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The Influence of Catechism Teaching, Lutheran Worship, and Pastoring towards Congregation Behavior: A Study in GKLI

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Abstract

This study examines the individual and combined effects of catechetical instruction, Lutheran worship practices, and pastoral care on the behavioral patterns of congregants within the Indonesian Lutheran Christian Church (GKLI) in the Humbang Hasundutan region, Indonesia. Utilizing purposive sampling, the study surveyed 160 adult congregants aged 20–59, drawn from a total population of 3,987. Data were collected using a validated and reliable closed-ended questionnaire. The findings indicate that catechetical instruction (r = 0.439; 19.27%), Lutheran worship (r = 0.464; 21.53%), and pastoral care (r = 0.546; 29.81%) each exert a moderate yet statistically significant positive influence on congregational behavior. Collectively, these three variables explain 46.51% of the variance in congregational behavior (R = 0.682), with the F-test (F = 45.167 > F_table = 2.60) confirming the overall significance of the model. These results highlight the critical role of strengthening catechetical education, liturgical engagement, and pastoral support in promoting positive behavioral outcomes among GKLI congregants in the Humbang Hasundutan region.

1. Introduction

The role of religious education, worship, and pastoral care has long been recognized as central to shaping the moral and behavioral orientation of church congregations (Magezi, V., & Nanthambwe, 2022). Within the Lutheran tradition, catechetical instruction functions not only as doctrinal teaching but also as a means of nurturing spiritual maturity and ethical conduct. Similarly, worship practices serve as communal expressions of theological convictions and act as a medium through which congregants internalize values and cultivate spiritual discipline. Pastoral care, meanwhile, offers individualized spiritual guidance, emotional support, and a

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tangible embodiment of the church's mission in daily life. Collectively, these elements constitute foundational components of ecclesial life, believed to significantly influence how church members interact with one another, engage with society, and respond to moral and spiritual challenges.

This study investigates the influence of catechetical instruction, Lutheran worship, and pastoral care on the behavioral tendencies of congregants within the Indonesian Lutheran Christian Church (GKLI), specifically in the Humbang Hasundutan region. Although these three pillars are theologically and pastorally emphasized within the church, empirical studies examining their measurable impact on congregational behavior remain scarce in the Indonesian context. By employing a descriptive quantitative approach and analyzing the responses of 160 adult GKLI members, this research seeks to address that gap. The findings are expected to offer valuable insights for church leaders, educators, and policymakers aiming to strengthen the spiritual formation and ethical conduct of congregants through more effective catechetical instruction, liturgical participation, and pastoral engagement.

2. Materials and Methods

Congregational Behavior

Papelis, Y., & Madhavan, P. (2010) state that behavior encompasses all human activities and actions, whether directly observable or not. Based on the nature of the response to stimuli, behavior can be categorized into two types: First, **closed behavior**, which occurs when the response to a stimulus is not directly visible or observable by others. This includes internal reactions such as attention, feelings, perceptions, knowledge, and attitudes. Second, **open behavior**, which is when the response to a stimulus is externally visible and can be clearly observed through actions or practices.

According to B.F. Skinner, behavior is a response to external stimuli and is shaped by interactions with the environment and the consequences that follow, emphasizing the role of learning. Bandura (1986), on the other hand, defined behavior as the result of reciprocal interactions between personal factors (cognitive, affective, and biological), behavioral patterns, and environmental influences—a concept known as triadic reciprocal determinism.

In this study, congregational behavior is defined as concrete actions reflecting an individual's understanding and application of Lutheran doctrine (sola scriptura, sola fide, sola gratia) within spiritual, moral, and social contexts. These behaviors include adherence to the Lutheran faith through worship, sacraments, and prayer; implementation of moral values from Luther's Small Catechism (e.g., the Ten Commandments and the Apostles' Creed); and active service to the church and broader society in accordance with Christian ethics.

Catechism Teaching

The term *catechism* originates from the Greek word *κατηχητικός* (*katechetikos*), meaning "instruction" (Kidd, J. E., 2017). In Christian tradition, particularly within Lutheranism, it refers to a structured and systematic presentation of the basic doctrines of the faith, often in a question-and-answer format. Historically, this method has served as a foundation for Christian education for both children and adults.

