

THE DYNAMICS OF INCENTIVE POLICY FOR RELIGIOUS PRACTITIONERS: A HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE IN BONTANG CITY

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the dynamics of incentive policies for religious practitioners in Bontang City from a Human Resource Management (HRM) perspective. Religious practitioners play a vital role in fostering public morality, strengthening social cohesion, and providing religious education, while local governments design incentive policies to encourage their active involvement. This research applies a qualitative case study approach, collecting data through in-depth interviews with religious practitioners, government officials, and community leaders, as well as document analysis related to Human Resource Management (HRM) practices and policy frameworks in the religious sector. The findings reveal that incentive policies significantly contribute to enhancing the motivation, performance, and engagement of religious practitioners. However, their effectiveness is constrained by inconsistent implementation, unclear procedures, weak inter-agency coordination, and limited alignment between policy design and the actual needs of practitioners. Furthermore, professionally structured incentive policies can foster the professionalization of religious practitioners and improve the quality of public services. This study provides empirical evidence of the relationship between incentive policies and Human Resource Management (HRM) practices in the religious sector, while offering strategic recommendations to develop policies that are more responsive, fair, and sustainable. The results are expected to serve as a reference for decision-making in religious institutions and support social harmony through strengthening the role of religious practitioners.

Keywords: Incentive Policy, Religious Practitioners, Human Resource Management, Bontang City

1. Introduction

Background of the Study

Religion plays a fundamental role in the life of the Indonesian nation. For a long time, religious values have been regarded as the foundation of morality, ethics, and social order (Geertz, 1976). In the context of community development, religious practitioners act as agents of change who not only convey spiritual teachings but also instill humanistic values, tolerance, and social integration. Their presence is crucial in strengthening collective awareness, maintaining social harmony, and serving as a pillar in fostering a society with strong moral character.

The role of religious practitioners becomes particularly strategic in areas with high social diversity, such as Bontang City, known for its pluralism in ethnicity, culture, and religion. This high level of heterogeneity can lead to potential social friction or conflict if not managed properly, making religious practitioners important social glue capable of maintaining community harmony. Through various activities, from preaching and education to community service, they not only communicate spiritual values but also serve as mediators bridging differences and fostering understanding among groups. Thus, the presence of religious practitioners contributes significantly to social cohesion, strengthens community solidarity,

and reduces potential conflicts, turning diversity into a social asset that supports inclusive and harmonious community development.

According to the Bontang City Regional Secretariat's Community Welfare Division, the number of active religious practitioners reaches 2,153 individuals, including muballighs, ustadz/ustadzah, mosque imams, mushalla imams, mosque caretakers, Sunday school teachers, pastors, Hindu religious teachers, and pinandita. This substantial number demonstrates the extensive role of religious practitioners in maintaining Bontang's socio-religious life. Their presence is not only a driving force for religious activities but also plays a key role in reinforcing social harmony and fostering moral resilience amidst complex socio-economic dynamics.

Although religious practitioners have a strategic role in fostering moral, social, and spiritual values in society, their welfare often does not match the contributions they provide. Many perform their duties with high dedication yet face financial limitations that may affect long-term motivation and commitment to religious service. This condition underscores the importance of adequate support through policies designed to recognize and encourage the vital role of religious practitioners, ensuring that their contributions are not only symbolically acknowledged but also tangibly reinforced, positively impacting their sustained engagement and community welfare.

In response, incentive policies have been introduced as a form of local government attention toward religious practitioners. In Bontang City, the government provides incentives to muballighs, ustadz/ustadzah, mosque imams, mushalla imams, mosque caretakers, Sunday school teachers, pastors, Hindu religious teachers, and pinandita figures as recognition for their contributions to community development. According to Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government, providing incentives to socio-religious actors falls within regional authority in improving community welfare. Such support is expected to enhance motivation and professionalism among religious practitioners.

