

## Optimizing Base Salary, Performance Incentives, and Welfare Benefits to Improve Lecturer Well-being and Educational Quality in Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions

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**Abstract:** Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia, particularly in Lampung Province, continue to face significant challenges in enhancing lecturer welfare due to suboptimal compensation policies. Disparities between workload and financial incentives often diminish lecturers' motivation and negatively impact the quality of education. This study aims to examine the implementation of compensation policies in Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions, evaluate their effects on lecturer welfare and academic performance, and propose realistic optimization strategies. Framed by Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, this qualitative study used a case study approach involving in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis across three Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions with varying institutional characteristics. The findings show that compensation components—including base salary, performance bonuses, welfare benefits, and professional development support—are inconsistently implemented and often constrained by limited budgets, lack of transparency, and institutional policy gaps. These deficiencies contribute to low job satisfaction and hinder efforts to improve teaching and research. The study recommends the adoption of a transparent, performance-based compensation framework supported by improved financial governance and alternative funding strategies such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) partnerships, *waqf*-based endowments, and performance-based grants. Strengthened collaboration between institutions, government, and external stakeholders is also essential to ensure sustainable improvement in lecturer welfare and education quality in Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions.

**Keywords:** Compensation Policy; Lecturer Welfare; Education Quality

## INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and increasingly intense competition in education, improving the quality of national education cannot be separated from

the strategic role of lecturers as the front line in the development of knowledge, technology, and human values (Nhai et al., 2024). In the environment of Private Islamic Religious Education Institutions, especially in Lampung Province, lecturer welfare is a crucial indicator that influences the effectiveness of education, research, and community service. While lecturers are expected to optimally fulfill the Three Pillars of Higher Education, the reality in the field shows that the compensation they receive is still far below the standard cost of living, potentially reducing their motivation and academic productivity.

Beyond economic challenges, the compensation system for lecturers in private Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions is also marked by inconsistencies in payment mechanisms. The calculation of lecturer workload, expressed in credit units, often does not align with the compensation received, leading to perceptions of unfairness among lecturers. Irregular payment practices, delays in salary disbursement, and the lack of non-financial incentives are pressing issues (Saputra, 2020). These conditions not only impact individual lecturer welfare but also affect the overall quality of education, given the critical role of lecturers in ensuring the success of teaching and knowledge development.

From an Islamic perspective, ethical values such as justice, trustworthiness, and responsibility should serve as the foundation in designing compensation policies. In Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions, an ideal reward and remuneration system should not only prioritize financial aspects but also accommodate spiritual and moral dimensions. Integrating Islamic values into compensation mechanisms is expected to create an academic environment that is not only economically productive but also ethically and religiously harmonious, thereby supporting the achievement of national education goals holistically (Surbakti et al., 2024).

Compensation in the context of higher education has been widely discussed across various studies, particularly in relation to lecturer performance, job satisfaction, and institutional loyalty. In general, the literature can be classified into five major thematic clusters.

*First*, several studies emphasize the importance of both financial and non-financial compensation in supporting lecturer performance. Research by Akbar and Hapipi (2024), Anwar (2021), and Armanto and Gunarto (2020) reveals that adequate compensation, including base salary and performance incentives, directly contributes to improved lecturer performance. This is further supported by Elisa et al. (2022), Garaika (2020), and Idris et al. (2020), who highlight the role of welfare benefits and non-monetary incentives in enhancing academic productivity. Moreover, Mardikaningsih and Darmawan (2022) stress

that the consistent provision of incentives promotes sustained lecturer performance over time.

*Second*, the theme of transparency and fairness in compensation systems emerges as a critical factor influencing lecturers' perceptions of their institutions. Marlina et al. (2023), Nirmalasari and Amelia (2020), and Wahyunto (2023) emphasize the importance of clarity and openness in compensation distribution mechanisms. Kamath and Verma (2020), along with Bello and Alhyasat (2020), also assert that perceived fairness in compensation is a significant determinant of lecturer job satisfaction.

*Third*, psychological aspects and organizational commitment are addressed in a number of studies. Afzal et al. (2025) and Ashraf (2020) argue that fair and transparent compensation systems not only enhance job performance but also reinforce lecturer loyalty to the institution. Research by Ghimire et al. (2024) and Ooi et al. (2022) demonstrates that employee engagement increases when compensation systems are perceived as fair and competitive. In the Indonesian context, Susilo and Muwardono (2021) and Nasuha et al. (2023) affirm that compensation aligned with individual contributions encourages stronger lecturer commitment to their institutions.