Martin Luther's contributions to catechetical teaching are especially significant. His *Small Catechism* and *Large Catechism* are not only historical documents but also enduring resources that continue to shape Lutheran theology and congregational identity. These texts explain foundational Christian doctrines such as the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the sacraments, and the life of faith.

The primary purposes of catechism instruction are: (1) to deepen the laypeople's understanding of Christian doctrine; (2) to combat spiritual ignorance and moral decline—what

Luther termed "spiritual blindness"; and (3) to foster communal unity by establishing shared theological foundations. Luther emphasized that catechism teaching should not rely solely on memorization but must cultivate true comprehension and application.

Pedagogically, the catechism employs an interactive format (e.g., *Frage und Antwort*—"question and answer") and emphasizes repetition and daily review. Luther advocated for both individual and family involvement, assigning parents the role of "house priests" responsible for religious instruction within the home.

Lutheran Worship

Worship, according to theologians is an act of devotion that involves awakening the conscience to God's holiness, feeding the mind with His truth, purifying the imagination with His beauty, opening the heart to His love, and dedicating the will to His purpose (Von, 2023). The foundation of worship is rooted in both Old and New Testament traditions. From Abel's offering (Genesis 4:4) to the structured worship practices of the Israelites in the Tabernacle (Exodus 25–30), biblical worship has always involved reverence, sacrifice, and communion with God. In the New Testament, worship is fulfilled in Christ, as described in Luke 24:27 and Hebrews 8–10, where Jesus is presented as both the High Priest and the ultimate sacrifice.

Lutheran worship is grounded in Scripture and retains continuity with biblical and historical traditions. It integrates symbols from the Old Testament—such as sacrifice and Psalms—with the fulfilled promises of the New Testament. Importantly, Lutheran liturgy emphasizes heartfelt worship over ritualism (Amos 5:21–24; Mark 7:6–8) (Barker et al., 2020), rejecting empty formalism in favor of sincere spiritual expression. Worship remains a central medium through which believers experience grace, express gratitude, and live out their faith.

Pastoral Care

The term "pastor" comes from the Latin *pastor* (shepherd) and the Greek *poimen*, denoting one who tends a flock. In the church, pastoral care (*poimenika*) refers to the spiritual oversight and guidance offered by clergy to their congregations. It includes visiting members, providing biblical counsel in life situations, offering support in times of hardship, disciplining with love, and modeling godly behavior (Tilley, 2016).

Pastoral care aims to enhance both the quantitative and qualitative growth of the church. Numerically, this is achieved through evangelism and discipleship, while qualitatively, it is fostered through scriptural teaching and active engagement in service. Forms of pastoral care include home visits, counseling, prayer, diaconal services, faith formation programs, and the use of media for spiritual edification. Servant leadership is foundational to effective pastoral ministry. Following the example of Christ, pastors are called to lead with humility, serve sacrificially, and guide the congregation in aligning with God's will.

The Indonesian Lutheran Christian Church (GKLI)

The Indonesian Lutheran Christian Church (GKLI) was founded on May 18, 1965, by Rev. J. Sinaga, initially under the name HKBPL as a separate entity from HKBP. Its ministry began in North Tapanuli and later expanded to Medan, Pematangsiantar, Dairi, Riau, Jambi, and Jakarta.

The name was officially changed to GKLI during the 1974 Grand Synod, and the central office moved to Sihabonghabong, Humbang Hasundutan, North Sumatra, in 1985 (Aritonang, 2018).

In Region III Humbang Hasundutan, GKLI comprises 3,987 members across various age groups: children (30%), teenagers (20%), adults (40%), and the elderly (10%). The gender distribution is 48% male and 52% female. There are 41 church workers, including 7 pastors, 6 evangelists, and 28 congregational teachers.

On average, about 65% of members participate in weekly services and church activities. Regular programs include Sunday worship, Sunday school, youth fellowships, women's group meetings, family prayer gatherings, anniversary celebrations, and inter-congregational events.