The implementation of incentive policies in Bontang City still faces significant challenges, such as delays in disbursement and limited dissemination regarding mechanisms and entitlements. These issues raise questions about the extent to which incentives can improve motivation, strengthen performance, and maintain the commitment of religious practitioners. Additionally, limitations in administrative capacity and inter-agency coordination may lead to irregularities in recipient data, causing some eligible practitioners to receive support belatedly. This aligns with human resource management principles emphasizing that incentives are crucial for feedback and motivation. For incentives to function optimally, organizational leaders must ensure clarity in mechanisms, orderly implementation, and adherence to fairness and eligibility principles so that both organizational goals and individual motivation can be achieved (Rivai & Sagala, 2014). By applying these principles, incentives serve not merely as symbolic recognition but as a tangible impetus that strengthens the role of religious practitioners and enhances the effectiveness of their contributions to society.

Moreover, incentives function not only as material rewards but also as strategic human resource management tools to boost loyalty, dedication, and service quality. This is in line with Dessler (2020), who posits that an appropriate compensation system acts as a motivational tool to achieve organizational goals, drive individual performance, and maximize employee contributions to organizational vision and mission. In the context of religious practitioners, this principle highlights that incentive policies should be designed to support competence enhancement, professionalism, and the quality of religious services to the community, fulfilling both material needs and reinforcing long-term commitment and performance.

Based on these conditions, this study aims to explore the dynamics of incentive policies for religious practitioners in Bontang City. Its main focus is to describe policy implementation, analyze its impact on motivation and performance, and identify factors influencing its effectiveness. Consequently, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between incentive policies and human resource management in the religious sector.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on human resource management, particularly in the context of managing human resources in socio-religious sectors. Practically, the results provide valuable insights for the Bontang City Government in formulating more responsive, fair, and sustainable incentive policies, enabling religious practitioners to optimally support community development.

Research Questions

In regional development, religious practitioners hold an important position as social agents shaping morality, ethics, and societal stability. The Bontang City Government has formulated incentive policies to support this strategic role. However, practical implementation raises several unresolved questions. One primary issue concerns how incentive policies are applied in the field, whether they align with the needs of religious practitioners, and how the government manages the distribution mechanisms to ensure effectiveness and precision. These questions are critical because public policy implementation often faces technical and administrative challenges that can affect its effectiveness.

From a human resource management perspective, it is essential to assess the extent to which incentives enhance motivation, loyalty, and performance among religious practitioners. In management literature, incentives are viewed as a key instrument for boosting work enthusiasm and individual productivity. However, in the socio-religious sector, the influence of incentives is not always linear, as practitioners' motivation is often shaped by intrinsic factors such as moral calling and service dedication. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze in depth whether incentive policies in Bontang City truly act as performance drivers or merely serve as administrative recognition.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of incentives for religious practitioners is influenced by internal and external factors. Internal factors include the quality of planning and human resource management by local authorities, which determine policy success. External factors involve practitioners' perceptions of fairness, community support, and socio-religious dynamics in Bontang City. Identifying these factors is vital to understanding obstacles that must be addressed and opportunities that can be leveraged to enhance the quality of human resource management for religious practitioners through incentive policies.

Based on the above, the study formulates three main research questions:

1. How are incentives for religious practitioners implemented in Bontang City from a human resource management perspective?
2. To what extent do incentives affect the motivation, loyalty, and performance of religious practitioners?
3. What factors influence the effectiveness of incentives in improving the quality of human resources among religious practitioners?

These questions serve as the foundation for understanding the dynamics of incentive policies comprehensively. Answering them will provide a detailed picture of the incentive policy landscape in Bontang City and analyze its relationship with human resource management, particularly regarding motivation and performance.

Research Objectives

This study aims to uncover the dynamics of incentive policies for religious practitioners in Bontang City, emphasizing human resource management perspectives. Incentives provided by local authorities are important instruments for supporting the roles of religious practitioners, both as moral guides, social harmony maintainers, and strategic government partners in fostering religious life. However, these policies are not merely administrative measures but strategic human resource management tools requiring proper planning, implementation, and evaluation. The study, therefore, focuses on examining how effectively these policies operate and their influence on the quality of religious practitioners as key human resources in social development.

