

Professionalizing Cooperatives through Human Resource Management: A Systematic Literature Review and Evidence-Informed Implications for Indonesia's Village Cooperatives

Muhaidir Ikram; Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia^{1*}

Muh Nurfadel Hamzah; Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia²

*Correspondence: muhammad.ikram@unm.ac.id

ABSTRACT

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Cooperative professionalization requires more than conventional human resource management (HRM) practices because professional management must remain compatible with democratic governance, member participation, accountability, and cooperative values. However, existing evidence is fragmented across HRM, managerial development, governance, and organizational capability research. This systematic literature review synthesizes these streams and develops an evidence-informed framework for cooperative professionalization. Following PRISMA 2020, searches were conducted in Scopus through Publish or Perish for publications from 2010 to 2026. Fourteen studies were included and analyzed using thematic and mechanism-oriented synthesis. Four higher-order themes emerged: institutional alignment for cooperative professionalization, integrated HRM and managerial talent architecture, HR-to-capability conversion, and multidimensional and context-contingent cooperative effectiveness. The synthesis indicates that professionalization depends on aligning professional HR systems with cooperative governance and on converting individual and managerial resources into collective organizational capabilities. The resulting framework links governance architecture, integrated HRM, individual and managerial capabilities, organizational capabilities, contextual conditions, and multidimensional effectiveness. The framework provides an analytical basis for future empirical testing and evidence-informed professionalization of Indonesia's Koperasi Desa/Kelurahan Merah Putih.



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Introduction

Cooperatives constitute a distinctive organizational form because economic activities are combined with member ownership, democratic control, participation, and collective benefit. Unlike investor-owned firms, members may simultaneously act as owners, users, employees, suppliers, or beneficiaries, creating governance relationships in which managerial efficiency must coexist with democratic accountability and member voice (Bakaikoa et al., 2004; Cornforth, 2004; Spear, 2004). Member participation itself is not automatic, as involvement depends on both individual motivations and organizational conditions that enable members to exercise their rights meaningfully (Birchall & Simmons, 2004). These

organizational characteristics make the management of people particularly important and potentially more complex in cooperatives than in conventional firms (Voigt & von der Oelsnitz, 2024) .

Human resource management (HRM) is especially relevant because organizational performance depends not merely on possessing human resources but on how those resources are acquired, developed, motivated, deployed, and retained. Strategic HRM literature has long argued that human resources can constitute strategically valuable organizational resources when HR systems develop and organize knowledge, skills, motivation, and employment relationships in ways that support organizational objectives (Lepak & Snell, 1999; Wright et al., 2001) Meta-analytic evidence further indicates that skill-enhancing, motivation-enhancing, and opportunity-enhancing HR practices affect organizational outcomes through intermediate mechanisms such as human capital and employee motivation rather than solely through direct effects on financial performance (Jiang et al., 2012) .

In cooperative organizations, however, these HRM mechanisms operate within a distinctive governance architecture. Employment relationships, membership status, self-control, participation, employment security, and cooperative values influence how HR policies can be designed and implemented (Voigt & von der Oelsnitz, 2024) . Existing cooperative research shows that ownership and democratic governance can create tensions when member preferences conflict with professional recruitment, performance discipline, managerial authority, or other efficiency-oriented HR practices (Basterretxea et al., 2019). Conversely, cooperative principles can support participation, agency, well-being, and solidarity when HR practices are deliberately aligned with the social purpose and democratic character of the organization (Bustamante Salazar, 2019) . These findings are consistent with longstanding governance research showing that cooperatives must manage simultaneous demands for democratic control, professional management, accountability, and organizational effectiveness rather than relying on a single conventional governance logic (Cornforth, 2004; Spear, 2004) .

This governance challenge is closely related to managerial professionalization. Professionalization requires more than appointing managers or providing occasional training; it involves establishing coherent systems for competency-based recruitment, management development, performance evaluation, career progression, knowledge transfer, compensation, and managerial continuity. Evidence from the Mondragon Cooperative Group demonstrates that managerial development can be organized as an interconnected system combining recruitment, individualized training, evaluation, careers, internal knowledge management, remuneration, and managerial mobility while retaining cooperative socialization (Basterretxea & Albizu, 2011). Evidence from rural cooperatives similarly indicates that appropriate person–role fit is an important foundation for HRM quality, while weak recruitment safeguards may generate subsequent problems in commitment, discipline, and organizational functioning (Basterretxea et al., 2019; Rahiminejad et al., 2014) .

The significance of professionalization is also consistent with broader human-capital and capability perspectives. Human capital creates strategic value not simply because individuals possess knowledge and skills but because organizations develop structures through which those resources can be combined, deployed, and retained (Lepak & Snell, 1999; Wright

et al., 2001). Dynamic capability theory similarly emphasizes the importance of organizational processes that integrate, reconfigure, and renew internal resources in response to environmental change (Teece et al., 1997). Within the cooperative evidence reviewed here, human capital does not consistently demonstrate a simple direct relationship with organizational performance; rather, its value appears to depend on structural, social, resilience, stakeholder-management, and other collective organizational capabilities (Mantog & Deriada, 2025; Pavao & Rossetto, 2015; Wang et al., 2025) .

This distinction suggests that the central issue is not simply human-capital accumulation but capability conversion. Individual competence, commitment, agency, self-efficacy, and managerial knowledge must become embedded in organizational routines, relationships, systems, and collective problem-solving capacity before they can consistently support organizational outcomes. This reasoning is compatible with broader HRM evidence showing that HR systems affect distal organizational outcomes through proximal human-capital and motivational mechanisms (Jiang et al., 2012). Cooperative evidence similarly indicates that leadership resources may operate through organizational resilience, while training outcomes depend partly on whether participants perceive new knowledge or technology as applicable and (Luo et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2025).

Digital transformation further strengthens the need for this capability perspective. Digitalization is increasingly important to cooperative efficiency, market access, administration, communication, and innovation, but technology acquisition alone does not ensure organizational transformation. Evidence from agricultural cooperatives indicates that managerial education, board training, organizational competency, specialist support, digital talent, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use influence whether digital technologies are actually adopted and utilized (Cao et al., 2025; Nguyen et al., 2023) . The broader literature on agri-food cooperatives likewise shows that digital transformation varies according to organizational characteristics and economic constraints, reinforcing the need to view digitalization as an organizational-development issue rather than solely a technological investment (Santos et al., 2024) .