*Fourth*, various studies highlight the relationship between human resource management (HRM) strategies and the effectiveness of compensation systems. Alam (2022) and Tran and Smith (2022) link lecturer retention strategies to well-planned compensation policies. Reginaldo (2024) underscores the need to align compensation schemes with an institution's vision and mission. Jackson (2001) and Clark and d'Ambrosio (2005) demonstrate that strategic HRM approaches, including compensation design, can enhance institutional competitiveness. On a broader scale, Mintz (2021) stresses the importance of understanding global trends in faculty management when developing relevant and sustainable compensation systems.

*Fifth*, contextual and organizational cultural factors are identified as important determinants of compensation system effectiveness. Arianto (2022) finds that organizational cultures promoting recognition and appreciation can amplify the positive impact of compensation on performance. Research by Cheng (2014) and Nasrallah & Zouari (2024) points to the necessity of adapting compensation systems to internal dynamics, including gender equity and organizational structure. Gottlieb et al. (2023) add that managerial efficiency and institutional governance significantly affect lecturers' perceptions of compensation fairness.

Despite the extensive research on the relationship between compensation and lecturer performance, a significant gap remains—particularly

in the context of Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions. Existing studies predominantly emphasize quantitative and economic aspects, while the integration of Islamic ethical values—such as *'adl* (justice), *amanah* (trust), and *mas'uliyah* (responsibility)—as conceptual foundations in compensation policy design has received limited attention. Moreover, there is a scarcity of qualitative research that explores lecturers' perspectives in specific regions, such as Lampung Province.

This study aims to fill that gap by offering a novel approach that integrates structural analysis of compensation policies with Islamic values as ethical and spiritual foundations. Thus, the research does not merely assess the economic impact of compensation policies but also explores how Islamic principles can strengthen holistic lecturer well-being and reinforce their commitment to the Three Pillars of Higher Education. The findings are expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions in designing compensation systems that are just, contextually relevant, and capable of enhancing the competitiveness of Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia.

The main problem addressed in this study is the mismatch between the existing compensation system and the workload and living needs of lecturers at Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions in Lampung Province. Specifically, the identified issues include: (1) low lecturer salaries, which are still below the regional minimum wage, (2) inconsistencies in the calculation and distribution of incentives, bonuses, and allowances, (3) the lack of integration of Islamic values in compensation policies, failing to reflect the ethical and moral responsibilities of lecturers, and (4) the negative impact of suboptimal compensation policies on lecturer motivation and performance, ultimately affecting education quality. This situation necessitates a comprehensive evaluation of existing policies and the formulation of optimization strategies that enhance both lecturer welfare and education quality simultaneously.

This study is expected to develop an optimal compensation policy model that not only increases financial remuneration and ensures consistency in payments but also integrates Islamic values as ethical foundations in lecturer compensation management. The primary objective of this research is to identify weaknesses in the current compensation system, reveal factors contributing to the misalignment between compensation and workload, and formulate practical strategic recommendations for policymakers in Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions. Expected outcomes include improved lecturer welfare, increased motivation and performance, and overall enhancement of education quality. Additionally, this study aims to contribute significantly to academic discourse by offering a new perspective on human resource management in

education, particularly through an approach that harmoniously integrates financial aspects and Islamic values.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach supported by Bardach's Eightfold Path policy analysis framework to explore the structure, challenges, and reform possibilities of lecturer compensation systems in Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions (Bardach, 2012). The qualitative method was chosen to capture the complex, value-laden nature of compensation practices, particularly ethical and Islamic dimensions that quantitative methods may overlook (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The study is further grounded in Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which distinguishes between hygiene factors (e.g., salary, job security) and motivators (e.g., recognition, responsibility) to interpret the impact of compensation policies on lecturer satisfaction and performance (Herzberg et al., 2011).

Fieldwork was conducted at three purposively selected Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions in Lampung Province—Universitas Islam An Nur Lampung, STIT Pringsewu, and Universitas Ma'arif NU Metro—chosen for their institutional diversity based on accreditation status, enrollment size, and Tri Dharma implementation. To ensure balanced perspectives and reduce selection bias, participants included lecturers, senior administrators, and academic staff from various roles and contract statuses.

Data collection used three techniques: (1) semi-structured interviews to explore participants' experiences and views on compensation fairness and motivation; (2) participant observation of teaching activities, policy meetings, and compensation-related decisions; and (3) document analysis of human resources policies, compensation guidelines, and financial reports. All data were triangulated to enhance validity.

Thematic analysis was employed to identify key patterns and themes such as disparities in pay, performance incentives, non-financial benefits, and the role of Islamic values. Member checking was used to validate findings with selected participants, while ethical standards were maintained through informed consent, confidentiality, and institutional ethical clearance.

By combining policy analysis and motivational theory within a qualitative framework, this study aims to generate context-specific insights and actionable policy recommendations to reform Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions compensation systems in line with institutional capacity and Islamic ethics.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### RESULTS

#### Variability and Disparities in Base Salary Structures

This study reveals a prominent disparity in base salary structures among lecturers in the three Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions located in Lampung Province. These disparities are not merely incidental but are structurally embedded in employment classifications, institutional financial capacity, and the absence of a unified compensation standard across Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions. The core distinction lies in employment status, particularly between civil servant lecturers assigned by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA), permanent lecturers appointed by foundations, and non-permanent (contract) lecturers hired on an institutional basis.

