

The Pastor's Role in Effectively Managing the Congregation's Potential: A Case Study in GKII Gracia Sintang

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the pastor's role as a religious leader in empowering the congregation's potential. Research for this article was conducted in GKII Gracia parish, Sintang. Qualitative method was utilized by the researchers, who interviewed the pastor, church committee members, and many members of the congregation. Data triangulation was used to obtain pertinent information from interview transcripts, and the results were then presented in a descriptive manner. Based on the collected data, these roles—which the pastor does in his capacity as a spiritual leader—were recognized as being essential to achieving church autonomy in GKII Gracia Sintang: 1) enlistment of the congregation in spiritual ministry to involve them according to their own abilities and potential, 2) optimization of external opportunities and utilization of internal potential to achieve good results, 3) mobilization of the congregation through encouraging and galvanizing them to participate in church ministry. In order to support these roles, particularly mobilization, training, pastoral visitation, and sermon delivery aimed at awakening the congregation to the importance of their participation were carried out.

Keywords: pastor, spiritual leader, church self-reliance, church member potential

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INTRODUCTION

Religious institutions play a significant part in community development. According to Yip, Lee, & Tang (2020), a rebuilt organized church can lead to communal development. A healthy church is a church growing up to the point of self-reliance and becoming a missionary church (Susanto, 2016). No matter how strong or talented a pastor is, they cannot labor alone to realize this, let alone attain optimal growth. In order to maximize his or her ministry, a competent pastor needs assistance from employees and/or colleagues (Ndapamuri & Objantoro, 2019).

Help can also be sought through managing the congregation. Bons-Storm (2012, p. 26) explained that members of the congregation can participate in church activities in order to live out and fulfill their callings and help the church become a blessing to many by doing so. An example was found in the early Church, where one of the pillars of its self-reliance was the participation of all the faithful (Rumbi, 2019; Sunarko, 2020b). Therefore, true to this day, participation from every aspect of the church is required to have a significant impact on church development.

The congregation's engagement in various ministry initiatives is strongly encouraged by the spiritual leader. Tafonao (2018) discovered that the pastor, as a spiritual leader, is crucial in inspiring and educating the church youth to participate in ministry. Hura (2020) proposed that the congregation's engagement in various church ministries depend on the pastor's communication style. This idea was further backed by research by Munthe (2019), which reveals that the congregation's participation in various church ministries in line with the Great Commission is a result of church leaders' effective use and utilization of the congregation's gifts. It is clear from the aforementioned considerations that spiritual leaders play a crucial role in mobilizing the congregation for Christian ministry.

Research by Soryadi and Hermanto (2019) shows that the congregation's participation in ministry emerges from the pastor's effort to provide excellent pastoral care. Tuai (2020) saw that churches would grow if their congregation were involved in evangelism. Meanwhile, research by Santosa et al., (2022) reveals that female leaders were crucial in giving the congregation economic empowerment. Darmawan et al. (2021) demonstrated importance of a congregation's the great participation in church ministry during the COVID-19 pandemic, which could trigger church selfreliance and growth. The studies described above looked at the congregation's involvement and education in spiritual, familial, and even financial issues. However, as it becomes a key factor in the congregation's participation, it is still seen as crucial to conduct a study on the part pastors and spiritual leaders play in activating their congregation's potential.

The Gracia parish of Gereja Kemah Injil Indonesia (Indonesian C&MA, abbreviated to GKII), afterwards referred to as GKII Gracia Sintang, appears to have carried out optimization of the congregation's role towards church self-reliance. According to the preliminary investigation into the parish, the members appear to have grown in good faith, be engaged in services, and have a high degree of solidarity. Since the early research indicates that the majority of the congregation has been put to effective use in ministry and church work in line with their own abilities and potential, the parish leaders also appear to have utilized their members' potential.

The parish has its own autonomy, which it received from the Sintang GKII church convention. Several aspects of self-reliance were found, namely: a) financial self-reliance, in which the parish has the ability to finance its own operation and to give financial support to its church planting establishments; b) constitutional self-reliance, with the parish having its own constitution in the form of a Church Order and Bylaws in accordance with GKII; c) polity self-reliance, in which the Pastor, the pastoral staff, and the Church Board carry out church functions in accordance with an established Standard Operating Procedure; d) missionary selfreliance, whereby the church, in collaboration with the Departments of Mission and Evangelism in the national GKII structure, is able to dispatch missions and contribute to the funding of missions. Based on this context, the researchers believe it is important to investigate the pastor's role as a spiritual leader in maximizing the potential of the GKII Gracia Sintang congregation.

METHOD

The research was conducted in GKII Gracia Sintang, West Kalimantan by using qualitative method. The method was chosen since it is desired to find the meaning of the pastor's role in the empowerment of the congregation's potential. As a result, the method generates descriptive data on observable behavior.