Additionally, the study aims to analyze how incentives impact motivation, loyalty, and performance. In Human Resource Management (HRM) theory, incentives are regarded as primary tools for enhancing performance. However, for religious practitioners, motivation stems not only from material factors but also from spiritual and moral considerations. This complexity makes it important to understand the interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and how incentives can strengthen the quality of religious service. Consequently, the study not only describes incentive policies but also evaluates their effects on human resource performance.

Furthermore, the study aims to identify factors supporting or hindering the effectiveness of incentive policies in Bontang City. Internal factors, such as policy planning, bureaucratic capacity, and budget availability, and external factors, such as community perceptions, institutional support, and socio-religious dynamics, determine policy success. By examining these factors, the study intends to provide strategic recommendations that are academically and practically valuable for local government in formulating more targeted, sustainable policies that enhance the quality of human resources among religious practitioners.

Specifically, the research objectives are:

1. To describe the implementation of incentive policies for religious practitioners in Bontang City, including planning, distribution mechanisms, and forms of incentives.
2. To analyze the impact of incentive policies on motivation and performance, including the balance between extrinsic (material) and intrinsic (spiritual) motivation.
3. To identify factors influencing the effectiveness of incentive policies, both from internal bureaucratic and external community perspectives, providing a basis for strategic policy improvements.

Significance of the Study

This study is expected to contribute to the development of knowledge, particularly in human resource management and public policy. It enriches the literature on incentives as Human Resource Management (HRM) tools applied in the religious sector, which has received limited attention in academic studies. Focusing on religious practitioners in Bontang City, the study offers new insights into how incentives function not only as economic support but also as social recognition for contributions to the community. Furthermore, it can serve as a basis for developing theories linking public policy and work motivation in non-profit or socio-religious sectors, extending the application of Human Resource Management (HRM) and motivational theories beyond corporate or profit-based contexts.

Practically, the study provides direct benefits. For the Bontang City Government, it offers valuable input for evaluating existing incentive policies and formulating improvements to ensure effectiveness, transparency, and sustainability. The findings can enhance governance, including budget planning, distribution mechanisms, and monitoring and evaluation systems.

For religious practitioners, the study strengthens their position in public policy, helping them understand the impact of incentives on motivation and performance while encouraging professionalism and quality service. The broader community benefits through improved religious services, as well-managed incentives foster commitment, contributing to spiritual, social, and moral development. Thus, the study's significance extends beyond academia and implementation to social dimensions, promoting religious harmony in Bontang City.

Research Originality

Studies on incentive policies have primarily focused on formal sectors, while research on the socio-religious realm remains limited, especially regarding religious practitioners as non-formal actors fostering morality, spirituality, and social cohesion. This study positions incentive policies for religious practitioners in Bontang City as the object of analysis from an Human Resource Management (HRM) perspective, differing from previous research that emphasized administrative or quantitative aspects.

The originality of this research is evident in several aspects: its specific focus on religious practitioners, the analysis linking incentives to motivation, loyalty, and performance, the qualitative case study methodology, and its contribution of new perspectives to Human Resource Management (HRM) and public policy literature. Consequently, this study fills a gap in the literature on incentive policies in the socio-religious sector and provides an empirical basis for developing theories and Human Resource Management (HRM) practices in non-profit contexts.

2. Literature Review

The literature review in this study discusses three main aspects: human resource management (HRM) theories related to motivation and rewards, the role of religious practitioners in society, and a review of previous studies concerning support and appreciation for practitioners within social and religious contexts. This approach aims to build a solid theoretical framework while providing an empirical foundation for analyzing policies of recognition and support for religious practitioners in Bontang City. The review emphasizes that recognition is not limited to formal acknowledgment but also includes social appreciation and capacity development that can enhance individuals' intrinsic motivation. The literature suggests that recognition plays a strategic role in fostering social engagement, increasing loyalty, and strengthening the commitment of practitioners in performing their community roles. In the religious context, rewards carry complex dimensions as they touch upon moral, spiritual, and social aspects.