Civil servant lecturers receive their base salaries directly from the state budget and thus enjoy a degree of stability and consistency in remuneration. In contrast, permanent lecturers under foundation employment typically rely on the institution's internally generated funds—mainly student tuition—while contract lecturers are paid based on part-time agreements with no assurance of continued employment or consistent income.

This layered employment framework has resulted in significant discrepancies in remuneration for lecturers performing similar duties. One contract lecturer explained, *“As a contract lecturer, I receive much less than my colleagues who are civil servants, even though we teach the same number of classes and advise the same number of students. It feels unfair”*. This sentiment was echoed by multiple participants, suggesting a systemic sense of inequity.

Approximately 70% of lecturers interviewed acknowledged that the disparities in base salary significantly influenced their morale and job satisfaction. Many of them reported feelings of demotivation and disengagement, especially when seeing colleagues in similar academic roles being compensated at substantially higher rates. One senior lecturer employed under a foundation contract expressed frustration: *“I’ve been teaching here for ten years, but my salary hasn’t increased in five years. Meanwhile, new civil servant lecturers are receiving more, even though they have less experience”*.

These findings align with Equity Theory, which posits that individuals assess fairness in the workplace by comparing their input-output ratios to those of their peers (Herzberg, 1966). In the context of Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions, non-permanent lecturers perceive an imbalance between their professional contributions (teaching, research, mentoring) and the

compensation received relative to civil servant peers. This perceived inequity leads to dissatisfaction, reduced work engagement, and even intentions to leave the institution for better opportunities.

Moreover, the disparity is not solely based on employment classification but also on institutional revenue capacity. Institutions with larger student enrollments and higher tuition rates can afford to offer slightly better salaries to lecturers. For example, one Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions with more than 2,000 students reported paying full-time contract lecturers up to 30% more than another Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions with fewer than 500 students. However, even in such cases, contract lecturers still fell below the national minimum wage standards when factoring in workload and hours.

The lack of a standardized national or regional base salary framework for Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions has further compounded the issue. Unlike public universities or state Islamic colleges, where salary structures are regulated and standardized, Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions often determine salaries through ad-hoc internal policies. This autonomy, while providing flexibility, also opens the door for inconsistency and potential exploitation. One administrator candidly stated, *“There’s no benchmark. We pay what we can afford. Some months we’re late, some months we cut incentives—it depends on the budget”*.

Such uncertainty and unpredictability in salary payments were highlighted as critical stressors by many participants. Several lecturers reported delays of one to three months in receiving their base salaries, which further undermines financial security. *“We never know when the salary will come”*, noted one female lecturer. *“Sometimes it’s on time, sometimes not. It’s hard to plan anything, especially when supporting a family”*.

These financial instabilities also have implications for academic development. Lecturers who are underpaid or inconsistently compensated often resort to taking multiple jobs—teaching at other institutions, offering tutoring services, or engaging in unrelated work to supplement their income. This diversification of income streams may ensure livelihood but inevitably compromises time for research, community service, or course innovation—key pillars of the Three pillars of Higher Education.

Furthermore, many contract lecturers reported that despite years of service, they had not been offered pathways to permanent positions or incremental salary increases. This situation creates a stagnant professional environment and undermines the notion of academic career progression. From the perspective of Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory, such a salary structure fails to

meet both hygiene and motivator factors (Herzberg et al., 2011). Inadequate pay and job insecurity are classic hygiene factors that lead to dissatisfaction, while the absence of growth opportunities erodes intrinsic motivation.

The long-term implications of such disparities are deeply concerning. Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions risk high turnover rates, loss of experienced educators, and reduced ability to attract qualified candidates in the future. *“I love teaching, and I love this institution. But sometimes I think about applying to a public university—not for prestige, but just for better compensation and job security”*, shared a mid-career lecturer.

Addressing this issue requires multi-level policy intervention. At the institutional level, Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions should commit to developing internal salary scales that at least meet regional minimum wage standards and are linked to measurable performance indicators. At the systemic level, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and related stakeholders should initiate a national dialogue to formulate equitable salary guidelines for Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions, incorporating financial assistance mechanisms or bridging funds to support smaller institutions.

Innovative models such as waqf-based endowments, corporate social responsibility (CSR) partnerships, or performance-based government grants could provide additional funding channels (Elisa et al., 2022). Institutions can also form regional consortia to pool resources and negotiate shared benefit schemes, particularly for non-civil servant lecturers.