Professionalization must also account for participation and inclusion. Democratic structures provide formal opportunities for participation, but meaningful participation depends on whether members possess sufficient capability, information, confidence, time, and economic resources to exercise those opportunities (Birchall & Simmons, 2004; Spear, 2004). Evidence from agricultural cooperatives shows that leadership participation may remain constrained by educational disadvantage, domestic responsibilities, time poverty, and inadequate compensation even when formal access exists (Huot et al., 2023) . Professionalization should therefore not be understood as choosing between merit and inclusion, but as establishing professional standards while creating the capability-development and enabling conditions needed for diverse members to meet those standards.

These concerns are especially relevant to Indonesia's Koperasi Desa/Kelurahan Merah Putih (KDKMP) initiative. Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2025 established a coordinated national agenda for the creation, development, and revitalization of approximately 80,000 village and urban-village cooperatives and assigned responsibilities for business-model

development, mentoring, education, and cooperative HR training to strengthen institutional and business capabilities (Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia, 2025a). The Indonesian government subsequently formalized the establishment of 80,081 KDKMP entities in July 2025, moving the policy challenge from large-scale institutional creation toward effective operation, governance, and managerial professionalization (Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia, 2025b). These developments make managerial and organizational capability formation especially important because the long-term effectiveness of newly established cooperatives depends on more than legal status, infrastructure, or initial training.

The distinction between organizational formation and professionalization is therefore critical. Cooperative experience indicates that organizations require appropriate management competencies, professional role allocation, effective governance, knowledge continuity, stakeholder coordination, and adaptive capability to translate human resources into sustainable organizational outcomes (Basterretxea & Albizu, 2011; Pavao & Rossetto, 2015; Wang et al., 2025). At the same time, Indonesia's village cooperatives operate across highly heterogeneous local settings, making it unlikely that a single standardized implementation model will be equally effective across variations in managerial experience, organizational maturity, infrastructure, business complexity, and institutional support.

Despite increasing interest in HRM within cooperative organizations, the evidence required to explain cooperative professionalization remains fragmented. Existing systematic reviews provide important foundations but address different parts of the problem. Voigt & von der Oelsnitz (2024) synthesize cooperative-specific HRM and develop a framework for understanding HRM within the distinctive characteristics of cooperative organizations. Chali & Lakatos (2024), by contrast, focus more specifically on the relationship between HRM practices and financial performance in cooperative enterprises. These reviews establish the relevance of HRM but leave a broader integrative question unresolved: how professional HRM interacts with cooperative governance, how human and managerial resources are translated from individual-level resources into organizational capabilities, how contextual conditions shape these processes, and how professionalization relates to forms of cooperative effectiveness extending beyond financial outcomes. The relevant evidence remains dispersed across HRM, managerial development, human capital, leadership, governance, organizational capability, resilience, participation, and digitalization rather than integrated within a common analytical architecture.

Accordingly, this study systematically reviews evidence on HRM, managerial capability, governance, and organizational capability in cooperative organizations and develops an evidence-informed framework for cooperative professionalization. The review addresses four questions: (1) what HRM, managerial, and governance arrangements are associated with cooperative professionalization; (2) through what mechanisms are human and managerial resources converted into individual and organizational capabilities; (3) what contextual conditions shape these relationships; and (4) what evidence-informed directions can be derived for the professionalization of Indonesia's village cooperatives?

This review extends the existing cooperative HRM literature in three related ways. First, it integrates professional HRM with cooperative governance by conceptualizing

professionalization as an HRM–governance alignment problem rather than as the adoption of isolated HR practices. Second, it connects individual and managerial resources with collective organizational capabilities through a synthesis-derived HR-to-capability conversion mechanism. Third, it broadens the organizational endpoint beyond financial performance by integrating operational, member/social, governance, and innovation/adaptive dimensions of cooperative effectiveness while explicitly accounting for contextual contingencies. These elements are combined in an evidence-informed integrative framework, with Indonesia's village-cooperative context treated as a setting for contextual translation and subsequent empirical validation rather than as a setting in which the synthesized relationships have already been established.

Method

Review Design

This study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) to synthesize evidence on human resource management (HRM), managerial capability, professionalization, governance, and organizational capability in cooperative organizations. The review was reported in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 framework for study identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion (Page et al., 2021). Because the eligible literature was heterogeneous in research design, theoretical perspective, cooperative form, analytical level, and outcome measurement, statistical meta-analysis was not considered appropriate. Instead, a thematic and mechanism-oriented synthesis was used to identify recurring organizational processes, cross-level mechanisms, contextual contingencies, and areas of convergence and divergence across studies.

The review scope was defined using the PICOC framework. The population comprised cooperative organizations and organizational actors, including managers, employees, board members, and members. Relevant interventions or exposures included HRM practices, human resource development, human capital, managerial competence, leadership, professionalization, governance, organizational capability, resilience, and related people-management mechanisms. Comparisons were optional and could involve differences in cooperative type, governance arrangement, professionalization level, or geographical context. Outcomes included individual and managerial capability, commitment, participation, governance effectiveness, resilience, innovation, productivity, organizational performance, financial outcomes, and member-related outcomes. The context covered cooperative organizations, with particular attention to rural, agricultural, farmer, and community-based cooperatives.

Eligibility criteria were established using the PICOC framework (Table 1). Studies were considered eligible when they (1) examined cooperative organizations or actors operating within cooperatives; (2) addressed at least one dimension related to HRM, human-resource development, human capital, managerial capability, leadership, professionalization, governance, or organizational capability; and (3) reported an organizationally relevant mechanism or outcome, including capability development, commitment, participation,

resilience, innovation, productivity, governance, or organizational performance. Studies referring to “cooperation” or “cooperative” in non-organizational contexts were excluded.

