

Research Article

The Role and Participation of Church Administrators in Church Financial Management

Cenny Clara Sumbagawe*, Selmita Paranoan, Moh. Iqbal Bakry, Betty

Department of Accounting, Universitas Tadulako, Palu, Sulawesi Tengah, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: cennysumbagawe.untad@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role and participation of church administrators in financial management and their impact on transparency and accountability of financial records in accordance with accounting standards. The study used a qualitative descriptive method with a case study approach through interviews with the pastor, treasurer, secretary, and congregation representatives at the Indonesian Rahmadani Christ Church in Palu City, the study location. The results indicate that financial records have been supported by digitalization (Google Forms and Spreadsheets) and strong participation of administrators, thereby increasing congregation trust. However, financial management practices have not been optimal. This is indicated by congregation financial reports that only cover income without detailed expenditures and limited data access. This condition is influenced by the administrators' limited understanding of standard reporting procedures, given the lack of administrators with formal accounting backgrounds. In conclusion, despite good administrator participation, the lack of formal accounting competency is a major obstacle to achieving transparency and accountability in church financial management as a whole.

Keywords: Accountability; Financial; Church Administrators; Church Financial Management; Transparency

1. INTRODUCTION

Accounting is a series of activities that function to identify, record, classify, process, and present data related to financial statement information. In the context of non-profit organizations like churches, accounting plays an important role in maintaining transparency and accountability in the management of church funds. However, as accounting develops at an increasingly rapid pace, many religious organizations, particularly churches, have not yet been able to keep up with these developments, especially in terms of financial recording and reporting. This condition is evident in the church's financial reporting practices, which are not fully compliant with applicable accounting standards. Financial reporting is generally done simply and only presented occasionally, for example, thru the church bulletin. (Simanjuntak & Purba, 2024) (Magdalena et al., 2022), (Halomoan et al., 2025) revealed that the Church only produces reports covering cash receipts and expenditures, even tho it already uses basic digital systems like Excel. Based on several previous studies, it can be said that the application of accounting in church financial management is still not optimal, even tho computer-based recording systems are used.

As an effort to produce good financial reports, sensitivity and responsibility are required from all church administrators toward the mandate that has been entrusted to them as those in charge. (Jurnal & Mea, 2021) revealed that church administrators are jointly involved in recording, using, and reporting financial information. The treasurer, secretary, and event committee all play a role in ensuring that every income and expense is recorded and accounted for transparently. This aligns with the application of Stewardship Theory, which emphasizes that church administrators serve as trusted stewards (Halomoan et al., 2025) responsible for managing financial resources wisely, transparently, and accountably. In the context of church financial management, every officer given responsibility is expected to carry out their duties with full integrity in order to foster and maintain the congregation's trust in the church's financial management. The relationship between managers and members from a stewardship perspective is built on trust, where managers are entrusted to manage church funds, services, and assets responsibly without constant strict supervision (Putrokoesoemo & Pada, 2024). Stewardship theory assumes that church administrators have a moral and spiritual responsibility to manage church resources with honesty, integrity, and accountability, as they serve as stewards entrusted by God and the congregation (Aldof Kolping Pawe et al., 2024)(Magdalena et al., 2022)

Applying accounting standards in churches is important to ensure financial transparency and accountability. . (Fredrik J. Wonok, 2016)) argued that the implementation of PSAK No. 45 in practice at the GMIM Imanuel Church is still based on

internal organizational agreements rather than following the established financial statement structure, indicating that understanding and application of accounting standards in religious organizations are still limited. A similar condition was stated by (Purba & Manullang, 2023) at the GMI Effatha Church, indicating that financial statements are still prepared simply but have referred to the ISAK 35 guidelines on Presentation of Financial Statements of Non-Profit Entities. The financial statements produced include an activity report, a statement of net assets, a statement of financial position, a statement of cash flows, and notes to the financial statements. In the process of its preparation, the church goes through several stages of recording, such as collecting transaction evidence, coding accounts, recording transactions in the journal, posting to the ledger, collecting supporting data, and finally preparing the final financial statements. (Pengabdian et al., 2024) revealed that financial records at the Methodist Church in Dolok Nagodang are still kept conventionally, meaning through manual recording limited to income and expenditure reports. The church has not yet prepared comprehensive financial statements in accordance with the standards set out in ISAK 35. Nevertheless, the level of trust the congregation has in the church leadership remains high. The congregation accepted and trusted the financial reports presented because of the commitment, integrity, and responsibility demonstrated by the church leaders in managing the church's finances. Thus, the congregation's trust does not solely depend on the application of formal accounting standards, but also on the interpersonal relationships and the credibility of the administrators that have been built within the community.