Human Resource Management Theories Related to Motivation and Rewards

Work motivation is a key factor influencing individual and organizational performance. Maslow (1954), through his hierarchy of needs theory, explains that recognition and rewards fulfill basic, social, and self-actualization needs, thereby promoting improved performance. Herzberg (1959), through his two-factor theory, distinguishes between hygiene factors such as working conditions and motivator factors, such as achievement and recognition. Rewards are more effective when accompanied by social acknowledgment that fosters intrinsic motivation. Vroom (1964) asserts that motivation arises when individuals believe that their efforts lead to performance, that performance leads to outcomes, and that those outcomes hold personal value. Deci & Ryan (2013) emphasize the importance of intrinsic motivation, which can be reinforced through recognition, appreciation, and opportunities to contribute. Based on these theories,

rewards serve dual functions: enhancing intrinsic motivation, affirming the practitioners' social roles, and sustaining their commitment to the community.

The Role of Religious Practitioners in Society

Religious practitioners hold a strategic position in maintaining moral, spiritual, and social values. Geertz (1976) stated that religion is a system of meaning that guides social action, positioning religious practitioners as moral agents, social mediators, drivers of solidarity, and ethical role models. In Bontang City, religious practitioners are involved in moral education, community strengthening, the performance of religious rituals, and social advocacy. This broad range of roles demonstrates that their contribution is not merely spiritual but also deeply social. Therefore, recognition and development programs can be seen as both acknowledgment of their service and motivation to sustain their strategic role in society.

Previous Studies on Rewards and Support for Practitioners

Previous studies have consistently shown that recognition, appreciation, and institutional support are positively correlated with motivation and individual performance. Hasibuan, M. S. (2003) and Sedarmayanti (2001) emphasized that intrinsic motivation and social recognition play equally important roles in maintaining work commitment. However, studies focusing specifically on religious practitioners remain limited, as most prior research has concentrated on government employees or educators. This indicates a research gap—namely, the lack of studies exploring the dynamics of rewards and support for religious practitioners and their effects on motivation, social engagement, and perceptions at the local level.

Thus, this literature review provides both a conceptual and empirical foundation for assessing the implementation of recognition and development policies for religious practitioners in Bontang City. Rewards and support function to strengthen intrinsic motivation, enhance social engagement, and maintain practitioners' commitment to fulfilling their roles effectively and sustainably.

Table 1. Summary of Literature Review: Motivation, Incentives, and the Role of Religious Practitioners

No	Topic / Subtopic	Researcher & Year	Focus / Theory	Key Findings	Relevance to This Study
1	Motivation & Incentive Theory	Maslow (1954)	Hierarchy of Needs	Incentives fulfill basic to social needs	Theoretical basis for incentives' effect on practitioners' motivation
2	Motivation & Incentive Theory	Herzberg (1959)	Two-Factor Theory	Incentives are effective when paired with motivator rewards	Highlights the importance of social recognition alongside financial rewards
3	Motivation & Incentive Theory	Vroom (1964)	Expectancy Theory	Motivation arises when effort → performance → valued outcome	Explains incentives as reinforcement of performance expectations
4	Motivation & Incentive Theory	Deci & Ryan (2013)	Self-Determination Theory	Recognition enhances intrinsic motivation	Relevant for religious practitioners driven by moral calling

No	Topic / Subtopic	Researcher & Year	Focus / Theory	Key Findings	Relevance to This Study
5	Role of Religious Practitioners	Geertz (1976)	Religion as a System of Meaning	Religious practitioners act as moral and social agents	Shows the relevance of incentives in strengthening social roles
6	Previous Research	Hasibuan, M. S. (2003)	Human Resource Management	Intrinsic motivation is essential	Supports the need for non-financial incentives
7	Previous Research	Sedarmayanti (2001)	Human Resource Management	Social recognition reinforces loyalty	Important for socially engaged religious practitioners

3. Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of incentive policies for religious practitioners in Bontang City. This approach was selected because it allows the researcher to examine the processes, meanings, and social interactions emerging from policy implementation, rather than merely measuring relationships between variables. The case study provides the opportunity to understand the local context, the experiences of the subjects, and the impact of policies on the motivation, loyalty, and performance of religious practitioners in a holistic manner. The research emphasizes exploring the perspectives of religious practitioners as beneficiaries and government officials as policy implementers, enabling an in-depth understanding of social interactions, actual practices, and implementation experiences.