The review considered English-language peer-reviewed journal publications published between 2010 and 2026. Conference papers, books, book chapters, theses, editorials, and non-peer-reviewed publications were excluded. The review was delimited to publications from 2010 to 2026 to focus the synthesis on contemporary evidence relevant to current HRM, managerial professionalization, governance, and organizational-capability development in cooperatives. Earlier foundational literature was used where necessary to establish the theoretical background but was not included in the systematic evidence synthesis

Table 1. PICOC Framework

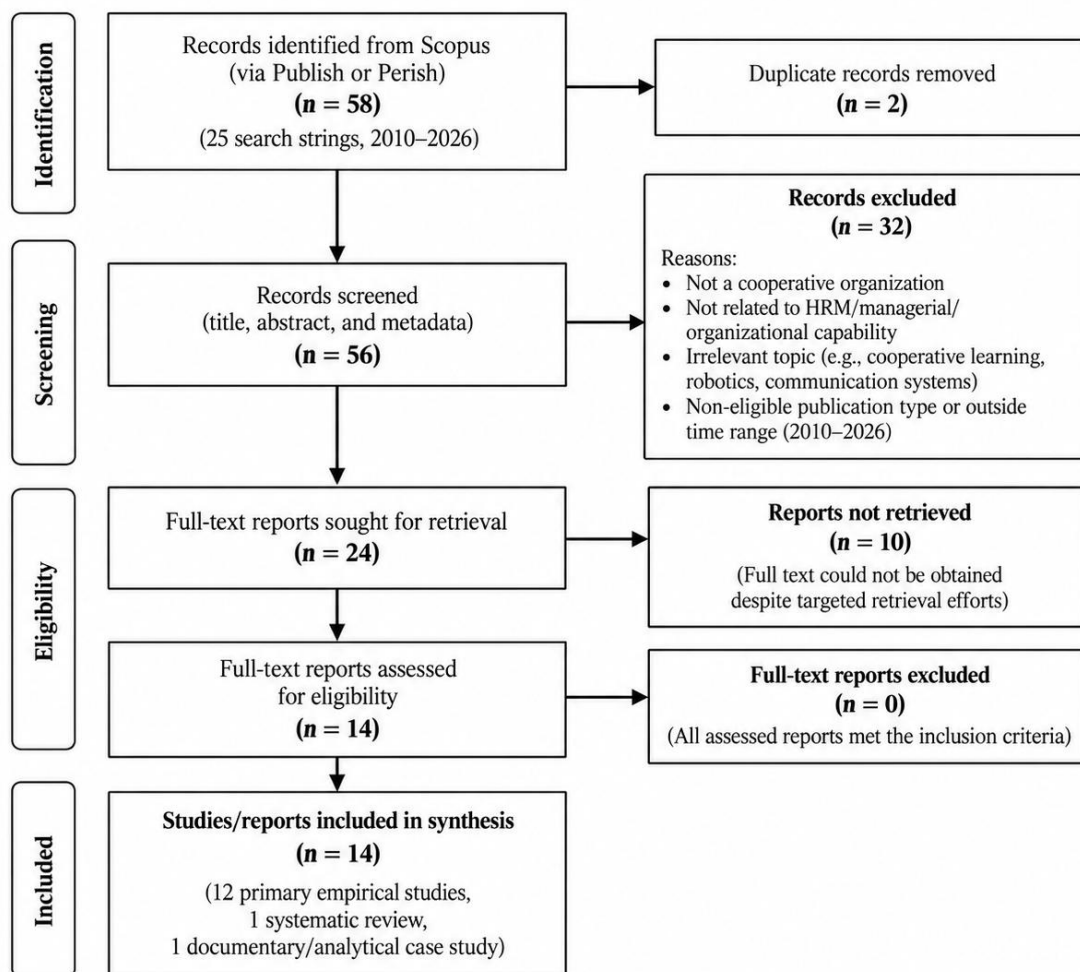
Element	Review scope
Population	Cooperative organizations, managers, employees, boards, and members
Intervention	HRM, HRD, human capital, managerial capability, leadership, professionalization, governance, organizational capability
Comparison	Optional; differences across cooperative types, governance arrangements, professionalization levels, or contexts
Outcomes	Capability, commitment, participation, governance, resilience, innovation, productivity, financial and organizational performance
Context	Cooperative settings, especially rural, agricultural, farmer, and community-based organizations

Review Design

The literature search was conducted in Scopus through Publish or Perish and covered publications from 2010 to 2026. Search terms were developed from the PICOC framework and were designed to capture literature related to HRM, human capital, managerial capability, leadership, professionalization, organizational capability, resilience, participation, and cooperative contexts. To increase search coverage, multiple targeted search combinations were used rather than relying on a single broad Boolean string.

A total of 25 search strings were applied: *cooperative AND "human resource management"*; *cooperative AND "human resource practices"*; *cooperative AND "human resource development"*; *cooperative AND "human capital"*; *cooperative AND training AND management*; *cooperative AND "managerial capability"*; *cooperative AND "managerial competence"*; *cooperative AND "management capability"*; *cooperative AND leadership AND management*; *cooperative AND professionalization*; *cooperative AND professionalisation*; *cooperative AND "professional management"*; *cooperative AND recruitment AND selection*; *cooperative AND "performance management"*; *cooperative AND "employee development"*; *cooperative AND "organizational capability"*; *cooperative AND "organizational resilience"*; *cooperative AND "member participation" AND management*; *"rural cooperative" AND management*; *"agricultural cooperative" AND management AND human*; *"farmer cooperative" AND management*; *"village cooperative" AND management*; *"community cooperative" AND management*; *"agricultural cooperative" AND leadership*; and *"farmer cooperative" AND training*. This multi-query strategy was intended to capture both

conventional HRM terminology and adjacent managerial or organizational-capability concepts that may be discussed in cooperative studies without being explicitly labeled as HRM.



Note: The flow diagram follows the PRISMA 2020 statement (Page et al. 2021).
The term “reports” is used to include empirical studies, a systematic review, and a documentary/analytical case study.

Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 Diagram Flow

The search identified 58 records. After removing two duplicates, 56 unique records remained for title, abstract, and bibliographic screening. Thirty-two records were excluded because they did not satisfy the eligibility criteria. Full-text retrieval was subsequently attempted for 24 reports, of which ten could not be retrieved and were recorded as reports not retrieved. The remaining 14 reports were assessed in full text and all met the inclusion criteria. The final evidence base comprised 14 included reports: 12 primary empirical studies, one systematic review, and one documentary/analytical case study. The complete study-selection process is presented in the PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1).

Data Extraction and Methodological Assessment

Full texts were systematically coded using a structured extraction matrix. The extracted information included study context, cooperative type, theoretical perspective, research design,

sample and data source, HRM practices, managerial and individual mechanisms, organizational capabilities, governance mechanisms, contextual conditions, outcomes, key findings, limitations, and future research recommendations. Because the included evidence comprised heterogeneous qualitative, quantitative, review, and documentary designs, methodological quality was not reduced to a single numerical score. Instead, a structured methodological-confidence assessment was conducted to determine the interpretive weight that could reasonably be assigned to each study.

The assessment considered (1) appropriateness of the research design for the stated question, (2) sampling and data adequacy, (3) measurement quality or qualitative procedural rigor, (4) analytical strategy, (5) consistency and transparency of reporting, (6) limitations on causal inference, and (7) correspondence between the evidence presented and the conclusions drawn. On this basis, studies were categorized as providing high, moderate, or low methodological confidence for synthesis purposes.

The confidence classifications were used to qualify interpretation rather than to exclude studies or generate numerical weights. Findings from lower-confidence or context-specific studies were retained when substantively relevant but were not allowed to override stronger evidence from more methodologically robust studies.

Results and Discussion

The systematic search identified 58 records. After two duplicate records were removed, 56 unique records remained for title, abstract, and bibliographic screening. Thirty-two records were excluded because they did not satisfy the predefined eligibility criteria. Full-text retrieval was subsequently attempted for 24 potentially eligible reports; ten reports could not be retrieved despite the retrieval procedures described in the Method section. Fourteen reports were therefore assessed in full text, and all satisfied the inclusion criteria and were retained in the final synthesis.

The final corpus comprised 12 primary empirical studies, one prior systematic review, and one documentary/analytical case study. The primary empirical studies constituted the principal evidence base for identifying recurring mechanisms and cross-study patterns. The prior systematic review by Chali and Lakatos (2024) was retained primarily for field positioning and contextual comparison rather than treated as an additional independent empirical confirmation, thereby reducing the risk of double counting evidence already represented in primary research. Similarly, the documentary analysis by Golovina et al. (2021) was used to illuminate professionalization practices, changing human-capital requirements, and organizational adaptation rather than as equivalent evidence of causal HRM effects.

The primary evidence covered worker, rural, agricultural, farmer, producer, and multi-sector cooperatives across Europe, Latin America, and Asia. Research designs were heterogeneous, including qualitative case studies, grounded-theory multiple-case research, cross-sectional surveys, structural equation modeling, path analysis, instrumental-variable estimation, and other observational approaches. This diversity allowed examination of cooperative professionalization from complementary perspectives but also limited direct comparability and precluded quantitative meta-analysis.

Direct empirical evidence from Indonesia was limited to Muhyi and Raharja (2026), who examined cooperatives in West Java. Their findings indicated positive associations of human resource development and organizational commitment with work productivity, with organizational commitment showing the stronger association. However, the small sample and inconsistencies in methodological reporting require cautious interpretation. Consequently, the Indonesian evidence currently provides contextual relevance rather than sufficient empirical validation of a broader professionalization model.

Table 2. Characteristics and Main Evidence of the Included Studies

Study	Context	Design	Key Result
Basterretxea et al. (2019)	Spain; worker cooperative	Longitudinal qualitative case; 25 interviews and documentary data	Democratic ownership can constrain professional HRM when member preferences override merit-based recruitment, performance control, and managerial authority.
Bustamante Salazar (2019)	Colombia; three worker cooperatives	Grounded-theory multiple-case study	Training, participation, equality, working conditions, and work–family balance supported agency, well-being, and solidarity capabilities.
Chali & Lakatos (2024)	International literature	Systematic literature review	HRM practices were associated with employee and organizational outcomes, although the reviewed evidence extended beyond strictly cooperative settings.
Rahiminejad et al. (2014)	Iran; rural cooperatives	Survey of 101 managing directors; regression and factor analysis	Manpower fit was the strongest predictor of HRM quality, alongside commitment, information/performance management, and flexibility.
Muhyi & Raharja (2026)	Indonesia; West Java cooperatives	Cross-sectional survey; n = 34; PLS	HR development and organizational commitment were positively related to productivity, while digital adaptation was comparatively weaker.
Golovina et al. (2021)	Arla Foods	Documentary/analytical case	Professional management, skill development, work flexibility, and technological change increased human-capital requirements.
Mantog & Deriada (2025)	Philippines; farmer/producer cooperatives	Survey; n = 201; regression and path analysis	Human capital correlated with performance but did not retain a direct effect when structural, social, and spiritual capital were considered.

Basterretxe a & Albizu (2011)	Spain; Mondragon Cooperative Group	Qualitative case study	Recruitment, development, evaluation, careers, compensation, knowledge management, and managerial mobility operated as an integrated managerial-development system.
Pavao & Rossetto (2015)	Brazil; multi-sector cooperatives	Survey; n = 171; SEM	Stakeholder-management capability was positively related to economic-financial and social-environmental performance.
Wang et al. (2025)	China; farmer cooperatives	Survey; n = 286; SEM and moderation analysis	Chairperson self-efficacy was associated with competitive advantage through planned and adaptive resilience.
Nguyen et al. (2023)	Vietnam; agricultural cooperatives	3,512 cooperatives; Probit, IV, and UQR	Board education and training were associated with internet use, which was related to financial, productivity, social, and innovation outcomes.
Huot et al. (2023)	Cambodia; agricultural cooperatives	FGDs and key-informant interviews	Leadership participation was constrained by capability gaps, domestic workload, and inadequate compensation despite formal access.
Luo et al. (2022)	China; 1,147 members of 148 cooperatives	Ordered Probit, IV, mediation, and heterogeneity analysis	Training increased green-production willingness partly through perceived applicability and benefit–cost perceptions.
Cao et al. (2025)	China; farmer cooperatives	Survey; n = 230; PLS-SEM	Organizational competency influenced digital-adoption intention partly through perceived ease of use, while perceived usefulness was the strongest predictor.