In order to facilitate this, the data were collected in situ by means of observations and interviews. In-depth interview sessions were chosen to approach this subject in order to understand a problem or phenomenon in a subjective manner (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Nazir, 1988; Zaluchu, 2020, 2021). The informants in this research were the pastor, church committee members, and some members of the congregation.

The data were then analyzed in stages by using the Miles and Huberman (2009) analytical model, which included classifying the interview data, grouping the classified data, and presenting the data in a descriptive and systematic manner.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Enlistment in Spiritual Ministry

The GKII Gracia Sintang's spiritual leaders played a vital role that could influence the presence of utilization of his/her congregation's potential for the parish's self-reliance, since by incorporating people into the ministry, spiritual leaders can make use of the potential of their followers (Mawikere, 2018). In this regard, the church leaders also equipped their congregation with spiritual ministry skills and led an exemplary personal and ministerial life.

Based on the interview data analysis, GKII Gracia Sintang had amazing potential and excellent utilization skills. In spite of that, it was discovered despite the leaders' best efforts, the that. congregation's potential had not been fully used due to a number of obstacles. Nevertheless, even with these obstacles, chances to obtain the greatest amount of church self-reliance were also discovered. Susanto (2016) argued that a congregation's underutilized potential could limit its ability to act independently. Hutahean (2021, p. 4) and Olabamiji (2022) supported this, postulating that the Church is a voluntary society that grows on insights, knowledge, and creativity. Consequently, GKII Gracia Sintang has developed into a community that is constantly willing to grow and that requires effective management of the congregation's potential.

GKII Gracia Sintang has a sizable number of members with a fairly high level of education. Its youths attained senior high school and universitylevel education, which enabled their involvement in ministerial activities. The congregation was mostly middle class, with many in civil service and in entrepreneurship. They were also highly skilled and cohesive in their social interactions within the church, and they helped one another. These were some of the parish's potential that could be optimized to realize church self-reliance.

In effectively using the congregation's potential, the spiritual leader of this congregation played several roles. Firstly, the leader developed a consistent time schedule for all categories of ministry that involves every church member in accordance with their individual skill, aptitude for education, and capacity. Secondly, the pastor enlisted the help of the church in caring for the ill, evangelistic efforts, and providing weekly ministry to the church planting locations.

Subsequently, these efforts resulted in the parish establishing three church planting posts: one each in Rarai, Solam Raya, and Martiguna, with the congregation giving their active support to maintain the posts' existence to their maturity. The opening of the Center for Child Development and Ministry by the parish, responsible for caring for more than 100 foster children, is another outcome of these ways of management. By involving members competent in child education, pediatrics, and child spiritual ministry, the Center is prepared to equip the future generation with the necessary health, education, and spiritual state. The two outcomes represented the parish's internal and external developments as a result of effective utilization of the congregation's potential, which eventually led to the church becoming autonomous and missionary.

The findings are consistent with Jura's (2021) belief that maximizing congregational empowerment, particularly in local church leadership, will aid in the development of the church. Jura (2021) also stated that the local church will grow most effectively if all of its components are empowered to the best of their abilities. The findings indicate that efforts were being made to increase the congregation's capacity for selfreliance by utilizing its potential as demonstrated by the pastor's actions in involving the congregation in a variety of ministerial activities. Still, it should be noted that gaps between the pastor and the congregation can occur if the pastor is unable to effectively manage the potential. Levine and Stoll (1997) argued that religious roles are critical in bridging the gap between congregational power and empowerment. According to this point of view, the empowerment of the GKII Gracia Sintang congregation by the pastor exemplifies the way organized religion can help reduce inequality.

However, despite the church members' involvement, GKII Gracia Sintang still needs to perform some practical actions. The congregation's members must all grasp the norms for participating in ministry, which calls for ongoing instruction in these guidelines. Tomatala (2004) contends that spiritual leaders must give the congregation guidance in order to achieve the stated objective. It is also vital to train the congregation to hone their ministry abilities in order to enable them to perform effective spiritual ministry due to the congregation's diverse educational and professional backgrounds. This step is essentially in line with the concept of discipleship within the Church. According to Darmawan (2017, 2019), the Church's responsibility for nurturing its members extends beyond simply forming them into members of the community, but includes preparing them to participate in the ministry. The congregation needs to be instructed in practical theological concerns and given ministryspecific training in this way.

Opportunity Optimization and Utilization of Potential

In building an organization, there exist strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) to be analyzed. The analysis is beneficial in strategic planning (Tefera & Hunsaker, 2020; Tomatala, 2002). The researchers discovered four main opportunities for the ministry's development of GKII Gracia Sintang, as presented in the following.