Previous research that revealed the application of accounting in the financial management of religious institutions by (Mariati Munte et al., 2024), (P. Nawa Pau et al., 2021) (Lenggu & Skolastika Siba Igon, 2025), (Lomi Ga et al., 2021), (Purba & Manullang, 2023) Previous studies have generally focused on the application of Financial Accounting Standards Interpretation (ISAK) 35 and the development of accounting information systems within church organizations. The research results indicate that most churches still prepare financial reports manually, are limited to recording income and expenses, and have not fully implemented the principles of transparency and accountability according to applicable standards. Some studies also indicate efforts toward digitalization through the design of computer-based accounting applications or systems, but the focus remains on the technical aspects of financial reporting and has not yet addressed the managerial and participatory aspects of church administrators. Additionally, limited human resources and the lack of understanding of accounting among church administrators are major obstacles to the implementation of a good church financial system.

Unlike those studies, this research does not focus on the application of accounting standards or the design of new information systems, but rather analyzes the role and participation of church board members in managing church finances that have already utilized a simple digital medium in the form of Google Forms. The novelty of this research lies in its emphasis on participatory governance in church financial management, rather than solely on the application of accounting standards such as ISAK 35. This research shows that the active participation of administrators and the involvement of the congregation in the financial decision-making process can build a high level of trust, even though the recording system used is still simple or not fully compliant with official standards. This perspective offers a new contribution that church financial accountability is not only shaped by adherence to accounting standards, but also by social transparency, open communication, and the commitment of church leaders recognized by the congregation. This finding expands on previous studies by emphasizing that participatory governance can be a key factor in maintaining the legitimacy and reliability of church financial management. Academically, this research contributes to the development of accounting science, particularly in the context of non-profit organizations, by presenting a new perspective on the utilization of simple digital technology in church financial reporting systems.

2. LITERATUR REVIEW

Stewardship Theory

Stewardship Theory, proposed by Donaldson and Davis (1991), emphasizes that a steward does not act solely out of self-interest, but is driven by a sense of moral responsibility, loyalty, and commitment to organizational goals. In the context of the church, this theory is highly relevant because church leaders are understood not merely as financial administrators, but as servants who bear a spiritual mandate. They manage church funds with integrity, loyalty, and the awareness that every financial decision is accountable not only to humans but also to God and the congregation. Research (Akuntansi & Literatur, 2024) indicates that stewardship principles directly contribute to increased accountability, as stewards with a stewardship orientation tend to be transparent, honest, and responsible in conveying financial information. This finding is supported by (Mediasi, 2023), which revealed that stewardship has a significant influence on the spiritual integrity of church administrators in managing funds. The study explains that when managers position themselves as servants of God, they demonstrate more ethical, honest, and faith-aligned financial management behavior. Thus, applying Stewardship Theory in church financial management not only strengthens organizational governance but also encourages church leaders to practice spiritually integrated leadership.

Church Financial Accountability

Financial accountability in the church is a fundamental obligation for church leaders to manage all funds and assets received

from the congregation (donors) in an ethical, transparent, and responsible manner. This concept is rooted in Stewardship Theory, where fund managers act as stewards of the resources entrusted by God thru the congregation, and therefore must use them wisely in accordance with the church's spiritual mission, which includes planning, organizing, supervising, reporting, and accountability (Waruwu, 2024). Accountability is closely related to transparency (Jurnal & Mea, 2021), which is achieved by presenting clear, relevant, and timely financial reports to the congregation and the board, as well as thru strong internal controls. Internal controls, such as segregation of duties (ensuring the person receiving the money is different from the one recording and disbursing it), are crucial mechanisms for protecting church assets from potential misappropriation (fraud). Essentially, financial accountability not only fulfills the legal or managerial requirements of a non-profit organization, but also serves as an essential pillar of moral integrity and trust for maintaining good relationships between leaders and the congregation (Pada et al., 2025).

Digitalization in Non-Profit Accounting

Digitalization in accounting is the process of changing from manual recording to the use of integrated digital technology, primarily in response to the limitations of human resources in effectively managing financial records. In the context of non-profit organizations, digitalization not only means transferring the recording format to electronic media but also includes automating accounting processes, improving data accuracy, and providing real-time information access for decision-makers and stakeholders (Laura et al., 2023). This change allows non-profit organizations to manage resources more efficiently, transparently, and well-documented, thus supporting more accountable governance practices (Nikita et al., 2024). The transparency resulting from the use of this technology not only minimizes the risk of errors and data manipulation (Alinsari et al., 2022) but also facilitates internal oversight processes and more objective evaluation of fund usage. Therefore, accounting digitalization plays an important role in strengthening the accountability of non-profit organizations because financial reports can be continuously monitored, easily traced back, and verified by internal and external parties, thereby increasing public trust in the integrity of financial management.