Source: *Proceed Data, 2026*

Methodological Profile of the Evidence

Seven studies were assessed as providing high methodological confidence, four moderate confidence, and three low confidence for synthesis purposes. These categories were used to qualify interpretation rather than to generate numerical weights or exclude substantively relevant evidence. Higher-confidence studies generally demonstrated stronger alignment between research questions and design, more adequate sampling or qualitative procedures, clearer measurement and analytical strategies, and greater correspondence between reported evidence and conclusions. Lower-confidence studies remained useful for contextual or exploratory purposes but were assigned more limited inferential weight.

The methodological profile nevertheless reveals important limitations in the evidence base. Much of the literature remains cross-sectional, perceptual, case-based, or intention-oriented. Qualitative studies provide comparatively rich explanations of governance tensions,

participation, managerial development, and HRM processes, whereas quantitative studies provide stronger evidence of associations and intermediate mechanisms involving human capital, digitalization, resilience, stakeholder management, and organizational outcomes. However, few studies examine the complete longitudinal sequence through which HRM practices develop individual capabilities, those capabilities become institutionalized at the organizational level, and organizational capabilities subsequently generate realized performance outcomes.

The distinction between intentions and realized behavior is particularly important. Luo et al. (2022) examined willingness to adopt green-production practices rather than sustained adoption, while Cao et al. (2025) examined digital-adoption intention rather than actual long-term technology use or organizational performance. Similarly, although Wang et al. (2025) provide evidence consistent with indirect relationships through organizational resilience, their cross-sectional design does not establish temporal causality. Nguyen et al. (2023) provide comparatively strong large-sample observational evidence and undertake endogeneity-related analyses, but their findings also warrant interpretation as observational rather than definitive causal estimates.

Several study-specific limitations further qualify interpretation. Mantog and Deriada (2025) provide useful evidence against a simple direct human-capital–performance logic, but their measurement and model-development procedures require caution. The Indonesian study by Muhyi and Raharja (2026) is contextually valuable but has a small sample and methodological-reporting inconsistencies. Golovina et al. (2021) provide useful documentary evidence concerning professionalization and digital transformation but cannot identify causal HRM effects. Chali and Lakatos (2024), meanwhile, are most appropriately treated as contextual review evidence because their included literature is not consistently restricted to cooperative organizations.

The evidence is therefore sufficiently convergent to identify recurring mechanisms and theoretically meaningful organizational patterns, but not sufficiently mature to establish a unified causal model of cooperative professionalization. The thematic findings that follow should consequently be interpreted as cross-study patterns and synthesis-derived mechanisms rather than causal relationships uniformly demonstrated across the included studies.

Thematic Synthesis

Cross-study comparison initially identified recurrent patterns concerning governance, managerial professionalization, capability conversion, participation and inclusion, digitalization, contextual heterogeneity, and multidimensional outcomes. Conceptually overlapping patterns were subsequently integrated into four higher-order themes: HRM–governance alignment in cooperative professionalization; integrated HRM and managerial talent architecture; the conversion of individual and managerial resources into organizational capabilities; and multidimensional and context-contingent cooperative effectiveness.

Institutional Alignment for Cooperative Professionalization

The first theme indicates that cooperative professionalization is not simply a skills problem but also an institutional alignment problem between professional management and cooperative governance. Democratic ownership can constrain recruitment, performance management, and managerial authority when member preferences override professional standards, as illustrated by the Fagor case (Basterretxea et al., 2019) .

However, cooperative governance can also reinforce professional HRM when participation, training, equality, and employee well-being are incorporated deliberately into management practices. Such arrangements can strengthen agency, well-being, and solidarity while remaining consistent with cooperative values (Bustamante Salazar, 2019) .

Stakeholder complexity adds another institutional dimension. Stakeholder-management capability was positively associated with both economic-financial and social-environmental performance, demonstrating that professional cooperative management must balance economic objectives with broader member and stakeholder interests (Pavao & Rossetto, 2015) .

Formal participation is also insufficient when members lack the capability or enabling conditions required to participate effectively. Education, confidence, domestic workload, time constraints, and compensation influenced access to cooperative leadership, indicating that formal equality does not necessarily produce substantive participation (Huot et al., 2023).

Taken together, these findings support the reviewer-derived concept of HRM–governance alignment. Professionalization requires merit-based staffing and sufficient managerial authority while simultaneously preserving accountability, cooperative values, democratic oversight, and meaningful participation.

Integrated HRM and Managerial Talent Architecture

The second theme demonstrates that professionalization extends beyond isolated training interventions. Evidence from Mondragon shows that recruitment, individualized development, evaluation, career progression, compensation, knowledge management, and managerial mobility can function as an integrated management-development system (Basterretxea & Albizu, 2011) .

Professional acquisition is particularly important. Manpower fit emerged as the strongest predictor of HRM quality in rural cooperatives, suggesting that professionalization begins with appropriate person–role matching rather than depending exclusively on subsequent training (Rahiminejad et al., 2014) . The Fagor case provides complementary evidence by demonstrating that weak merit safeguards during recruitment can create downstream HR problems that become difficult to correct later (Basterretxea et al., 2019) .

Digitalization adds further managerial requirements. Education and management-board training were positively associated with actual internet use, indicating that digital transformation depends partly on managerial and organizational competencies rather than technological availability alone (Nguyen et al., 2023) .

The review therefore organizes recurring HR functions into six interconnected domains: Acquire, Develop, Motivate and Engage, Lead, Govern, and Sustain. These domains

are synthesis-derived components intended to represent an integrated professionalization architecture rather than independently validated constructs.

From Human Resources to Organizational Capabilities

The third theme represents the central theoretical mechanism identified in the review. Human and managerial resources do not automatically translate into organizational performance. Their contribution depends on whether individually held knowledge, skills, attitudes, and leadership resources become embedded in organizational processes and collective capabilities.