Opportunities from Geographic Location

It is true that in order for a church to become self-reliant, opportunities arising in its surroundings must be fully utilized. Permana et al. (2014) claimed that community empowerment can be carried out by maximizing opportunities nearby. Thus, it was discovered that opportunities emerging from outside GKII Gracia Sintang's surroundings, one of which is the church's geographic location, were intentionally leveraged to bolster the church's strengths. This opportunity could be used to build various activities and forms of ministry.

GKII Gracia Sintang is situated in the downtown district of Sintang, home to many higher education institutions, which offers excellent opportunities to connect with students from outside the city who live in boarding houses and dormitories. Given this, the pastor decided to seize this chance by enlisting the help of a large number of parishioners, turning the congregation into partners in ministry. The parish made the most of some of its members by involving them in a range of missions due to the wide geographic reach of ministry in Sintang.

Opportunities in Education Field

One of the missions stated above was in the field of education due to the significant demand for access to education in Sintang, partly since the city has become a hub for education for the nearby regencies. In dealing with this, the parish could then set up educational institutions of all levels, starting from kindergartens to higher education facilities. Referring to research by Nofyansyah et al. (2018), the establishment of educational institutions directly and indirectly leads to job creation, meaning that in this case, potential within GKII Gracia Sintang-in the form of the large number of parishioners-may be fully utilized in the establishment of educational institutions in Sintang. Members with relevant competencies could be involved as educators in these future establishments. The parish could be present in the community and offer top-notch educational services thanks to its advantages in terms of land area, location, and accessibility of human resources.

In terms of the leadership, in order to increase ministry activities, the pastor should take advantage of GKII Gracia Sintang's strengths and potential (Okunade, 2022; Permana et al., 2014).

Opportunities in Manpower for Internal Parish Ministries

Members of the parish who had not yet been given any ministry responsibilities were also given opportunities to serve. The congregation's spiritual potential is one opportunity Munthe (2019) believed needs to be developed to its fullest. The congregation's spiritual gifts are one example of this, which must be used effectively to support the growth of church ministry. By equipping the members in meetings such as training sessions, seminars, and workshops, the members will be more eager and self-assured about participating in ministry. This result supports Riniwati's (2020) view that providing training is an effective strategy to prepare church members for service in church ministry. Members with strong educational backgrounds are valuable assets for the church and will be of great assistance to church leaders in managing various ministerial tasks.

However, in order for them to function effectively, there needs to be a good structure in place to manage these individuals, particularly with regard to the delegation of authority and responsibility from the leaders. To tackle this, the parish's Church Committee dispatched parishioners to its ministry in accordance with their individual talents, qualifications, and areas of specialization. Spiritually-upstanding church members were assigned liturgical responsibilities of preaching, leading worship, and singing. It is evident from the foregoing that the congregation's intellectual and professional potential, if utilized to the fullest, provided the parish leaders with sufficient aid in performing their ministerial duties.

Opportunities in Manpower for Outreach

GKII Gracia Sintang could play a role in the dispatch of manpower for missions to the areas within West Kalimantan or elsewhere outside Kalimantan. Interview and observational findings indicate that the GKII Gracia Sintang congregation had a strong sense of solidarity, which was demonstrated by their eagerness to participate in many church activities. This kind of solidarity is a strength to be leveraged in the dispatch of manpower for missions to various places in Kalimantan. Taking account of the early Church's way of living, the solidarity of the early Church was a crucial factor in their growth (Sunarko, 2020a; Zaluchu, 2019). The early Church members' attitudes toward helping one another were a potential factor in their expansion (Rumbi, 2019). Similarly, the pastor could apply this time-tested formula by harnessing the sense of solidarity among GKII Gracia Sintang parishioners to efficiently dispatch manpower for missions.

This is shown by the parish's ability to act as a "dispatcher church," providing financial support for missionary efforts in various areas. Based on the 2019-2021 data gathered by the researchers, GKII Gracia Sintang had allocated mission funds to help several church planting efforts in West Kalimantan, coming from church offerings and a number of individual contributions from the congregation. This fact demonstrates how the parish leaders made the best use of the parish's ability for missions by maximizing its opportunities.

Member Mobilization for Church Self-Reliance

Spiritual leaders as mobilizers have a role in encouraging and galvanizing all of their congregation's participation in the church ministry by effectively using their respective potential.

A person's activities can theoretically be motivated by either internal or external factors. Success in completing projects, the appearance of personal recognition, the existence of responsibility for the work of others, and changes in status, such as positions, are some of the internal factors believed to motivate an organization, while the presence of technical advice or knowledgeable superiors, the existence of a quality relationship with the advisor, and the culture of the organization itself are examples of external factors (Engstrom & Dayton, 2007).