ISAK 35 and Non-Profit Standards

ISAK 35 is an interpretation of financial accounting standards that specifically regulates the financial reporting of non-profit organizations, including churches, foundations, and social institutions (Yulianti & Wulandari, 2023). This standard emphasizes the presentation of accrual-based financial statements, including the Statement of Financial Position, the Statement of Comprehensive Income, the Statement of Changes in Net Assets, and the Statement of Cash Flows. ISAK 35 is designed to ensure that non-profit organizations have more uniform, transparent, and accountable reporting guidelines for managing resources from donors and the public (Iqtishadia et al., 2023). ISAK 35 differs from accounting standards for business entities because its focus is not on measuring profit-based performance, but on accountability for the management of non-commercial resources (Faturrahman & Sumbawa, 2023). In business entities, financial statements are oriented toward profit and loss, operating cash flow, and returns for capital owners. Conversely, in IAS 35, financial statements emphasize changes in net assets, resources with restricted use, and disclosures of fund usage according to the organization's purpose. Thus, IAS 35 prioritizes accountability and transparency as key characteristics, not profitability. In the context of the church, the application of ISAK 35 is evident in the preparation of financial position reports that separate net assets based on donor restrictions (e.g., development funds, mission funds, or general offerings). The church also prepares a statement of changes in net assets to explain how funds are used in accordance with the service objectives. Additionally, the implementation of ISAK 35 requires accrual-based accounting, meaning that revenues and expenses are recorded when the transaction occurs, not when cash changes hands. This application helps the church provide more accurate and accountable reports to the congregation.

Conceptual Framework of Research

Emphasizing that every individual in the organization has a clear role and expected participation in the organizational process (Coryanata & Bengkulu, 2006). This concept is based on the idea that organizational effectiveness is greatly influenced by the extent to which members understand their responsibilities, perform their functions according to their positions, and actively participate in decision-making and task execution. In the context of non-profit organizations like churches, this theory is relevant because the participation of board members is not only structural, but also normative and moral. The clearer the role being played and the higher the level of participation, especially among those involved in management, the stronger the accountability, transparency, and quality of organizational resource management. Managers are directly involved in the process of recording, reporting, and delivering financial information to the congregation, thus maintaining public trust (Rahayu, 2014). This finding aligns with Compartment's research, which confirms that the competence of managers is an important factor in maintaining the quality of non-profit organizations' accountability. The higher the managers' accounting and governance knowledge and understanding, the more effective the accountability process that can be achieved (Qomariyah & Sulistyowati, 2022).

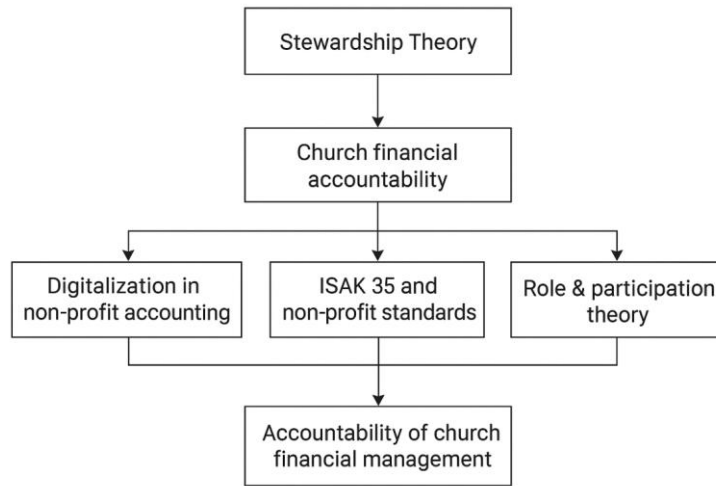


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach, aiming to explore and understand phenomena in depth that cannot be explained thru quantitative data (Mwita, 2024). Data collection in this study was carried out using two main techniques: in-depth interviews and direct observation. Interviews were conducted with four key informants: the Shepherd, the Secretary, the Treasurer, and a representative from the Congregation (Showned in Table 1). This research was conducted at the Gereja Kristus Rahmani Indonesia (GKRI). The selection of this location was based on the researcher's accessibility and the relevance of the research object to the study's focus on church financial management. Field observations were conducted for one month, providing the researcher with sufficient time to repeatedly and thoroughly observe administrative activities and financial recording processes. The interview technique used is a semi-structured interview with a duration of 45–60 minutes per session. Each informant was interviewed once, while the Shepherd was interviewed twice to gain a deeper understanding of church financial management practices. In addition to interviews, the researcher also conducted direct observation of church administrative activities to see the recording process and financial flow as they occur in the field. Data analysis in this study used the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. To ensure data validity, this study employs source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from the Shepherd, Secretary, Treasurer, and Congregation. Method triangulation was achieved by combining in-depth interviews and direct observation. Member checking is done by asking informants to review a summary of the interview results to ensure data accuracy and avoid misinterpretation.