Human capital was strongly associated with cooperative performance but did not retain an independent direct effect when structural, social, and spiritual capital were considered. Although this finding does not establish formal mediation, it is consistent with the proposition that individual resources acquire greater organizational value when they become embedded in collective structures and relationships (Mantog & Deriada, 2025).

Comparable mechanisms are evident in leadership and training research. Chairperson self-efficacy was associated with competitive advantage through planned and adaptive resilience, suggesting that individual leadership resources can become organizationally consequential when translated into collective adaptive capacities (Wang et al., 2025). Cooperative training similarly influenced green-production willingness partly through perceptions of technological applicability and benefit–cost value, indicating that knowledge acquisition alone does not determine subsequent behavioral responses (Luo et al., 2022).

Digital adoption follows a related pattern. Organizational competency influenced perceived ease of use, while perceived usefulness emerged as a strong predictor of digital-adoption intention. This suggests that technology-related outcomes depend on both organizational resources and users' interpretation of technological usefulness and manageability (Cao et al., 2025).

The synthesis therefore distinguishes individual and managerial capabilities from organizational capabilities. The former include competence, commitment, agency, self-efficacy, digital readiness, and stakeholder competence, whereas the latter include structural and knowledge capability, stakeholder-management capability, digital organizational capability, and planned or adaptive resilience.

This cross-level process is conceptualized in the review as HR-to-capability conversion. Integrated HR practices contribute to individual and managerial capability development, while sustained organizational value depends on whether these resources become institutionalized in collective routines, systems, relationships, and organizational capabilities.

Multidimensional and Context-Contingent Cooperative Effectiveness

The fourth theme concerns both the endpoint and contextual conditions of professionalization. Cooperative effectiveness extends beyond financial outcomes and includes productivity, member well-being, social performance, governance, participation, innovation, resilience, and competitive advantage.

Stakeholder-management capability was related to both economic-financial and social-environmental outcomes, while internet use was associated with financial performance, labor productivity, worker-related outcomes, and product innovation (Pavão & Rossetto, 2015; Nguyen et al., 2023). The benefits of organizational capabilities were not uniform across cooperatives. Digital gains varied across organizations, while environmental dynamism weakened some resilience-related advantages, indicating that similar capabilities may produce different outcomes under different organizational and environmental conditions (Nguyen et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2025).

Capability development was also influenced by education, family responsibilities, organizational resources, work arrangements, institutional support, and other contextual conditions. Professionalization should therefore be understood as context contingent rather than based on the assumption that identical practices will generate identical results across cooperative settings (Bustamante Salazar, 2019; Huot et al., 2023).

Based on these findings, the review synthesizes cooperative effectiveness into five domains: operational effectiveness, financial effectiveness, member/social effectiveness, governance effectiveness, and innovation/adaptive effectiveness. These domains represent a reviewer-derived synthesis rather than a validated multidimensional measurement scale.

Theoretical Integration: An Evidence-Informed Framework of Cooperative Professionalization

The four thematic findings can be integrated into a broader theoretical architecture by combining strategic HRM, resource- and capability-based reasoning, and cooperative-governance perspectives.

Strategic HRM explains how organizational systems acquire, develop, motivate, organize, and deploy human resources. Rather than treating individual HR practices as isolated interventions, strategic HRM emphasizes coherent systems through which human capital and employee motivation become relevant to organizational outcomes (Jiang et al., 2012; Lepak & Snell, 1999; Wright et al., 2001). The reviewed cooperative evidence extends this logic by suggesting that managerial recruitment, development, performance management, participation, leadership, knowledge continuity, and succession are more appropriately considered components of an integrated professionalization architecture.

Resource- and capability-based perspectives help explain why the possession of competent people is not sufficient. Human capital represents an organizational resource, but its strategic contribution depends on whether knowledge and competence can be deployed, combined, retained, and institutionalized (Lepak & Snell, 1999; Wright et al., 2001). Dynamic capability reasoning further emphasizes organizational processes through which resources are integrated and reconfigured under changing conditions (Teece et al., 1997). The HR-to-capability conversion pattern identified in this review operationalizes this theoretical problem at the cooperative level: individual and managerial resources become organizationally consequential when they are translated into structural, relational, stakeholder-management, digital, knowledge, and resilience capabilities.

Cooperative-governance theory adds an institutional boundary that distinguishes cooperative professionalization from conventional corporate HRM. Democratic ownership, participation, member accountability, and plural stakeholder interests influence how managerial authority and professional HR systems can legitimately operate (Cornforth, 2004; Spear, 2004). The findings of Basterretxea et al. (2019) and Bustamante Salazar (2019) show why this boundary is substantive rather than symbolic. Governance can either constrain professional HRM when role boundaries and merit safeguards are weak or reinforce professionalization when participation and cooperative values are translated into coherent organizational practices.

These theoretical perspectives suggest a five-layer architecture.

First, cooperative governance architecture provides the institutional setting. Member oversight, cooperative values, role clarity, managerial authority, accountability, and stakeholder relationships shape the conditions under which professional HR systems operate.

Second, integrated HRM architecture provides the organizational processes through which relevant human and managerial resources are acquired, developed, motivated, led, governed, and sustained.

Third, these processes influence individual and managerial capabilities, including competence, commitment, agency, self-efficacy, digital readiness, and stakeholder competence.

Fourth, organizational value depends on cross-level conversion through which individual capabilities become embedded in collective organizational capabilities such as structural and knowledge systems, stakeholder-management capability, digital organizational capability, and planned or adaptive resilience.

Fifth, these collective capabilities are associated with multidimensional cooperative effectiveness encompassing operational, financial, member/social, governance, and innovation/adaptive outcomes.

Contextual and institutional conditions surround this architecture rather than constituting a separate linear stage. Cooperative maturity, infrastructure, member characteristics, institutional support, technological conditions, business complexity, and environmental dynamism may strengthen, weaken, or alter relationships between the five layers.