In terms of church self-reliance, the spiritual leader inspires his or her congregation to realize it. It was discovered through interviews and observations that the GKII Gracia Sintang leaders could inspire their congregation to participate in numerous kinds of ministry.

The first step to this was through encouragement. The spiritual leaders gave their appreciation to the congregation for their involvement in parish programs. It seemed that encouragements like these caused the congregation to become more aware of the value of participating in a variety of ministries, including giving to missions financially and serving in ministerial roles like group leader and worship leader. These actions resembled those of the apostle Paul, who frequently praised the churches for their deeds in his epistles (Gaventa, 2022). They also shared characteristics with Jesus' leadership, which placed a strong emphasis on inspiring followers to take action (Katarina & Siswanto, 2018). Jesus encouraged His disciples in some of His deeds so that they would continue to be enthusiastic about hearing and doing His teachings. Sianipar (2019) posited that spiritual leaders can provide spiritual reinforcement and support to improve the congregation's passion for participating in ministry. Based on the examples above, acts of encouragement would motivate the congregation to be willing to serve.

The next step in congregation mobilization was through training. According to the pastor's interviews, some members received training to help them better grasp the fundamentals of ministry and the significance of their involvement in it. Through workshops, members of the congregation become trained and prepared to participate in various ministries of the parish. Additionally, the pastor provided trained members with several opportunities to expand their involvement in the ministry. With access to training possibilities in areas like teaching Bible studies and cell groups, the congregation would widen their scope of service. These initiatives follow the guidelines of discipleship. Per the definition of the concept of discipleship by Darmawan (2019) and Orles (2020), church leaders have a duty to educate and prepare their congregation to engage in ministry. Consequently, the congregation's trained members would expand their engagement by becoming considerably more competent in the ministry.

One of the potential reasons for the congregation's lack of involvement in church ministry is the requirement for training. Addressing this, the pastor of GKII Gracia Sintang organized evangelism-related seminars and training sessions. Winarno (2019) noted that the congregation requires training to be able to serve effectively in order for church multiplication to occur.

It is time-tested knowledge that seminars and training sessions tailored to the requirements of the congregation are those most likely to result in change and encourage ministry engagement. Tuai (2020) revealed that seminars and training sessions are coaching initiatives carried out to increase congregational involvement in ministry. In the opinion of GKII Gracia Sintang, these initiatives are crucial in encouraging congregations to engage in ministry by providing them with the necessary training.

The pastor thus organized Bible studies and ministry training workshops to support this. He was the instructor and set the subjects for the Bible studies. According to Gunawan (2020), a Christian's spiritual maturity is tremendously assisted by the ministry of discipleship in order for them to exhibit Christlike characteristics and have a strong desire to serve the Lord. Therefore, the goal of this discipleship program is to increase the congregation's involvement in parish ministry in order to realize church self-reliance.

The pastor also undertook pastoral visitation to guide members who were not yet participating in prayer or evangelism efforts. By explaining to them the vision for ministry, the pastor also developed their sense of perception.

Preaching on evangelism, particularly during the GKII Month of Mission, increased the congregation's awareness of the significance of their involvement in the effort. In Wijaya's (2019) opinion, one strategy a pastor can employ to nurture his or her church is to offer a sermon. Selan (2022) concurred that the pastor instructs his or her congregation on how to apply God's word through the sermon. Since the Bible declares that it is every believer's obligation to carry out God's work in the world, this means that the pastor instructs his or her congregation in carrying out this duty through sermons. In order for the congregation to understand the significance of their involvement in these initiatives and thereby become more motivated, visits to the Church Planting posts were made with them. Since they had a firsthand look at how these places were progressing with the help of GKII Gracia Sintang's sponsorship, the congregation became increasingly eager to provide more support, both material and moral.

CONCLUSION

These roles—which the pastor does in his capacity as a spiritual leader—were recognized as being essential to achieving church self-reliance in GKII Gracia Sintang. The first step is enlisting the congregation in spiritual ministry, which is accomplished by developing a consistent time schedule for all categories of ministry that involves every church member in accordance with their individual skill, aptitude for education, and capacity. The second step is optimizing opportunities

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and utilizing the congregation's potential. It was discovered that opportunities emerging from outside the parish's surroundings, one of which is its geographic location, were intentionally leveraged to bolster its strengths. To meet the high need for education in Sintang, the parish could establish educational institutions. This would allow the congregation to realize its full potential and make the best use of its members who have not previously been involved in ministry responsibilities. Due to their strong sense of unity, there was a dispatch of personnel for missions and an increase in congregation engagement within the parish. The leaders engaged in congregation mobilization to increase participation and move the parish toward self-reliance by encouraging and galvanizing them to be involved in church ministry according to their own potential. Training, pastoral visits, and the delivery of sermons with a focus on congregational engagement are specific actions taken to actualize the mobilization.

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