Table 1. Informants List

Nickname	Profession/position
Ps. Navy	Church Pastor
Mrs. Betty	Church Treasurer
Mrs. Sarah	Church Secretary
Ms. Niken	Youth

Processed by the Researcher, 2025

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Church Record System

The Church's financial resources largely come from the congregation thru various types of offerings, including general offerings given at every Sunday service, such as for Church construction, as well as categorical offerings for weekly activities like R-Kids, R-Youth, R-Men, R-Women, CnC Family and Youth, CnC GenBi, and CnC GenBi Teens. Additionally, there are offerings for both general and personal diaconia, Holy Communion, communal prayer, faith pledges, and voluntary offerings as expressions of the congregation's gratitude. The congregation also gives a tithe of 10% of their income according to biblical teachings, as written in Malachi 3:10, which emphasizes the importance of bringing offerings to the house of the Lord. Church finances are also obtained thru offerings during special holiday services, such as Easter, Christmas, and Good Friday.

The process of counting the offering money is done jointly by the treasurer, several boards, and trusted members of the congregation to count and record the amount of donations, with the aim of ensuring the security and accuracy of financial data. This procedure ensures that every amount received can be verified transparently and minimizes the risk of errors or misuse. The money from offerings is managed and stored by the treasurer in designated locations, namely the church treasury and bank accounts. This fund is used to support routine operational needs, such as facility maintenance, worship services, and church service programs, with a portion allocated to church construction, diaconal activities, and special congregational programs as decided by the council. Each type of offering is placed in the same account using the Church's own name, and the only person with access to that account is the Church treasurer. Using the same account access results in all funds being mixed in one account, making it quite difficult to distinguish the balance within the account. The way to differentiate all these transactions is by looking at the recording results they create, which can serve as a guide so that even tho the funds are mixed, they can still be differentiated based on the reports already recorded at the Church.

The recording system implemented at the Rahmani Indonesia Church of Christ has been digitally integrated thru the use of Google Forms. The use of this system is supported by the findings of (Putu et al., 2025) which state that using the system to access financial reports is an important solution for the Church because it can display financial data in real-time. Innovation at the GKRI Church began with the initiative of one of the young people in the congregation who sought to simplify administrative and data management tasks, particularly in the church's financial management. The idea arose because there was previously no structured and efficient system for recording and documenting activities and financial transactions. By using Google Forms, all church cash flow can be recorded more systematically, well-documented, and facilitate the financial management process. Creating a Google Form is divided into several types of reports, namely general worship reports, categorical worship reports, and financial reports. The main goal is to simplify the reporting system in the church. Access to the Google Form link is only given to the administrators by placing the link in the notes of the relevant category group, making it easier for the administrators to fill it out. This access restriction also aims to limit the movement of parties who could potentially engage in abuse.

The process of filling out a Google Form is done using several techniques according to the needs of each report, including financial reports. During public worship, the treasurer sends the amount of offerings to the church council's management group as a temporary record that also serves as a backup archive. The data was then used to fill out a Google Form so that no information was missed and supporting records remained available. Temporary messages on WhatsApp must be entered into the Google Form immediately so that financial reports are automatically saved in the file prepared to accommodate all reports for each category of worship. The financial recording process is carried out using the same mechanism thru the provided Google Form link. This statement is reinforced by the treasurer's words:

"...So I shared the cash book via WhatsApp and asked them to correct it, since WhatsApp is advanced now."

In data entry, it is generally the treasurer's responsibility, but under certain circumstances, this task can be delegated to the secretary if the treasurer is unable to attend. This pattern indicates a clear division of roles within the financial record-keeping system, while also supporting the consistency and sustainability of the church's financial administration. To simplify financial record-keeping, the Rahmani Indonesia Church of Christ uses several important components in Google Forms. Each component has its own function that supports the order and clarity of the data. The components are as follows

1. Worship Date: Records the chronological time of church activities.
2. Worship Type: Differentiates between organized activities such as main worship, youth worship, or special worship.
3. Report Type: Identifies whether the transaction is a debit (expense) or credit (income).
4. Report Category: Groups transactions according to the type of offering, such as Holy Communion, general diaconia, or faith promise.
5. Description: Provides detailed explanations of transactions, especially expenses.
6. Phone Number: Serves as the identity of the Google Form filler.
7. Nominal: Shows the amount of funds recorded, both income and expenses.