The variability and disparity in base salary structures among Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions lecturers in Lampung reflect both financial and policy weaknesses. Without systemic reform, these disparities will continue to erode lecturer morale, threaten institutional loyalty, and diminish the quality of higher education. For Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions to fulfill their mission as Islamic institutions committed to justice (*‘adl*) and welfare (*maslahah*), compensation policies must reflect ethical and equitable principles that uphold the dignity of educators.

### **Inconsistencies and Delays in Allowance Disbursement**

In addition to base salary disparities, this study found that the allowance system in Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions is plagued by inconsistencies and delays, which further compromise lecturer welfare and institutional accountability. Allowances—such as functional allowances, certification bonuses, transportation aid, and health-related benefits—are intended to supplement base salaries and support the professional and personal needs of faculty members. However, in the observed Private Islamic Religious



Higher Education Institutions in Lampung, the realization of these allowances remains erratic, non-transparent, and in many cases, unequal.

One of the most common grievances expressed by lecturers was the delayed disbursement of functional allowances, especially those tied to academic ranks such as Lecturer, Assistant Professor, or Associate Professor. While these allowances are mandated by government policy, their implementation at the institutional level is inconsistent. A certified lecturer lamented: *“I completed my functional promotion and submitted the required documentation months ago, but I still haven’t received the allowance. They keep telling me there’s a delay in the disbursement?”*. This was not an isolated complaint; nearly 60% of lecturers interviewed reported at least one instance where allowances were delayed for more than two months.

Such delays are largely attributed to bureaucratic inefficiencies, limited cash flow, and the reliance on tuition-dependent budgets. Unlike state-run institutions with government-backed payroll systems, Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions must internally manage allowance disbursement, often deferring payments when budget shortfalls occur. One finance officer admitted: *“We prioritize base salaries first. Allowances come later—sometimes much later—because our monthly income fluctuates depending on tuition payments”*.

The institutional theory perspective is useful here, highlighting how internal norms, routines, and resource dependencies shape the behavior of educational organizations. Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions, due to their private and religious nature, often lack institutionalized mechanisms for timely allowance processing. Their practices are shaped by internal financial norms rather than standardized national frameworks. This lack of structural maturity leads to ad-hoc decision-making, where disbursements are subject to managerial discretion rather than governed by policy.

In some cases, lecturers are not even informed in advance about the timing or structure of allowances, which creates uncertainty and hinders financial planning. A junior lecturer recounted: *“Last semester, we received our transport allowance on time, but this semester there has been no announcement. I had to ask three times before they told me it would be postponed”*. This opacity in financial communication contributes to institutional mistrust and a weakened psychological contract between faculty and administration.

Even more concerning is the inequitable distribution of certification allowances. Lecturers who have completed the Ministry of Religious Affairs’ lecturer certification process are entitled to receive monthly stipends as recognition of their qualifications and workload. However, findings show that certified lecturers in some Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions do not consistently receive these payments, while others receive

them irregularly or in lump sums. One respondent shared: *“We’re told we are eligible, but the institution said they haven’t received the transfer from the Ministry. Yet, our colleagues at another Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions already got theirs”*. This not only reflects inconsistency across institutions but also raises questions about institutional capacity to liaise effectively with government agencies.

From a Herzberg’s Motivation-Hygiene Theory perspective, such allowance inconsistencies fall squarely within the hygiene factors that, when inadequate, lead to dissatisfaction. The failure to deliver on promised allowances—even when not directly linked to daily job performance—erodes basic expectations of fairness, stability, and respect (Herzberg et al., 2011). Consequently, motivation declines, regardless of whether intrinsic motivators like academic freedom or personal development are present.

Another concern lies in the treatment of non-permanent lecturers with regard to allowances. The majority of contract-based or adjunct faculty are excluded from institutional benefits, regardless of tenure or workload. Several lecturers expressed disillusionment about this exclusion, especially when performing similar responsibilities as their permanent counterparts. *“We’re in class just as much, grade the same number of assignments, yet when it comes to allowances, we’re invisible”*, one part-time lecturer stated. This two-tiered system creates internal tension and may lead to a perceived hierarchy of value among educators.

Additionally, delays and inconsistencies are not only financial but also administrative. For instance, performance-based honoraria for research or community service projects are frequently postponed due to administrative bottlenecks. A senior faculty member explained: *“We submitted our research report last semester, but the honorarium is still pending. They say it’s under review by the finance division, but there’s no clear timeline”*. This uncertainty demoralizes lecturers and discourages participation in initiatives that are critical to the institutional mission and national education goals.

The implications of this problem extend beyond the individual level. Institutions that fail to deliver timely allowances risk damaging their reputation, reducing faculty retention, and undermining student learning outcomes. When lecturers are preoccupied with financial instability or feel undervalued, their ability to innovate in teaching or mentor students effectively is compromised.