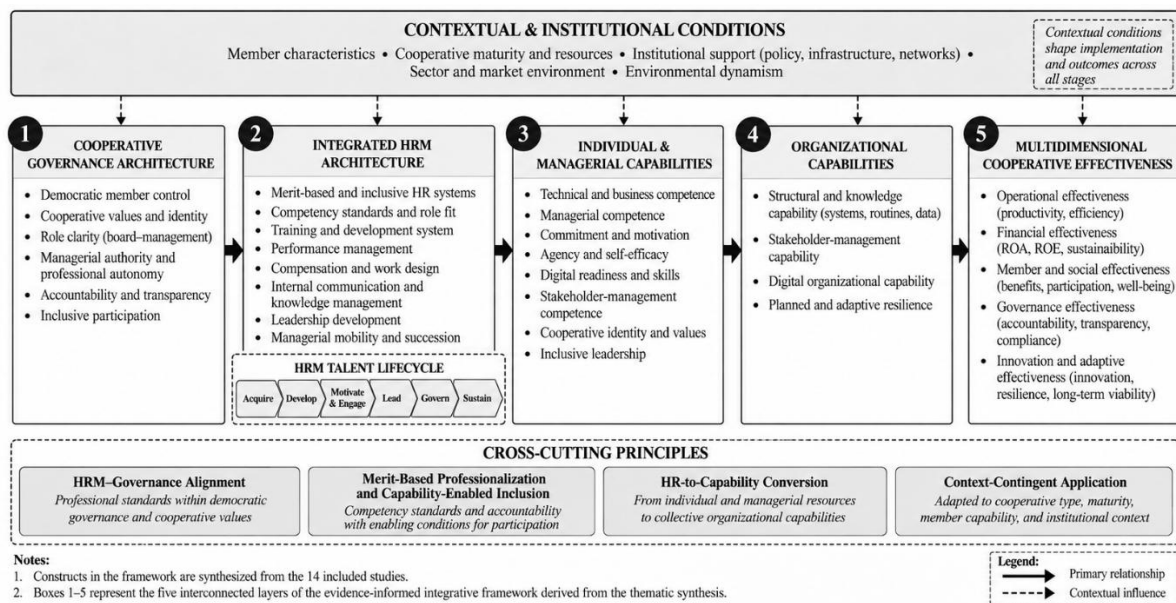


Figure 2. Evidence-Informed Integrative Framework for Cooperative Professionalization

The framework should be interpreted as an evidence-informed integrative architecture rather than a statistically validated causal model. The directional relationships represent synthesis-derived propositions supported by recurring patterns across heterogeneous studies, not pooled effect estimates. Similarly, contextual conditions represent theoretically and empirically plausible boundary conditions rather than moderators formally established across every relationship in the framework.

The framework contributes to existing cooperative HRM research by connecting three problems that have often been studied separately: the institutional alignment between professional HRM and cooperative governance, the conversion of individually held human resources into organizational capabilities, and the evaluation of professionalization through multidimensional rather than exclusively financial outcomes.

Contextual Translation to Indonesia's Village Cooperatives

The framework has particular relevance to Indonesia following the establishment of Koperasi Desa/Kelurahan Merah Putih (KDKMP). Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2025 established a coordinated national agenda for the formation, development, and revitalization of approximately 80,000 village and urban-village cooperatives and assigned responsibilities concerning business-model development, mentoring, education, and cooperative HR training (Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia, 2025a). The government subsequently formalized the establishment of 80,081 KDKMP entities in July 2025 (Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia, 2025b).

However, the international evidence synthesized in this review should not be interpreted as empirical validation of the framework for KDKMP. Direct Indonesian evidence remains limited, and the organizational characteristics of newly established village cooperatives differ from those of many established worker, agricultural, and producer cooperatives represented in

the evidence base. The implications that follow therefore constitute contextual translation of the synthesis rather than locally established causal effects.

A first implication concerns managerial acquisition. The evidence indicates that professionalization begins with appropriate person–role matching and credible merit safeguards. For KDKMP, local embeddedness and community legitimacy may remain important, but these attributes need not substitute for managerial competence. A defensible professionalization architecture would combine transparent eligibility standards, competency profiles, structured selection, cooperative-values orientation, and appropriate mechanisms for local participation. This approach follows the evidence that weak recruitment safeguards may create subsequent commitment and performance-management problems, whereas appropriate manpower fit is associated with stronger HRM quality (Basterretxea et al., 2019; Rahiminejad et al., 2014).

A second implication concerns the distinction between democratic oversight and operational management. KDKMP involves multiple actors, including members, boards, managers, village institutions, government agencies, and external business partners. The reviewed literature suggests that professional management is more likely to function effectively where decision rights, accountability, and role boundaries are clear. Democratic governance can remain authoritative at the oversight level while routine managerial decisions are subject to defined professional responsibilities and transparent accountability mechanisms.

Third, capability development should extend beyond activity-based training. Participation in training, completion of certification, or exposure to technical information represents an input rather than evidence of professionalization. The capability-conversion findings suggest that evaluation should examine whether learning changes managerial behavior, improves perceived applicability, strengthens decision processes, enters operating routines, contributes to organizational knowledge, and develops collective capabilities such as digital competence or resilience (Luo et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2025).

Fourth, professionalization and inclusion should not be treated as competing objectives. Huot et al. (2023) indicate that formal access to leadership can remain ineffective where potential participants face educational disadvantage, confidence gaps, time poverty, domestic responsibilities, or inadequate compensation. In KDKMP, inclusion may therefore require targeted capability development, transparent selection criteria, feasible work arrangements, and adequate economic conditions while maintaining minimum competency requirements.

Fifth, digitalization should be approached as an organizational-capability issue rather than primarily as technology provision. Nguyen et al. (2023) and Cao et al. (2025) indicate that education, managerial competency, perceived usefulness, usability, and organizational conditions influence digital utilization. For KDKMP, digital infrastructure and applications are therefore likely to generate greater value when accompanied by relevant managerial skills, specialist support, user-oriented systems, and integration into routine organizational processes.

Finally, implementation is unlikely to be equally effective under highly heterogeneous local conditions. Inpres No. 9 of 2025 itself recognizes variation in village characteristics, economic potential, and existing local economic institutions (Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia, 2025a). The synthesis similarly indicates that capability development varies

according to resources, cooperative maturity, education, infrastructure, institutional support, environmental dynamism, and participant characteristics. A context-contingent model would therefore distinguish between minimum professional standards that can be standardized and implementation mechanisms that need adaptation to local organizational conditions.