Filling out the Google Form is not limited to once; it can be done repeatedly according to the number of transactions that occur on that day. This is because the component format available within the Google Form is designed to record one transaction each time it is filled out. If there are multiple transactions, each transaction must be entered separately by refilling the form according to the available components. This process does require repetition, but all incoming data will be automatically integrated into a single Google Spreadsheet file. This integration allows all transaction records to be neatly organized and compiled into a single file, making it easier for the council to access well-documented financial reports. Although the Google Forms system allows for repetitive and integrated transaction recording in a single file, the application of this practice is technically limited to daily cash recording. Some components of the financial statements regulated in ISAK 35, such as the statement of cash flows, the statement of changes in net assets, and notes to the financial statements, have not yet been implemented in the church's accounting practices. Based on observations and interviews, financial record-

keeping practices at the Rahmani Indonesia Church of Christ only include recording the amount of incoming offerings and daily cash disbursements thru Google Forms. This statement is reinforced by the words of the Shepherd.

"Usually, we only record the amount of offerings and expenses; there are no other official reports. That Google form is sufficient for our needs because we are still a small congregation and this isn't a business."

This condition indicates a gap between the recording practices implemented and the reporting standards set by ISAK 35, resulting in the church's financial statements presenting only a limited portion of financial information in addition to those records. This inadvertently means the church still has various resources and financial activities that have not been systematically recorded. This condition indicates that using Google Forms alone is not yet fully capable of comprehensively and comprehensively depicting the church's financial condition.

In practice, church administrators often experience delays in entering financial data into Google Forms because they forget to fill it out directly. For example, offering transactions on Sundays are sometimes only recorded the next day. Although the accrual principle is maintained because entries are based on the date the transaction occurred, which is when the money is received, delayed input has the potential to cause errors in numerical entries and prevent reports from being presented in real-time. This risk of error can be minimized thru thoroughness and full attention from the managers from the beginning. However, once an error has occurred, the correction mechanism is carried out by the administrators informing the council thru the church's central administration WhatsApp group, so that the council can immediately make corrections to the available spreadsheet. The limitations of the Google Form format and the potential for input delays mean that the treasurer needs to keep additional financial records, as some components are still not recorded in Google Forms, thus limiting the information provided to the church's internal authorities. This additional note is used to record items not covered in the Google Form, such as bank interest, direct cash amounts, or account balances. Although the treasurer has two different sources of records, the basis of the report remains the data from the Google Form that is entered into the Google Spreadsheet, which is then supplemented with additional information from the treasurer's records. This separate note ensures that all transactions are fully and accurately documented. However, while useful, these additional notes also present potential weaknesses, as data not entered into Google Forms cannot be monitored in real-time by other administrators or the congregation, thus increasing the risk of errors or so the risk of errors or non-compliance remains. Another area where errors are likely to occur is in the expenditure section. Expenses are often not supported by notes as proof of transaction. This is because the components in Google Forms do not provide a specific space to include proof of expenses, so the data entered is only numbers without supporting documents. This condition opens the door to fraud due to minimal oversight. This statement is supported by the words of the Shepherd, who said:

"There should be an invoice, but we usually don't use one"

Although there is potential for errors in the recording process, the church considers this not to be a significant issue that could disrupt overall financial management. This assessment is based on the belief that using Google Forms has been quite effective in maintaining data order and integrity. This system does not come with additional backup mechanisms and relies solely on the platform's built-in digital storage. This is in line with the Shepherd's statement that:

"We don't use any other data backups because the data is already securely stored digitally."

The Pastor's statement reflects the church's full confidence in the digital system used, while also demanding caution and discipline from the administrators in managing and maintaining financial data. Recording serves not only as an administrative tool but also as the primary basis for achieving accountability, and it is used as the foundation for preparing the Church's monthly and annual reports as a form of accountability to the congregation.

Church Financial Reporting System

Financial reporting activities in a church environment must essentially be conducted professionally and follow applicable reporting standards to produce accurate, competent, and reliable reports for those who need them. Thru good financial reporting, the church can provide a comprehensive overview of its financial condition and serve as a means of accountability for every use of the funds it manages. The ability to prepare and present financial reports is extremely important because it is thru this process that all of the church's financial activities can be clearly understood, including both income and expenses incurred during a specific period. However, based on the interview results, the financial reporting practices implemented in the church are not yet fully in line with professional reporting principles. The church has not yet been able to provide complete and detailed financial reports to the congregation. The reports submitted tend to be still simple and only informative, not comprehensive reports that follow the accounting format of non-profit organizations. This was revealed by the Church Treasurer, who stated that:

"It will still be announced in the news, depending on whether they fill in their names or not."