To address these challenges, Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions must implement a transparent and automated disbursement system for all forms of lecturer allowances. Technology solutions—such as integrated financial management software—can reduce dependency on manual processes

and ensure timely communication. In addition, institutional leadership should establish clear guidelines on the prioritization and scheduling of allowance payments, with built-in accountability mechanisms. Training and capacity-building for finance and HR staff are also essential to ensure that administrative inefficiencies do not become structural barriers.

From a policy standpoint, stakeholders such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs and higher education accreditation bodies should develop and enforce minimum standards for allowance disbursement in Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions. These standards must include timeliness, transparency, and equal access, regardless of employment status. Furthermore, alternative funding mechanisms—such as corporate partnerships, waqf-based financing, and alumni endowments—can be explored to supplement institutional budgets and ensure the sustainability of lecturer benefits.

Inconsistencies and delays in the disbursement of lecturer allowances at Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions represent a systemic issue with deep organizational and policy roots. Left unaddressed, these challenges risk compounding lecturer dissatisfaction, weakening institutional trust, and undermining the goals of Islamic higher education. Reforming these mechanisms requires both internal institutional commitment and external regulatory support to ensure a fair, functional, and future-ready compensation environment.

### **Limited Performance-Based Incentives and Promotion Mechanisms**

An additional and equally critical finding of this study is the lack of structured performance-based incentives and transparent academic promotion mechanisms across the observed Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions. While compensation systems in higher education ideally reward merit and scholarly achievement, the institutional structures in the selected Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions lack effective frameworks to recognize, evaluate, and incentivize individual performance—either in teaching, research, or community engagement.

Interview data revealed that incentives tied to academic performance were inconsistently applied, often subject to managerial discretion rather than standardized metrics. One senior lecturer noted: *“I have published three journal articles this year and guided several student theses, but I have not received any performance bonus or recognition. Meanwhile, those who are close to management get assigned extra projects with honorariums”*. This perception was echoed by many, with over half of participants stating that their academic achievements had not been reflected in any form of financial or institutional reward.

According to Equity Theory (Adams, 1965), such conditions foster perceptions of organizational injustice, where input (effort, achievement) is not balanced by corresponding outcomes (rewards). Lecturers who perceive inequitable treatment tend to reduce their motivation, either by decreasing work intensity or disengaging from non-obligatory academic activities like research, mentoring, and community service. One respondent candidly remarked: *“Why bother publishing if there’s no difference in salary or recognition? I might as well just focus on teaching my classes and go home”*.

The performance evaluation systems that do exist are often informal, vague, and disconnected from clear incentive pathways. In some institutions, no formal performance appraisal is conducted. In others, evaluations are conducted perfunctorily, without clear rubrics or links to remuneration decisions. This leads to a widespread sense that excellence goes unrewarded while mediocrity is tolerated. A department head expressed frustration: *“We don’t have a performance-based salary system. Everyone gets paid the same, regardless of how much they publish or contribute”*.

This finding also resonates with Herzberg’s Motivation-Hygiene Theory, which posits that true motivators in the workplace include recognition, achievement, and opportunities for advancement. Without these elements, even adequate hygiene factors (like base salary) fail to generate job satisfaction or organizational commitment. In the Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions context, the absence of a well-defined incentive structure for high-performing lecturers removes a key driver of academic motivation and undermines a culture of excellence.

Moreover, academic promotions—typically associated with increased responsibilities, prestige, and compensation—do not function as expected in many Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions. Several participants indicated that despite achieving the required academic rank (e.g., Associate Professor), they received no significant financial or professional recognition. One lecturer who had recently earned a doctoral degree commented: *“After finishing my Ph.D. and applying for promotion, nothing really changed. My salary stayed the same, and I didn’t get any extra benefits or new responsibilities”*. This disconnect between career progression and institutional reward weakens the incentive for faculty to pursue academic development and higher qualifications.

Promotion procedures themselves are often mired in bureaucratic inefficiencies and a lack of institutional support. The process for academic rank advancement, while governed by national regulation, is frequently delayed due to missing documentation, lack of guidance from the institution, or insufficient funding to support promotion-related requirements (e.g., publication fees or

conference travel). As one faculty member stated: *“The administration says we should publish in Scopus-indexed journals, but they don’t provide funding or assistance. It’s almost impossible unless you pay out of pocket”*.

The lack of a formalized academic incentive scheme also extends to community service—one of the core elements of the Three Pillars of Higher Education. Faculty who engage in community projects reported receiving little to no compensation for their efforts, despite the workload and logistical demands. *“I led a community literacy program in a rural area for three months, but the university gave no support—neither financial nor administrative”*, explained a lecturer from one of the smaller Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions. This disconnect suggests a misalignment between institutional values and resource allocation.