The research subjects consist of two main groups. The first group includes religious practitioners, such as muballigh, ustadz/ustadzah, mosque/mushalla imams, Sunday school teachers, pastors, Hindu teachers, and pinandita. The second group comprises local government officials involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of incentive policies. From a total of 2,153 religious practitioners in Bontang City, 5 individuals representing five different categories of religious practitioners were selected, while 3 government officials were chosen based on their direct involvement in the policy. Subject selection was conducted purposively, with criteria including a minimum of three years of experience in religious activities or direct involvement in implementing incentive policies. Recommendations from religious organizations and official government records were also utilized to ensure representativeness and relevance of the research subjects.

Data collection was conducted through methodological triangulation, including semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Interviews were used to explore the perceptions, experiences, and meanings perceived by the informants, with each session lasting 60–90 minutes. Participatory observation enabled the researcher to record actual practices of the practitioners that might not emerge during interviews, while document analysis examined formal regulations, activity reports, and incentive recipient data to compare written policies with their field implementation. The combination of these techniques enhances data validity, analytical depth, and contextual understanding, allowing the policy dynamics to be comprehensively understood.

Data analysis was conducted thematically, beginning with transcriptions of interviews and observation notes, repeated readings to identify patterns, coding, grouping into categories, and

finally constructing descriptive narratives. For example, the informant's statement "Incentives make me more motivated" was coded as "work motivation." Similar codes were combined into the category "impact of incentives on performance," which subsequently formed the main theme "Effectiveness of Incentive Policies." This approach allows a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon, linking the subjective experiences of practitioners with policy implementation while understanding social relationships and local human resource management.

Data validity and reliability were maintained through source and method triangulation, member checks with three religious practitioners and two government officials, and prolonged engagement in the field. An audit trail was used to document the entire research process, including transcriptions, codes, and analytical decisions. Official documents were verified to compare field data with administrative records. This strategy ensures that the data obtained are valid, consistent, and trustworthy, thereby contributing both academically and practically to the management of religious practitioners in Bontang City.

4. Result and Discussion

This study found that the incentive policy for religious practitioners in Bontang City has become a local government strategy to strengthen their roles in social and religious life. Religious practitioners encompass various categories across faiths, including muballighs, ustadz/ustadzah, mosque imams, mushalla imams, mosque caretakers, Sunday school teachers, pastors, Hindu teachers, and pinandita figures. Incentives are provided not merely as a form of appreciation but also as a means of enhancing motivation, performance, and loyalty in carrying out their religious and social roles.

Findings from interviews, observations, and the analysis of government documents indicate that the implementation of this policy, while routine, faces several administrative and technical challenges. Delays in disbursement, lengthy verification procedures, and suboptimal inter-agency coordination affect the continuity of practitioners' motivation. A muballigh expressed: "This incentive is very helpful, but the disbursement often comes late. If it could be on time, we would be able to focus more on preaching." (Muballigh, Islamic Religious Practitioner, Bontang City, 2025)

This highlights the need for a more comprehensive human resource management strategy to maximize the impact of incentives. While incentives help practitioners meet their basic needs, allowing them to focus on their religious roles, their influence on long-term loyalty and performance is not always linear unless complemented with other forms of support such as social recognition, capacity building, and training opportunities. A ustadz explained: "Incentives alone make our spirit fluctuate. But when there are trainings or capacity building programs, we feel more developed." (Ustadz, Islamic Religious Practitioner, Bontang City, 2025)

These findings align with Herzberg's theory, which positions incentives as hygiene factors—preventing dissatisfaction but not serving as the primary drivers of intrinsic motivation. Thus, a combination of incentives, social recognition, and capacity development emerges as a crucial strategy to sustain motivation and ensure optimal performance.