The statement describes that financial reporting in the church is still limited, with financial information only being communicated thru the weekly bulletin displayed during the Sunday main service. The congregation only has access to view the report in summary form without further details regarding the church's financial transactions. Presenting financial reports in this way results in a lack of transparency, which should be a form of accountability to the congregation as an obligation. This aligns with the stewardship theory, which states that church administrators are responsible for reporting financial statements to the congregation as the stewards. Some of the categorical activities within the church report their offering results thru Google Forms, and this data serves as input for the church council, which then summarizes and reports it in the church bulletin. Thus, for both public and categorical worship, the party with full access to the financial statements is the church council. This information was then presented to the congregation in a limited form, where the reports provided only included income data without further explanation of church expenses.

"The congregation can see the reports from the bulletin, but even then, the expenses are not shown, only the income is displayed."

Reporting the cash position without providing a full explanation of the actual circumstances is a fatal error. (Hermanto et al., 2021) which shows that the Church has attempted to implement the principles of transparency and accountability in its financial management, but the implementation has not fully complied with applicable standards. This is evident from the reporting system implemented, where the complete financial statements are only accessible to the council, while the congregation only receives limited information regarding income. This condition has the potential to create the impression that something is being hidden in the church's financial statements.

An interesting point was reiterated when the Shepherd stated that the format of the report presented to the congregation was not their main concern. In fact, there was hardly ever a congregation that asked about the weekly reports submitted by the church. This condition indicates that the financial reporting process in the church has not yet become a significant factor influencing the congregation's level of trust in the church administrators. This statement is reinforced by the Shepherd's expression, which states: "There is hardly ever a congregation that wants to know about the church's financial reports, but if they do, we will only provide the physical report without giving them access to see the report in its entirety." The response provided by the congregation aligns with the findings (Tjungadi & Rahadian, 2020) which reveal that few congregations attempt to find out or carefully examine the financial reports published by the church. This statement can be viewed from two perspectives: positive and negative. From a positive standpoint, it indicates that the congregation has a high level of trust in the church as a religious institution that is trusted to manage funds well. However, on the other hand, this condition can also have negative impacts because it opens up opportunities for fraud, both intentional and unintentional, due to a lack of attention to the importance of financial reporting being done transparently and accountably.

Internal Audit in Church Financial Management

The audit process in a church is not the same as the audit process in a for-profit company in general. At the Rahmani Indonesia Church of Christ, internal audits, or what is more commonly known as the examination process, are conducted annually by members of the church council, consisting of the pastor, secretary, and treasurer. These three parties have the authority to regulate the course of worship and oversee all reports related to church activities. The audit process focused on examining the compliance of daily cash transactions and church expenditures, which included checking supporting documents, reconciling financial records recorded thru Google Forms with physical cash, and assessing adherence to internal procedures applicable within the church environment. The church authorities did not use external auditors because they felt they were still capable of conducting periodic financial statement examinations. This was confirmed by the secretary's statement, which stated that:

"So far, only we have checked the reports. We don't think it's necessary for outsiders because we are still a small congregation, so the offerings aren't that much either."

This condition indicates that the relatively small scale of the organization and the number of financial transactions are the main considerations for the church not involving external parties. Direct involvement of the council in the internal audit process is seen as more efficient because they have a deep understanding of the service context, financial flows, and the needs of the congregation. Compared to ideal audit practices, this mechanism has the potential to create limitations, particularly in terms of objectivity and independence of the examination, as internal auditors come from within the church's governing body itself. Therefore, although the internal audit mechanism in the church environment can be effective in a small congregation, awareness of potential weaknesses is still necessary to maintain transparency and accountability in church financial management.

With the central council having full authority over the results of the church report examination, the data obtained thru Google Forms will be returned to the church for review. From this process, two types of reports are generated: monthly reports and annual reports. Monthly reports are managed solely by internal church personnel without external involvement and are not recorded in physical form. Annual reports, on the other hand, are a compilation of monthly reports gathered

throughout the year, then compiled into a physical document to be officially presented during the synod meeting.

The distinction between monthly and annual reports reflects the existence of an internal control mechanism aimed at maintaining transparency in the management of church finances. This system is quite efficient for small congregations as it simplifies record-keeping and the preparation of periodic reports for the management. Despite this, limited access to monthly reports could potentially limit accountability to the congregation, especially in providing a comprehensive overview of the church's financial condition. The information received by the congregation in practice is limited to the weekly announcements shared during the service. The congregation is not given full access to view financial records, but rather only receives a summary report of weekly income and the number of congregational attendees. This limited information delivery pattern indicates that transparency to the congregation is still partial and does not fully reflect the entire process of church financial management.