The lack of structured, transparent performance-based incentives and weak promotion pathways significantly demotivate lecturers in Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions and hinder the institutions’ ability to foster academic excellence. Without reforming these mechanisms, Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions will continue to face challenges in attracting, retaining, and empowering qualified faculty. Institutional leaders must therefore view performance incentives not merely as budgetary burdens but as strategic investments in educational quality and institutional sustainability.

### **Insufficient Welfare Protection for Non-Permanent Lecturers**

The study uncovered a recurring theme of welfare inadequacy among non-permanent lecturers in all three Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions studied. Unlike their counterparts in public universities, who typically benefit from government-provided social security and pension schemes, non-permanent lecturers in Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions are largely excluded from formal welfare protections. This exclusion places them in a precarious position, both financially and professionally, significantly impacting their morale, commitment, and long-term career trajectory.

Interview data revealed that over 60% of contract-based and non-permanent lecturers did not receive any form of health insurance, old-age security, or professional development funding. As one junior lecturer candidly stated, *“I’ve been teaching here for five years, but I’ve never had health insurance. If I get sick, it’s my own problem. The university doesn’t help”*. This lack of institutional safety nets forces many lecturers to rely on personal resources or seek external employment to supplement their income and safeguard their well-being.

This finding aligns with Herzberg's Hygiene Theory, which categorizes working conditions and job security as essential baseline needs (Herzberg et al., 2011). When these are unmet, dissatisfaction rises, regardless of any intrinsic motivators (e.g., passion for teaching, academic freedom). For many Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions lecturers, the absence of basic welfare benefits creates persistent anxiety about the future. One participant noted: *"Even though I love teaching and working with students, I always feel insecure about what will happen if there's an emergency—there's no guarantee for us here"*.

This insecurity is further exacerbated by the temporary nature of many lecturers' contracts. Some are renewed yearly, while others operate on semester-to-semester agreements, with no assurance of long-term employment. Such conditions leave lecturers in a vulnerable state, where job loss may occur abruptly and without severance. One lecturer explained: *"We don't even get official letters sometimes. One semester you teach, the next semester you're not on the schedule. There's no explanation"*.

Moreover, the absence of professional development support—such as funding for conferences, training, or further studies—limits non-permanent lecturers' capacity to grow in their roles or achieve academic promotion. A lecturer expressed frustration: *"I want to pursue a master's degree, but the university doesn't provide any support. Meanwhile, my permanent colleagues get assistance or at least reduced teaching hours"*. This results in a widening gap between permanent and non-permanent faculty, not only in compensation but also in academic opportunity and professional advancement.

This institutional neglect creates a two-tier system within Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions: one group of lecturers (mostly permanent and certified) enjoys relatively secure employment and benefits, while the other (non-permanent, contractual staff) faces structural marginalization. Such disparities violate the principles of Equity Theory, which emphasize the importance of fairness in reward distribution relative to effort. Many non-permanent lecturers perform comparable, if not greater, workloads—especially in teaching-intensive programs—yet receive significantly fewer institutional benefits. This discrepancy leads to disillusionment and, in some cases, quiet quitting or attrition.

The implications of inadequate welfare protection extend beyond individual well-being. Institutions that fail to safeguard their educators face high turnover rates, low faculty retention, and diminished institutional reputation. More importantly, they risk weakening the overall quality of higher education. Lecturers under constant financial and psychological stress are less likely to innovate, collaborate, or invest in long-term academic projects.

Some institutions attempt to mitigate these shortcomings by offering token allowances or informal support, such as covering part of a medical expense or offering temporary relief funds. However, these ad hoc measures lack consistency and sustainability. As one faculty member observed: *“They might help you once in an emergency, but it’s all informal. Next time, there’s no guarantee. It depends on who you talk to”*. This further erodes trust in institutional leadership and policy credibility.

The absence of adequate welfare protection for non-permanent lecturers represents a serious structural flaw in Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions compensation policy. Addressing this issue is essential not only for the sake of individual dignity and fairness, but also for ensuring long-term educational quality and institutional resilience..

### **Limited Incentives for Academic and Professional Development**

A central finding of this study is the insufficient institutional support for academic and professional development among lecturers at Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions in Lampung Province. While enhancing educational quality is a stated objective of most Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions, the study reveals that current compensation frameworks do not adequately incentivize scholarly advancement, further studies, or professional enrichment. This lack of developmental support has implications not only for individual career progression but also for the broader academic standing of the institutions involved.

Interviews with faculty members showed that more than 65% of lecturers had never received institutional support to attend academic conferences, pursue postgraduate degrees, or publish in peer-reviewed journals. One lecturer shared, *“I wanted to pursue my doctoral degree, but I couldn’t afford the tuition. The institution offers no scholarship or study leave. I had to postpone it indefinitely”*. Another added, *“If we want to present at a conference, the costs come out of our own pockets. There’s no institutional budget for that”*.