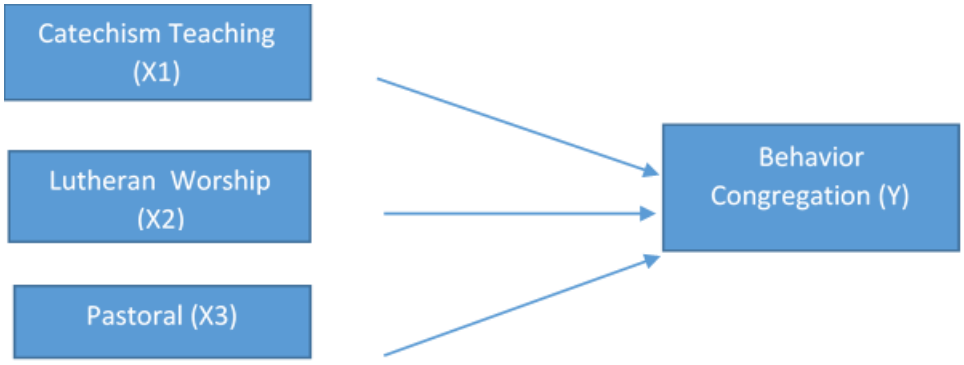
However, the church faces several challenges, including limited human and financial resources, theological illiteracy among congregants, and inconsistent participation due to daily life demands. These issues underscore the need for stronger catechetical teaching, meaningful worship experiences, and effective pastoral care to support spiritual formation and church engagement.

Hypotheses

Based on the objectives of this study, the following hypotheses are proposed:

1. **H1**: Catechism teaching has a significant and positive influence on the behavior of congregants in the GKLI Hum bang Hasundutan area.
2. **H2**: Lutheran worship has a significant and positive influence on the behavior of congregants in the GKLI Hum bang Hasundutan area.
3. **H3**: Pastoral care has a significant and positive influence on the behavior of congregants in the GKLI Hum bang Hasundutan area.
4. **H4**: Catechism teaching, Lutheran worship, and pastoral care collectively have a significant and positive influence on the behavior of congregants in the GKLI Hum bang Hasundutan area.

Research Model Framework Image



Research Design

This study employs a quantitative approach with a causal-correlational design. According to Kumar et al. (2017), quantitative research offers advantages in terms of objectivity, generalizability, and predictability, allowing researchers to draw valid and generalizable conclusions regarding the phenomena under investigation. In this context, the research aims to produce findings that can be generalized about the influence of catechism teaching, Lutheran worship, and pastoral care on the behavior of congregants in the GKLI Humbang Hasundutan region. A survey method was used, with a structured questionnaire serving as the primary instrument for data collection to measure the influence of the independent variables on congregational behavior.

Population and Sample

The population of this study comprises all adult members of the GKLI congregations located in the Humbang Hasundutan area. From a total population of 3,987 members, a purposive sampling technique was employed to select 160 respondents aged between 20 and 59 years who were actively involved in church activities.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted using two primary techniques: observation and questionnaire distribution. The researcher acted as a participant observer, being directly involved in the teaching of catechism, the facilitation of Lutheran worship services, and the delivery of pastoral care within the GKLI congregations. This allowed for a deeper contextual understanding of the practices being studied. The questionnaire, consisting of closed-ended and validated items, was used to gather quantifiable data on the variables of interest.

Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were employed to analyze the data. Descriptive analysis was used to present the distribution and central tendency of each variable—namely Catechism Teaching (X1), Lutheran Worship (X2), Pastoral Care (X3), and Congregational Behavior (Y). Mean scores were calculated for each variable to provide an overview of the data. Furthermore, inferential analysis using correlation and regression techniques was applied to test the hypotheses and determine the strength and significance of the relationships among the variables. These analytical methods ensured that the research findings were both valid and reliable for interpretation and conclusion.

3. Results and Discussion

Classical Assumption Test

The results of the classical assumption tests—including the reliability test, multicollinearity test, and normality test—indicate that all variables used in the study are valid and suitable as measurement tools. The multicollinearity test confirms that there is no significant correlation among the independent variables, demonstrating that the regression model is free from multicollinearity. Furthermore, the normality test shows that the data are normally distributed, satisfying one of the key assumptions for parametric statistical analysis. Based on these results, the research model meets the necessary classical assumptions, thereby justifying the use of multiple linear regression analysis to test the study's hypotheses.