The lack of transparency in an accounting perspective is not always seen as a major issue for the church's internal affairs, as the board is able to maintain the congregation's trust thru the standards they set themselves. Although the reporting didn't fully adhere to the applicable rules, the congregation still had complete trust in the reports presented. From the perspective of the congregation, offerings are seen as gifts to God, while the responsibility for their management is entrusted entirely to the church leadership. This view aligns with the biblical principle written in 2 Corinthians 9:7, "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." Within an academic framework, this phenomenon can be explained thru trust theory, where the congregation grants full authority to church officials to manage funds, with the belief that the officials will carry out their duties responsibly and in accordance with the values of faith.

Participation of Church Leaders in Church Financial Management

In its implementation, the Church needs to prepare financial statements as a form of accountability to the users of the financial statements. The users of these financial statements are all members of the church, such as the congregation, pastors, elders, and specific committees or departments that have been established in each church. Church organizations are one form of non-profit organizations in the religious field, in accordance with Financial Accounting Standards (PSAK) 45 of 2011 regarding Non-Profit Organizations, which states that non-profit organizations must prepare financial statements and report them to users of financial statements. Understanding church financial management, which often leads to disputes and conflicts within the church due to a lack of understanding of accountability and the preparation of standard financial reports that can be presented to third parties if needed. In managing church finances, the administrators believe they don't need professional accounting help from outside. They felt they had mastered the field of finance sufficiently and were capable of performing the task independently. This statement was reinforced by the treasurer's mother's expression.

"Yes, we are still a small church, so it seems we don't need outside help."

This view influenced internal accounting practices, where financial statements were more focused on the daily administrative needs of the congregation without fully adhering to ISAK 35 standards, often resulting in suboptimal financial management (Ngawu et al., 2024) Another factor is that some administrators have to handle more than one area of service. This divides their focus for other services, especially personal matters, leading to delays and irregularities in financial record-keeping and reporting. This condition indicates that a high level of board member participation does not necessarily guaranty effectiveness if it is not balanced with competence and proportional division of tasks (Mangiri & Sasabone, 2023). The church has actually been trying to keep up with the times by using a digital system to help with the weekly financial record-keeping process. Theoretically, this system is expected to simplify the reporting process and increase financial transparency (Alse Hau et al., 2023) However, in practice, the use of the digital system has not been optimal because the administrators often forget or are late in entering financial data due to the layered service burden. This situation shows that the use of technology does not automatically increase accountability if it is not accompanied by commitment and discipline from the managers. This phenomenon indicates that participation in the form of technology use still requires support in the form of consistent administrative habituation from church administrators. The dynamics of church leadership changes is also one of the factors influencing the financial management process. According to the church shepherd, the management usually changes every two years, which often makes it difficult to trace and correct errors in the financial statements due to the unstable management structure. This statement is reinforced by the shepherd's expression:

"...yes, our Church's leadership changes every 2 years."

The perspective resulting from the pastor's statement was not fully agreed upon by the management, as some of them felt that the rapid turnover actually provided room for mutual coordination and correction. As stated by the treasurer, "I asked them to correct me if there were any errors in the report writing via the group WhatsApp, since WhatsApp is now quite advanced." This statement describes the active collective participation among the managers in ensuring the financial statements remain accurate. Communication between the board members thru the WhatsApp group serves as an effective

means for mutual review and improvement of the financial reports that have been prepared. This indicates that cooperation and openness within the team are important assets for the church in maintaining smooth financial administration, even in the face of the challenge of high leadership turnover. The frequent change of management is common, and there is a positive aspect in that it allows for a process of regeneration in service. The old managers played an important role in guiding and teaching the new managers about the proper management of church finances. This process became a tangible form of sustainable participation that strengthened the spirit of togetherness among church servants. However, because most of the managers do not have an accounting background, the knowledge transfer process is practical and limited, so the resulting financial statements are still not fully compliant with applicable accounting standards. This management condition indicates that the participation of church administrators in managing church finances is relatively high, but the quality of its implementation does not yet reflect ideal accountability and transparency. Factors such as double workloads, limited technical capabilities, and rapid changes in management are major challenges in achieving good financial governance. Nevertheless, the spirit of service, willingness to learn, and efforts to adapt thru the use of digital systems demonstrate significant potential for the church to continue improving the quality of its financial management in the future.

Discussion

The following diagram illustrates the roles and participation of church officials in managing church finances. This diagram depicts the relationship between several important aspects: the participation of church officials, financial record-keeping and reporting, and the church's internal audit. Thru this diagram, it can be seen how church officials actively participate in the financial management process, from collaboration and responsibility in record-keeping to the implementation of internal audits that support transparency and accountability in church finances.