These testimonies highlight a structural gap in how Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions view academic growth—as a personal rather than institutional responsibility. According to Herzberg’s Motivation-Hygiene Theory, opportunities for growth, recognition, and advancement are key motivators in the workplace (Herzberg et al., 2011). The absence of such motivators at Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions leads to stagnation, diminished enthusiasm, and lower faculty engagement with research and innovation.

Furthermore, lecturers reported that promotion mechanisms were often symbolic or procedural, with limited impact on their financial remuneration or workload. A senior lecturer noted: *“I was promoted to Lektor Kepala two years ago, but my salary has not changed. The title means little without financial or institutional support”*. This decoupling of rank and reward undermines the purpose of academic promotion, which should incentivize excellence and continuous improvement.

The data also reveal that academic incentives, when they exist, tend to be narrowly distributed and often dependent on personal connections rather than merit-based systems. Lecturers who are already well-positioned within institutional networks are more likely to receive small research grants or get selected for institutional representation at academic events. One participant stated, *“Only those close to the leadership get recommended for external grants or invited to international forums. It’s not transparent or inclusive”*. This perception erodes trust in institutional governance and discourages younger or less-connected lecturers from participating in developmental activities.

This condition is particularly troubling given that Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions are mandated to uphold the Three Pillars of Higher Education—teaching, research, and community service. Without structured and equitable support for academic development, the realization of this mandate becomes limited. The resulting imbalance—where teaching is emphasized while research and community service are neglected—undermines the holistic mission of higher education and restricts innovation.

From an institutional perspective, neglecting investment in faculty development has long-term costs. A weak research culture, low publication output, and lack of international visibility affect accreditation, student recruitment, and access to competitive grants. More importantly, students are deprived of exposure to current academic thinking and practices, which diminishes the relevance and rigor of the learning process.

In terms of institutional theory, Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions that fail to develop internal systems for promoting academic excellence risk decoupling from broader standards and expectations in higher education (Garg & Motwani, 2018). Without mechanisms that align faculty behavior with academic norms, institutional legitimacy may erode over time.

Limited incentives for academic and professional development constitute a critical weakness in the current Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions compensation and human resource system. Without strategic investment in faculty capacity, Private Islamic Religious Higher



Education Institutions will struggle to improve educational quality, meet accreditation standards, or fulfill their Islamic and academic missions.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study has revealed a multidimensional picture of compensation practices at selected Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions in Lampung Province, exposing systemic disparities, policy ambiguities, and inconsistent implementation. The findings point to a structurally fragmented compensation system that has direct implications for lecturer welfare and the sustainability of academic quality. This discussion will interpret these findings through relevant theoretical frameworks, propose realistic policy pathways, and reflect critically on both the local and general implications of the study.

### **Interpreting Disparities Through Equity Theory**

The pronounced disparities in base salary structures and employment status among lecturers at Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions can be meaningfully analyzed through the lens of Equity Theory (Adams, 1963). According to this theory, employee motivation is strongly influenced by perceived fairness in input-output ratios. When lecturers with comparable teaching loads and qualifications receive significantly different compensation due to employment status (e.g., civil servant vs. contract lecturer), it creates a perception of inequity that undermines morale and institutional commitment.

This perception of injustice not only affects individual motivation but may also trigger emotional withdrawal, lowered productivity, and high turnover intentions. The theory further explains the lecturers' responses: some reduce effort (e.g., skipping non-mandatory academic activities), while others seek external employment to balance perceived inequity.

### **Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and the Compensation Context**

Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory (1966) provides another lens for interpreting the findings. The study identifies compensation as a hygiene factor—a condition that, if inadequate, causes dissatisfaction, but if sufficient, does not necessarily lead to high motivation. Several lecturers noted that while adequate base salaries were a prerequisite for staying in the profession, they derived genuine motivation from opportunities for research, professional development, and recognition.

However, as revealed in the results, many Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions provide limited access to such motivational factors. This highlights the dual failure of many Private Islamic Religious Higher

Education Institutions: inadequate hygiene factors (e.g., timely and fair salaries) and an absence of motivation-enhancing conditions (e.g., academic recognition, research grants, leadership opportunities).

### **Structural Constraints and Institutional Theory**

Institutional theory offers insight into why such compensation disparities and structural inefficiencies persist. Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions are embedded in a regulatory and financial environment that constrains reform. Many institutions rely almost entirely on tuition fees for funding, making them highly vulnerable to fluctuations in student enrollment. The lack of diversification in income streams—such as through waqf endowments, corporate social responsibility (CSR) partnerships, or performance-based grants—limits their ability to sustainably enhance compensation structures.

Moreover, institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) may explain why some Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions adopt superficial compliance with Ministry guidelines without implementing substantive compensation reform. Institutions mimic public university frameworks in form but lack the state funding necessary for functional equivalence, resulting in distorted or fragmented compensation policies.

