceiving performance management initiatives as instruments of surveillance rather than professional empowerment. This resistance is consistent with the broader organizational change literature: Nijs dkk., (2024) demonstrate that talent management adoption is significantly impeded in institutions where innovation and learning are not embedded in organizational norms, and where top down policy mandates are not accompanied by participatory implementation processes. Complex internal bureaucracies further decelerate decision-making, generating implementation lags that erode the relevance and responsiveness of HR development programs to fast-changing academic environments. Rather than treating budget constraints, organizational culture, and bureaucratic complexity as independent obstacles, the findings indicate they are mutually reinforcing within a single governance logic: limited budget authority at private institutions restricts technological investment (constraining identification and competency development), which in turn keeps appraisal administratively oriented rather than developmental, which removes the data and trust needed to justify reform to a conservative culture, which then sustains the very bureaucratic caution that limits budget reallocation in the first place—a self-reinforcing cycle that technological investment alone cannot break without parallel leadership and governance change.

Viewed together, the four dimensions are therefore best understood not as parallel, independent processes but as a single institutional capability that succeeds or fails as a whole: identification systems generate the data that competency development programs act upon, competency gains are only sustained when appraisal systems recognize and reward them, and appraisal is only credible when linked to genuine retention incentives. Public universities in this study perform consistently better across all four dimensions not because each policy area happens to be separately well managed, but because centralized governance authority and dedicated budget lines allow the whole cycle to function as an integrated system; private universities perform consistently worse across all four dimensions because the same structural constraint limited delegated authority and discretionary funding breaks the cycle at its first link. This systemic interdependence, rather than any single dimension in isolation, constitutes the central mechanism through which institutional capacity and governance shape talent management effectiveness in resource-constrained regional contexts, and it is this mechanism, not the four dimensions individually, that represents the study's primary contribution to context-sensitive talent management theory.

Despite these challenges, the study identifies substantial opportunities for systemic improvement. The rapid advancement of information technologies including cloud-based HR platforms and AI-assisted analytics presents an accessible pathway toward integrated, data-driven talent management systems for institutions currently operating with fragmented infrastructure Al-Qarshoubi, (2020); Becker dkk., (2001). Critically, however, technological solutions must be accompanied by cultural and leadership transformation. Transformational leadership characterized by vision, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration of staff development needs has been empirically demonstrated to mediate the relationship between HR system quality and institutional talent outcomes in higher education Al Ariss dkk., (2014); Thalib dkk., (2024). Institutions in Gorontalo that succeed in combining digital HR infrastructure with transformational leadership and participatory reform processes are thus better positioned to close the current implementation gap, improve academic HR quality, and sustain competitive institutional performance within the increasingly demanding national and regional accreditation landscape.

CONCLUSION

The findings demonstrate that governance failure in BUM Desa is structurally produced through persistent institutional misalignment rather than arising from isolated technical or managerial deficiencies. Although formal governance frameworks are formally established, their effectiveness is consistently undermined by dominant informal institutions, including patronage networks, elite control, kinship relations, and norms discouraging criticism. These informal practices distort decision-making, weaken accountability, and limit transparency, resulting in poor business planning and persistent stagnation of BUM Desa operations.

This study examined the implementation of talent management in academic human resource development across five higher education institutions in Gorontalo Province, revealing a consistent pattern of structural disparity between public and private universities. Public universities demonstrated

markedly stronger performance across all four talent management dimensions talent identification, competency development, performance appraisal, and retention driven by digital HRMIS infrastructure, dedicated funding mechanisms, continuous appraisal systems, and structured incentive frameworks. Private universities, constrained by budget limitations, fragmented data systems, conservative organizational cultures, and the absence of clear career pathways, continue to operate talent management in a largely reactive and non-systematic manner, with direct consequences for faculty motivation, retention, and research productivity.

These findings carry meaningful theoretical and practical implications, though their scope should be stated carefully. Theoretically, the central contribution of this study is not the descriptive observation that public universities outperform private ones a pattern that confirms, rather than challenges, existing resource-based accounts of talent management but the empirical demonstration that the four talent management dimensions function as an interdependent cycle whose performance is governed by a single upstream factor: delegated budgetary and decision-making authority. This refines context-sensitive talent management theory (Thunnissen dkk., 2013) by specifying governance authority, rather than resource availability per se, as the moderating mechanism linking institutional context to talent management outcomes. Practically, the findings most directly support two interventions for which this study provides direct evidence: targeted investment in digital HR infrastructure at private institutions, and the cultivation of leadership practices observed inductively among effective leaders in this sample that open appraisal and resource decisions to participatory input. Recommendations concerning broader collaborative governance reform between universities, local government, and national funding bodies are offered more tentatively, as a plausible extension of these findings rather than a conclusion fully tested by the present data and are proposed here as a direction for future research and policy dialogue.

This study is subject to several limitations that warrant acknowledgment. First, the qualitative design, while appropriate for contextual depth, limits the generalizability of findings beyond the five institutions studied. Second, the purposive sampling approach, though optimized for informational richness, may not fully capture the perspectives of all relevant stakeholder groups. Third, as a cross-sectional study, it cannot account for longitudinal changes in talent management practices. Future research should employ mixed-methods or longitudinal designs across a broader sample of institutions in Eastern Indonesia. Quantitative investigations measuring the relationship between specific talent management practices and institutional performance indicators such as accreditation scores, research output, and faculty retention rates would substantially advance the field. Comparative studies extending the analytical framework to other underserved regional higher education systems in developing countries are also encouraged.

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CRediT Authorship Contribution Statement

Tety Thalib: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft, Writing – Review & Editing.

Ellys Rachman: Investigation, Validation, Supervision, Writing – Review & Editing.

Co-authors: Data Collection, Validation, and Review of the Final Manuscript.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Ethical Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of social research. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all informants, and all data were anonymized to protect participant confidentiality.

Data Availability Statement

The qualitative data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Due to confidentiality agreements with participating institutions, the data are not publicly available.

Declaration of Generative AI

Generative AI tools were used only for language editing and readability improvement of the manuscript. All conceptual development, data collection, analysis, interpretation of findings, and final approval of the manuscript were performed by the authors

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