Multicollinearity Test

Coefficient Correlations [a]			
Model	Shepherding	Worship Lutheran	Catechism Teaching

1	Correlations	Shepherding	1,000	-.208	-.238
		Lutheran Worship	-.208	1,000	-.185
		Catechism Teaching	-.238	-.185	1,000
	Covariance	Shepherding	.030	-.005	-.009
		Lutheran Worship	-.005	.018	-.005
		Catechism Teaching	-.009	-.005	.045
a. Dependent Variable: Behavior Congregation					

Based on the correlation matrix, the coefficient of correlation between pastoral care (X2) and Lutheran worship (X3) is 0.208. The correlation between pastoral care (X2) and catechism teaching (X1) is 0.238, while the correlation between Lutheran worship (X3) and catechism teaching (X1) is 0.185. All three correlation coefficients are well below the threshold of 0.60, which is commonly used as an indicator of potential multicollinearity. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no multicollinearity among the independent variables, and they can be reliably included in the regression analysis.

Heteroscedasticity Test

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-10,510	22,465		-.468	.641
Teaching Catechism	.861	.212	.252	4.056	.886
Lutheran Worship	.644	.134	.298	4.818	.899
Shepherding	1,089	.172	.395	6,320	.878

Dependent Variable: Behavior Congregation

Based on the results presented in the table, all independent variables have significance values greater than 0.05. This indicates that the residuals are homoscedastic, and thus, there is no evidence of heteroscedasticity in the regression model. Therefore, it can be concluded that the regression model in this study satisfies the assumption of homoscedasticity, supporting the validity of the model for hypothesis testing.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

The analysis technique used in this study is multiple linear regression, conducted using the SPSS program. Based on the calculation of the coefficient of determination, R2= (0.682×0.682) ×100%=46.51%R^2 = (0.682 \times 0.682) \times 100\% = 46.51\%R2= (0.682×0.682) ×100%=46.51%. This means that 46.51% of the variance in the behavior of GKLI congregants in the Humbang Hasundutan area can be explained by the combined influence of catechism teaching, Lutheran worship, and pastoral care. In other words, the magnitude of the combined effect of these three variables on congregational behavior is 46.51%.

The multiple regression equation representing the relationship between congregational behavior and the three independent variables (catechism teaching, Lutheran worship, and pastoral care) is as follows:

Y=β0+β1X1+β2X2+β3X3+ϵY = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \epsilon=β0+β1X1+β2X2+β3X3+ϵ

Where:

- YYY = Behavior of the GKLI congregation,
- X1X_1X1 = Catechism teaching,
- X2X_2X2 = Lutheran worship,
- X3X_3X3 = Pastoral care,
- β0\beta_0β0 = Constant (intercept),
- β1, β2, β3\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3β1, β2, β3 = Regression coefficients for each predictor variable,
- ϵ\epsilonϵ = Error term.

It suggests that improvements in catechism teaching, Lutheran worship, and pastoral care together will lead to a greater positive impact on the behavior of the GKLI congregation in the Humbang Hasundutan region.

Discussion

Based on the results of the research, it can generally be concluded that there is a positive relationship between the independent variables—catechism teaching, Lutheran worship, and pastoral care—and the dependent variable, congregational behavior. All four proposed hypotheses were accepted based on the statistical analysis results.

First, catechism teaching (X1) has a positive influence on congregational behavior (Y), with a correlation coefficient of 0.439 (19.27%). This suggests that as the quality of catechism teaching improves, so does the behavior of the congregation. The catechism, grounded in Martin Luther's Large Catechism, plays a crucial role in shaping the theological understanding, ethical conduct, and active participation of congregants in church life. However, challenges remain, such as low participation in Bible study groups, particularly among youth and adults.

Second, Lutheran worship (X2) also demonstrates a positive influence on congregational behavior, with a correlation coefficient of 0.464 (21.52%). Lutheran worship, which emphasizes liturgical practices cantered on the Word and sacraments, as well as Reformation principles like sola scriptura, sola fide, and sola gratia, provides a spiritually enriching experience that encourages repentance and gratitude. Despite this, there are still issues, such as some congregants not being sufficiently active in hymn-singing or praise, which is an important part of liturgical appreciation.