### **The Ethical Contradiction: Islamic Values vs. Practice**

A striking contradiction emerges between the Islamic values that supposedly underpin Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions—justice (*‘adl*), trust (*amanah*), and accountability (*mas’uliyah*)—and the realities of compensation practices. While many Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions publicly espouse Islamic ethics, the findings indicate systemic inequities that violate these very principles. Non-permanent lecturers, who often shoulder heavy teaching loads, remain excluded from benefits such as health insurance, pension plans, and professional development support.

This ethical disconnect not only weakens institutional credibility but also undermines the spiritual and moral integrity of the educational environment. Reconciling institutional policies with Islamic ethical principles should therefore become a central objective of any compensation reform in Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions.

### **Policy Pathways: Toward a Just and Sustainable System**

To address these challenges, a multifaceted and realistic compensation reform strategy is required. First, Private Islamic Religious Higher Education

Institutions must adopt a performance-based compensation system that includes both financial and non-financial incentives. Compensation models should incorporate teaching effectiveness, research output, and community engagement, ensuring that lecturers are recognized for all aspects of Three Pillars of Higher Education.

Second, institutions need to diversify funding sources. Initiatives such as establishing waqf-based endowments, forming CSR partnerships with local businesses, or applying for competitive research and teaching grants can provide alternative financing. This reduces overreliance on student tuition fees and creates fiscal space to improve lecturer compensation packages.

Third, institutional leadership must undergo capacity building in human resource management and financial planning. Many administrators lack formal training in managing academic compensation systems, which results in policy inconsistencies and delays in implementation. Regular workshops, collaboration with more experienced institutions, and the adoption of digital HR systems can improve planning and transparency.

Fourth, Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions should develop inter-institutional cooperation frameworks to pool resources, share best practices, and advocate collectively for policy reform. Regional consortia can enable smaller Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions to gain bargaining power and access national funding mechanisms that may otherwise remain out of reach.

### **Reflections on Contextual Limitations and Transferability**

While this study provides rich qualitative insights from three Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions in Lampung Province, its generalizability is naturally limited. The specific socio-economic and institutional conditions in Lampung—such as the concentration of private Islamic universities and limited public funding—may differ from those in other regions of Indonesia.

Nonetheless, many of the challenges identified—salary disparities, limited benefits, policy ambiguity—are common across Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions nationally. Therefore, the findings may resonate with broader systemic issues, but further studies are needed to verify their applicability in different provincial and institutional contexts. A national-level comparative study would help clarify which compensation barriers are specific to regional contexts and which are symptomatic of broader structural flaws in Indonesia's Islamic higher education system.

## Toward a Just Future

Ultimately, improving compensation policies is not only a matter of finance but of justice, governance, and vision. The long-term viability of Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions depends on their ability to attract, retain, and support qualified educators. A system that undervalues its lecturers not only undermines educational quality but also contradicts the moral foundation of Islamic education itself.

By aligning policy design with motivational theories and Islamic ethics, and by implementing pragmatic financing strategies, Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions can move toward a more equitable and sustainable future. Such reform will not only improve lecturer welfare but also reinforce the integrity and excellence of Indonesia's Islamic higher education system.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights the critical issues of lecturer compensation in Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions in Lampung Province, focusing on structural disparities, policy ambiguity, and insufficient welfare support, all of which directly affect the quality of higher education. The novelty of this research lies in its integration of Islamic ethical principles—such as justice (*'adl*), trust (*amānah*), and accountability (*mas'uliyah*)—into the analysis of compensation policy, as well as its application of motivational theories, including Equity Theory and Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory, to interpret the psychological and institutional implications of compensation inequality. This approach contributes to the development of Islamic-based human resource management models in higher education institutions.

Practically, this study proposes realistic and context-sensitive reform strategies, such as establishing community *waqf*-based funding schemes, developing partnerships with Islamic financial institutions to support incentive programs, and phased implementation of welfare guarantees like health and retirement insurance (e.g., BPJS schemes) for non-permanent lecturers. Nevertheless, the study also acknowledges that implementing such reforms may face challenges—including bureaucratic inertia, resistance from institutional foundations, and limited administrative capacity—which may hinder policy effectiveness or widen equity gaps between well-resourced and underfunded institutions. Therefore, improving the compensation system in Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions requires a holistic and collaborative approach, involving coordination among government actors, foundation boards, academic communities, and the broader Islamic society. Future researchers are

encouraged to conduct comparative studies across different regions or develop simulation-based policy models that take into account the financial diversity and managerial capacity of Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions nationwide.■

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Tadbir : Jurnal Studi Manajemen Pendidikan Vol. 9, No.2, November 2025

**IAIN Curup –Bengkulu | p-ISSN 2580-3581; e-ISSN 2580-5037**