The study further emphasizes that capacity building, training opportunities, and social support play significant roles in strengthening practitioner engagement. A Sunday school teacher remarked: "For us, incentives are not only about the money, but a sign of the government's attention. That boosts our enthusiasm to guide the children." (Sunday School Teacher, Christian Religious Practitioner, Bontang City, 2025)

Integrating incentive policies with human resource development programs is therefore necessary to ensure more comprehensive and sustainable impacts, while also fostering consistent professionalism among practitioners. Comparisons with previous literature demonstrate the consistency of Bontang City's incentive policies with prior studies. Hasibuan highlighted the role of incentives in maintaining basic satisfaction. Rivai underscored the importance of social recognition and capacity development. Dhiona Ayu Nani and Cinthia Annisa Vinahapsari (2020) further argued that the effectiveness of incentives is not determined solely by their amount, but also by the fairness, transparency, and sustainability of distribution mechanisms. Nevertheless, local challenges such as delayed disbursements and perceptions of unfairness necessitate adjustments to ensure that the policy remains relevant to the practitioners' needs.

Implementation of Incentive Policy

The implementation of the incentive policy in Bontang City includes regular disbursements and supplementary support, although the latter remains limited. Incentives are distributed through administrative mechanisms involving data verification by relevant agencies. In practice, practitioners often experience lengthy procedures and delayed disbursements, which may undermine their motivation. A pinandita noted:

"We hope that the incentives will be distributed fairly, so that no one is left behind." (Pinandita, Hindu Religious Practitioner, Bontang City, 2025)

From the government's perspective, an official in the Religious Practitioners Program of the Welfare Section explained:

"We always verify the data to ensure that the incentives truly reach those who are entitled. Sometimes, this procedure causes delays in disbursement." (Program Officer for Religious Practitioners, Welfare Section, Bontang City, 2025)

A policy analyst from the Mental and Spiritual Development Division of the Welfare Section added:

"We acknowledge the technical obstacles, but every year the distribution mechanism is evaluated to ensure faster and more accurate delivery." (Policy Analyst, Mental and Spiritual Development, Welfare Section, Bontang City, 2025)

The following table presents the categories of religious practitioners in Bontang City by religion and role:

Table 2. Categories of Religious Practitioners in Bontang City by Religion and Role

No	Religion	Category of Religious Practitioner	Number of Persons	Description
1	Islam	Muballigh	133	Preachers of dakwah/tabligh
2	Islam	Ustadz/Ustadzah	494	Teachers in Islamic study groups/TPA
3	Islam	Mosque Imam	75	Leaders of prayers in mosques
4	Islam	Mushalla Imam	38	Leaders of prayers in mushallas
5	Islam	Mosque Caretaker	74	Responsible for mosque maintenance and cleanliness
6	Christian	Sunday School Teacher	139	Teachers for children in Sunday school
7	Christian	Pastor	20	Congregational worship leaders
8	Hindu	Hindu Teacher	10	Hindu religious educators (Weda, Dharma)
9	Hindu	Pinandita	11	Leaders of Hindu rituals and ceremonies
Total			2,153	

Source: Processed data from interviews and documents, Bontang City Public Welfare Section, 2025

Analysis shows that while regular incentives are provided, capacity development support remains limited, and administrative mechanisms require simplification. In the long run, practitioners' motivation is more influenced by social recognition and capacity-building initiatives.

Impact on Motivation, Loyalty, and Performance

The impact of incentive policies on practitioners' motivation, loyalty, and performance is not always linear. Incentives help meet basic needs, but social recognition and capacity development play more significant roles in building long-term commitment. A pastor explained:

"We feel appreciated through the incentives. Although the amount is small, it increases our sense of responsibility." (Pastor, Christian Religious Practitioner, Bontang City, 2025)

A Sunday school teacher shared a similar view:

"The incentive is not about the amount, but a sign of the government's concern that motivates us to guide the children more passionately." (Sunday School Teacher, Christian Religious Practitioner, Bontang City, 2025)

However, the effect of incentives without complementary support is limited. A ustadz said:

"When there is coaching, training, or direct attention from the government, our motivation is sustained better than with incentives alone." (Ustadz, Islamic Religious Practitioner, Bontang City, 2025)

Thus, combining incentives with capacity building helps maintain basic motivation while enhancing performance quality sustainably.

Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Incentive Policy

The effectiveness of incentive policies is influenced by the transparency of mechanisms, fairness of distribution, program continuity, and integration with human resource strategies. The Head of the Welfare Section of Bontang City emphasized:

"Our principle is accountability. Since this comes from the regional budget, every recipient must be clearly identified and recorded." (Head of Welfare Section, Bontang City, 2025)

Meanwhile, a policy analyst from the Mental and Spiritual Development Division added:

"We always strive to conduct evaluations so that the incentives are not merely routine, but truly impactful for practitioners' motivation." (Policy Analyst, Mental and Spiritual Development, Welfare Section, Bontang City, 2025)

Table 3. Factors Affecting the Effectiveness of Incentive Policies for Religious Practitioners in Bontang City

No	Effectiveness Aspect/Factor	Findings in Bontang City	Supporting Literature/Theory	Implications/Analysis
1	Clarity of Mechanism	Delays in disbursement and lengthy procedures	Dhiona Ayu Nani & Cinthia Annisa Vinahapsari(2020)	A clear and simple mechanism maintains motivation and reduces dissatisfaction
2	Transparency of Distribution	Perceptions of unfairness in amount and timing	Dhiona Ayu Nani ¹ & Cinthia Annisa Vinahapsari ² (2020)	Transparency builds trust, loyalty, and prevents conflicts
3	Motivation and Performance	Positive short-term impact, limited in the	Maslow (1954); Herzberg (1959)	A combination of incentives, training, and

No	Effectiveness Aspect/Factor	Findings in Bontang City	Supporting Literature/Theory	Implications/Analysis
		long run without support		recognition ensures sustainable motivation
4	Capacity Support & Social Recognition	Training and recognition programs remain limited	Rivai & Sagala (2014)	Capacity support and recognition strengthen loyalty and professionalism
5	Integration with HR Strategy	Incentive policy not fully integrated with HR development	Rivai & Sagala (2014); Dessler (2020)	Integration with HR strategy enhances policy effectiveness and sustainability

Source: Processed from interviews and documents, Welfare Section, Regional Secretariat of Bontang City, 2025

Overall, this study confirms that the incentive policy in Bontang City positively influences the motivation, loyalty, and performance of religious practitioners. However, long-term effectiveness can only be achieved if complemented by capacity development, social recognition, and fair distribution. A holistic approach to human resource management is therefore essential to enable practitioners to contribute optimally to the social and religious life of the community.

5. Conclusions

Conclusion

This study confirms that the incentive policy for religious practitioners in Bontang City plays a strategic role in enhancing motivation, performance, and retention among practitioners. The financial incentives provided help meet their basic needs, while non-material support, such as training, mentoring, and social recognition, significantly influences the effectiveness and sustainability of practitioners' contributions. Overall, the policy has a positive impact; however, challenges such as delayed disbursements, budget limitations, and perceptions of unfairness still exist and need to be addressed to optimize benefits. Analysis from a human resource management perspective emphasizes the importance of integrating financial incentives with non-material support and improving distribution mechanisms to ensure the policy operates more effectively and sustainably.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, several recommendations are proposed for the Bontang City government and religious institutions. First, the distribution mechanism for incentives should be strengthened to ensure transparency, timeliness, and fairness, thereby minimizing perceptions of dissatisfaction and inequity. Second, incentives should be combined with capacity-building programs, training, and non-material recognition to enhance motivation, performance, and retention more effectively. Regular evaluation of the amount, scope, and distribution mechanisms of incentives is also necessary to ensure that the policy aligns with actual needs on the ground and produces tangible effects on the contributions of religious practitioners. Implementing an integrated human resource management strategy is expected to strengthen the sustainability and effectiveness of practitioners' roles in supporting religious and social life.

Furthermore, future research could expand the geographic scope or compare Bontang City with

other cities to examine differences in incentive implementation. Subsequent studies could also explore other types of non-material incentives or investigate public perceptions regarding the contributions of religious practitioners receiving incentives. Additionally, future research could examine the relationship between incentives and effective human resource management, including the influence of leadership and bureaucratic accountability in incentive distribution, providing more comprehensive and practical recommendations for public policy formulation in the religious sector.

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