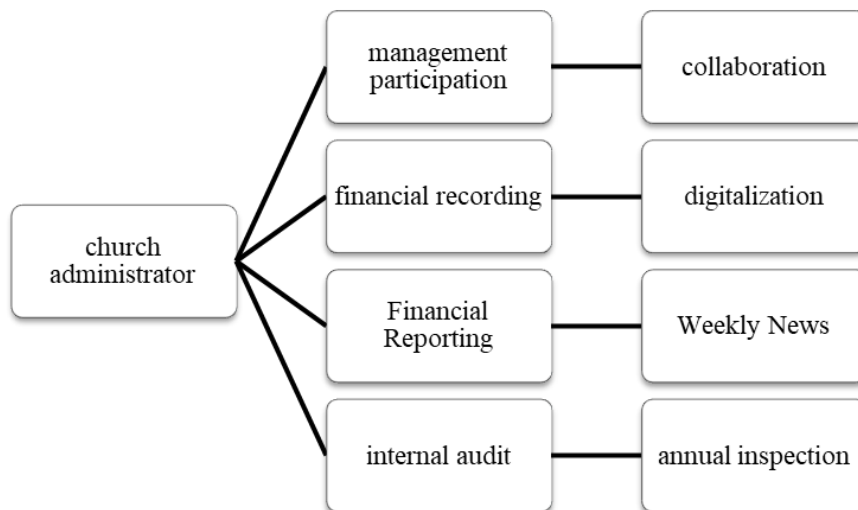


Figure 2. Model of the roles and participation of Church Administrator in Church Financial Management

The research results indicate that the Rahmani Indonesia Church of Christ has demonstrated a high level of board member participation in financial management, particularly thru the implementation of a digital recording system using Google Forms and Google Spreadsheets. This finding demonstrates innovation and adaptation to technological developments within the context of non-profit religious organizations. This aligns with the view of (Putu et al., 2025) which emphasizes that using digital systems can improve the efficiency and transparency of financial reporting. The implementation of the digital system has not yet fully and comprehensively captured the church's financial condition. The data entered is still limited to daily cash recording, while other report components stipulated in ISAK 35, such as the statement of cash flows, changes in net assets, and notes to the financial statements, have not yet been implemented. This situation is similar to the findings of (Purba & Manullang, 2023) and (Mariati Munte et al., 2024), which show that most churches still use simple record-keeping without fully adhering to non-profit entity accounting standards. Technical limitations are also influenced by human resource factors, as evidenced by the large number of managers who do not have an accounting background and must handle multiple service areas. As a result, there were delays in data input and recording errors that reduced the accuracy of the reports.

This phenomenon reinforces the view (Mangiri & Sasabone, 2023) that high participation does not always guaranty effectiveness if it is not balanced with clear competence and division of labor. From an accountability perspective, the Church has strived to maintain transparency by publishing weekly financial reports in the form of parish bulletins. However, the reports presented are still limited to revenue information without details of expenses. This condition creates a transparency gap, as stated by (Hermanto et al., 2021) and (Tjungadi & Rahadian, 2020) that incomplete reporting can lead to a perception of being less open, even thought the congregation's trust in the management remains high. From the perspective of

Stewardship Theory, church managers have demonstrated strong moral and spiritual responsibility in managing congregational funds. They view service as a form of God's mandate, making the spirit of dedication the primary motivation for maintaining the church's financial integrity. High congregational trust is also a supporting factor for system sustainability, even though it doesn't technically meet all the principles of modern accountability. Thus, the implementation of a digital system and the spirit of service can be considered an initial step toward more professional and transparent church financial governance.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that financial management at the Rahmani Indonesia Church of Christ demonstrates a high level of responsibility and service spirit among the administrators in carrying out their functions as servants of God, in accordance with the principles explained in Stewardship Theory. Utilizing a digital system thru Google Forms is a positive step toward achieving order and efficiency in financial record-keeping, although its application is still limited to daily cash recording and does not fully meet financial reporting standards based on ISAK 35. The simple reporting and internal audit system indicates that the church still relies on the congregation's trust as a form of moral accountability, rather than on formal transparency mechanisms. The active and collaborative participation of the management, combined with strong spiritual values, is a key factor in maintaining the integrity of the church's financial system. Thus, the implementation of a digital system accompanied by strengthening the capacity of the management is expected to serve as the foundation for achieving more professional, transparent, and accountable church financial governance. This research has limitations in terms of access to church financial data. The church authorities did not grant full permission to view and examine all financial report documents because the information is internal and should only be accessed by the board of directors. This condition means researchers can only use data that has been approved for sharing and information obtained thru interviews. This limited access affects the depth of analysis, especially when evaluating the financial reporting system comprehensively. Additionally, all the informants interviewed were internal church members such as pastors, treasurers, secretaries, and congregation representatives. The absence of external respondents limited the comparative information, making the research results more descriptive based on the perceptions and experiences of church administrators. Therefore, the findings of this study are not intended to be generalized, but rather to provide a contextual overview of financial management practices at the Rahmani Indonesia Church of Christ.

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