Research Gaps and Future Research Agenda

Five interrelated research gaps emerge from the synthesis. An HRM–governance integration gap remains because professional HR systems and democratic cooperative governance are rarely examined as an integrated organizational configuration. Future studies should investigate how managerial autonomy, board oversight, merit-based staffing, accountability, and member participation can be configured simultaneously.

An HR-to-capability conversion gap also persists. Human capital, training, leadership, digital competency, stakeholder capability, and resilience have been examined in separate research streams, but few studies trace how HR practices initially shape individual and managerial capabilities and how those capabilities subsequently become institutionalized at the organizational level.

A third gap concerns the integration of professionalization practices. Recruitment, development, evaluation, compensation, managerial mobility, succession, and knowledge management are often examined separately, despite evidence that their organizational effects may depend on their configuration as a coherent managerial talent system.

A contextual translation and heterogeneity gap further limits generalization across cooperative forms. Evidence obtained from established worker, agricultural, or farmer cooperatives cannot automatically be transferred to newly established village cooperatives. Future studies should therefore distinguish broadly transferable professional principles from implementation mechanisms that depend on cooperative maturity, member characteristics, governance arrangements, resources, and institutional support.

Finally, the evidence base is characterized by a longitudinal and multilevel gap. Cross-sectional, perceptual, case-based, and intention-oriented designs dominate the current literature, limiting understanding of how professionalization develops over time and across individual, managerial, and organizational levels.

For the Indonesian context, future research could examine whether governance and HRM arrangements in KDKMP contribute to managerial capability development, whether these capabilities become institutionalized in organizational routines and collective capabilities, and whether these changes are subsequently associated with operational, financial, member/social, governance, and innovation/adaptive outcomes. Multi-wave, multi-source, multilevel, and where feasible quasi-experimental designs would provide stronger evidence than single-wave managerial surveys.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The review makes three main theoretical contributions. First, it reframes cooperative professionalization as an HRM–governance alignment problem rather than the simple transfer of conventional corporate HR practices into cooperative organizations. Professionalization

therefore requires professional managerial systems to operate in ways that remain compatible with democratic oversight and cooperative values.

Second, the review distinguishes human and managerial resources from organizational capabilities. Skills, training, commitment, agency, self-efficacy, and managerial competence are valuable resources, but the synthesis suggests that their organizational contribution depends on whether they become embedded in routines, knowledge systems, stakeholder-management processes, digital capabilities, and organizational resilience.

Third, the review broadens the endpoint of cooperative HRM from financial performance toward multidimensional cooperative effectiveness. Professionalization should therefore be evaluated in relation to operational, financial, member/social, governance, and innovation/adaptive outcomes rather than through a single performance measure.

Practically, the findings suggest that cooperative-development programs should move beyond activity-based indicators such as the number of managers recruited, participants trained, certificates issued, or digital technologies distributed. Such indicators demonstrate program activity but do not necessarily demonstrate professionalization.

More meaningful evaluation should examine whether individual competence is transferred into actual managerial behavior and subsequently institutionalized in organizational routines, decision systems, knowledge continuity, stakeholder-management practices, digital use, governance quality, and sustained cooperative outcomes.

Overall, the synthesis suggests that developing capable people is only the starting point of cooperative professionalization. Individual competence becomes strategically valuable when it is embedded in organizational capabilities within a governance system that balances professional management, accountability, democratic participation, and cooperative values. This provides the central theoretical basis for the evidence-informed framework and a structured agenda for subsequent empirical validation in Indonesia's village-cooperative context.

Conclusion

This systematic literature review synthesized evidence on HRM, managerial capability, governance, and organizational capability in cooperative organizations and developed an evidence-informed framework for cooperative professionalization. Based on 14 included studies, the review identified four interconnected themes: institutional alignment for cooperative professionalization, integrated HRM and managerial talent architecture, HR-to-capability conversion, and multidimensional and context-contingent cooperative effectiveness.

The synthesis shows that professionalization cannot be reduced to training or human-capital development alone. Professional HR practices need to operate within governance arrangements that balance democratic member oversight, managerial authority, accountability, and cooperative values. At the same time, individual competence, commitment, self-efficacy, and digital readiness become organizationally meaningful when they are embedded in collective routines, knowledge systems, stakeholder-management processes, digital capabilities, and organizational resilience. Cooperative effectiveness should therefore be

understood multidimensionally, encompassing operational, financial, member/social, governance, and innovation/adaptive outcomes.

For Indonesia's emerging village cooperatives, particularly KDKMP, the findings suggest that large-scale institutional establishment should be accompanied by competency-based managerial selection, integrated capability development, clear governance roles, inclusive access to managerial opportunities, knowledge continuity, and context-sensitive implementation. Training participation, certification, or technology provision alone should not be treated as evidence of successful professionalization.

The proposed framework is evidence-informed rather than causally validated. The current literature remains constrained by cross-sectional, case-based, perceptual, and intention-oriented designs, while direct evidence from Indonesian village cooperatives remains limited. Future research should therefore employ longitudinal, multi-source, and multilevel designs to examine how HRM and governance arrangements develop managerial capabilities, how these capabilities become institutionalized at the organizational level, and how they contribute to multidimensional cooperative effectiveness.

Author Contributions Statement

MI: Conceptualization, methodology, literature search, screening and study selection, data extraction, evidence synthesis, framework development, visualization, writing original draft, and writing review and editing. MNH: Methodology, validation, interpretation of findings, supervision, critical review, writing review and editing, and final approval of the manuscript. MI and MNH: Approved the final version of the manuscript and agreed to be accountable for the integrity and accuracy of the work.

AI Usage Statement

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in this study strictly for supportive purposes, including language editing, grammar checking, and improving the clarity and readability of the manuscript. AI was not used to generate the core research ideas, conduct substantive analysis, interpret the reviewed evidence, or formulate scholarly conclusions. All methodological decisions, evidence synthesis, interpretations, and conclusions remain the responsibility of the author. The author also assumes full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and academic integrity of the manuscript. In accordance with established ethical standards in academic publishing, AI tools are not credited as authors or contributors.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest related to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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