Third, pastoral care (X3) was found to have the most significant influence on congregational behavior, with a correlation coefficient of 0.546 (29.81%). Pastoral activities such as visits, spiritual counseling, and support during crises play a vital role in strengthening the relationship between church leaders, elders, and congregants. The personal involvement of pastors, particularly during times of sickness or mourning, significantly contributes to congregants' spiritual growth and alignment with Christian values. However, a limited number of congregants receive pastoral visits, indicating that further efforts are needed to improve this aspect of care.

Finally, when considered together, catechism teaching, Lutheran worship, and pastoral care have a significant combined influence on congregational behavior, with a total influence of 0.682 (46.51%). This shows that these three aspects of church service complement each other and collectively contribute to shaping the behavior of congregants in line with Christian values. One indicator of success in this regard is that the congregation refrains from practices like occultism and rejecting blessings from ancestral spirits. Nevertheless, the low priority placed by some congregants on daily Bible reading and reflection highlights the need for a more consistent

implementation of the principle of *sola scriptura* in daily life. Therefore, it is crucial for pastors and elders to continue strengthening these three aspects of church service to foster sustainable growth in both the faith and behavior of the congregation.

Limitations of the Study

Although this study was carefully designed and conducted, it is not without its limitations. The researchers acknowledge that certain weaknesses exist in the organization and presentation of the scientific report. One of the primary limitations is the insufficient development of the underlying theory for each variable, which resulted in the compilation of the questionnaire indicators being less detailed than desired. Additionally, although the study instrument was tested for validity and reliability, there may still be shortcomings, particularly in terms of indicator alignment and the potential for respondents to provide overly positive answers due to social desirability bias. This research primarily examines congregational behavior from three perspectives—catechism teaching, Lutheran worship, and pastoral care—due to the limitations of the researchers' resources and scope. The use of self-reported data, collected through a Likert scale, also presents limitations, particularly regarding the accuracy and honesty of the information provided by respondents. Furthermore, the possibility of intercorrelation between the independent variables presents an inherent challenge in social research that can be difficult to avoid. Despite these limitations, the researchers made every effort to ensure that the results remain valuable and scientifically accountable. While the findings may not be exhaustive, they still contribute meaningful insights into the studied phenomenon.

4. Conclusion

Based on the data analysis and field findings, it can be concluded that catechism teaching significantly influences the ethical and spiritual behavior of the congregation, with an emphasis on core Christian teachings such as the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, and the sacraments. However, participation in catechism classes remains limited, especially among youth and parents, which may hinder the transmission of faith to the next generation. Lutheran worship, while theologically and historically rich, is perceived by some congregants—particularly adults—as less relevant in a contextual manner, leading to a decline in worship participation. On the other hand, pastoral care has proven to be an effective means of fostering closeness and supporting faith development, although it is not yet fully utilized by all members due to resistance or lack of information.

Overall, the three aspects—catechism teaching, Lutheran worship, and pastoral care—are interconnected and work together holistically to shape congregational behavior. However, cultural challenges, traditional beliefs, and a low theological understanding serve as obstacles to deeply internalizing faith teachings.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn, the following strategic recommendations are provided to enhance the quality of services at GKLI:

1. For Church Leaders and Congregational Members: It is recommended to evaluate the methods and materials used in catechism teaching, and to develop a more contextualized and sustainable model of intergenerational learning. Utilizing narrative approaches and digital media can make the teaching more relevant to younger generations.
2. For Liturgists and Pastors: Ongoing training on Lutheran liturgy is necessary, as well as innovative practices to ensure worship remains theologically grounded. Additionally, the use

of local language and contextual narratives in sermons should be encouraged to better connect with the congregation.
3. For Pastoral Care Services: Pastoral care should be more personalized and dialogical, with an emphasis on reaching out to passive congregants or those currently experiencing a crisis of faith. Adequate documentation should be maintained to support effective planning and delivery of services.
4. For the Congregation: Active participation in faith formation is encouraged, alongside the rejection of practices that conflict with Christian teachings. Congregants should strive to live according to the principles of love and repentance.
5. For Future Researchers: It is recommended that future studies investigate the influence of local culture and socio-economic conditions on congregational development. A qualitative approach could also be used to explore the spiritual experiences of individuals in greater depth.

It is hoped that the implementation of these recommendations will foster the significant spiritual growth of the GKLI congregation in the Humbang Hasundutan region.

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