



The Impact of Leadership, Character, and Sanctity of the Congregational Pastor on the Spiritual Growth of the Church Members

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ABSTRACT

This study presents the influence of leadership, character, and sanctity of the congregational pastor on the spiritual growth of church members, specifically those attending the Alfa Omega Ketintang Baru Church in Surabaya. The aim of this research is to analyze the relationship between leadership, character, and sanctity of the congregational pastor and the spiritual growth of church members, particularly those attending the Alfa Omega Ketintang Baru Church in Surabaya. The study employs a survey method to collect data on the influence of leadership, character, and sanctity of the congregational pastor on the spiritual growth of church members. The research sample consists of 150 church members of GPdI Alfa Omega Ketintang Baru in Surabaya. Data is gathered through questionnaires and analyzed using linear regression analysis. The results of the analysis indicate a positive correlation between leadership, character, and sanctity of the congregational pastor and the spiritual growth of church members. The research finds that improvements in leadership, character, and sanctity of the congregational pastor are associated with an increase in the spiritual growth of GPdI Alfa Omega Ketintang Baru church members in Surabaya. The results are as follows: When looking at the population, a t-value of 4.321 for leadership, 3.378 for character, and 5.721 for sanctity is obtained, which is significant at a < 0.05 level. This implies that the variables of leadership, character, and sanctity of the congregational pastor significantly influence the spiritual growth of GPdI Alfa Omega Ketintang Baru church members in Surabaya. Future studies could expand the scope of this research by involving more variables that affect the spiritual growth of church members. Additionally, it is essential to conduct evaluations of church programs, collaborate with mission agencies, and implement effective management systems to enhance the spiritual quality of Christians, the analysis also yielded an R-squared value (Coefficient of Determination) of 0.790 or 79.0%. This means that the contribution of the variables Leadership, Character, and Sanctity of the Congregation's Leader in shaping the Spiritual Growth of the GPdI Alfa Omega Congregation in Ketintang Baru, Surabaya, is 79.0%, while the remaining 21% is influenced by other factors outside the research model.

Keywords: Leadership, character, holiness, spiritual growth of the congregation

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of the pastor's role in spiritual growth in individual lives serves as the primary rationale for the author to conduct research on this aspect (Wongso Peter, 1981). Furthermore, the author recognizes that research on spiritual growth plays a crucial role in the context of Christianity to sustain the church's continuity. Given the ongoing challenges and evolving phenomena, this research assumes significant relevance. Therefore, the author acknowledges that this research must adopt a factual approach that gathers and utilizes relevant facts in accordance with the contemporary developments.

Congregational spirituality that fails to grow is often triggered by conflicts stemming from social disparities within the church. Additionally, leadership transitions also have the potential to hinder the spiritual growth of congregation members within a church. This study will analyze the influence of leadership, character, and sanctity of the congregational pastor on the spiritual growth of church members, specifically those attending GPDI Alfa Omega Ketintang Baru in Surabaya.

The duration of membership in a church and the number of growing churches cannot be considered accurate indicators for measuring the spiritual growth of the congregation. This is evident from the findings of a research study conducted by the Bilangan Research Center (BRC) on 4,394 church leaders located in 34 cities/counties across Indonesia. The conclusions drawn from the study revealed that the majority of congregational pastors and spiritual leaders have not been successful in fostering the spiritual growth of the congregation in their efforts of evangelism. Data released from the study indicated that approximately 42.3% of the congregation in a church actually comes from other churches, rather than new converts from non-Christians, followed by biological or hereditary congregation growth contributing to about 28.1%. In fact, over the past 10 years, only about 34.9% of churches have implemented gospel evangelism programs (BRC, January 30, 2018). This data suggests that spiritual leaders have not paid adequate attention to the spiritual growth of the congregation and, instead, many church leaders have focused more on improving the church as a personally profitable business venture (BRC, January 30, 2018).

Furthermore, the lack of involvement of spiritual leaders, particularly pastors, in the spiritual growth of young people and teenagers has resulted in a declining number of youths attending church services. One of the findings of a survey conducted by the Barna Group (as mentioned in the book "You Lost Me") among Christians aged 18-29 in America indicated that 59% of respondents who used to regularly attend church have stopped doing so (Redaksi Spektrum, 2023). In Indonesia, the role of congregational pastors also has a significant impact on the spirituality of the congregation, especially among young people and teenagers. Data released by the Bilangan Research Center (BRC) in 2018 showed that approximately 21.2% of young people/teenagers who stopped attending church felt that the church leadership was poor. This figure is relatively high considering the total number of respondents, which was 4,095 young Christians (aged 15-25) located in 42 cities and counties across Indonesia. Moreover, around 61.8% of young people and teenagers felt that the church was no longer attractive and suitable for them due to leaders who failed to understand the mindset of young people and were seen as outdated and authoritarian.

The survey conducted by BRC in 2018 on 4,095 young Christian generations in Indonesia revealed an increase in the percentage of teenagers who do not attend religious services regularly as they grow older. This indicates the

urgent need to focus on spiritual growth. Most teenagers attend out of obligation or habit, with only a small portion coming for spiritual nourishment and a desire to worship Jesus. These reasons have their own potential consequences. Teenagers who attend out of obligation may potentially leave the church when they feel free from such obligations, while those who attend for spiritual nourishment may consider moving to another church if they do not find their spiritual needs met by the congregational pastor. In other words, one out of three diligent church-attending teenagers may potentially stop attending regularly, and one out of five diligent Christian teenagers attending church may potentially switch to another church. Additionally, a significant factor here is the quality of church leadership and the presence of hypocrisy within the church, which can make teenagers feel that the church is unsuitable and unattractive to them. Furthermore, the congregational pastor plays a crucial role in involving teenagers in ministry, as churches that encourage teenage involvement in ministry have a higher percentage of teenagers attending religious services regularly compared to churches that do not promote such involvement. Therefore, paying attention to spiritual growth is crucial in addressing these challenges, as teenagers who do not receive encouragement to serve are more likely to leave the church.

Another issue currently faced by the church is secularism infiltrating through spiritual leaders or congregational pastors. This secular view tends to emphasize physical and intellectual development as the highest points, regardless of the spiritual growth of the congregation. As a result, there is a hidden disparity within the congregation. This disparity is referred to by Widiyanto as "Silent Apostasy" (Dr. Kasiatin Widiyanto, 2018).

Furthermore, as reported by CNN in an article written by John Blake on April 2, 2023, out of the 64% of the American population who currently identify themselves as Christians (although this figure is still significant, it represents a substantial decline compared to 50 years ago), there has been a significant decrease compared to 50 years ago when the number of Christian adherents reached 90% of the total population (John Blake, 2023). This further strengthens the predictions made by the Pew Research Center in 2020, which stated that the majority of Christians in the United States may disappear by the year 2070. The primary factor influencing this decline is the negative image of leaders. This indicates a downward trend in the number of Christian followers in the country, attributed to the poor character of leaders who fail to uphold sanctity and morals consistent with God's standards (Pew Research Center, 2022, September 13). Furthermore, based on research conducted by the Pew Research Center, it is indicated that the number of Christians of all ages will decline from 64% to between slightly over half (54%) to just above one-third (35%) of the entire American population by the year 2070 (Pew Research Center, 2022, September 13). Alvin Toffler has long warned that in a few decades, the United States itself saw the emergence of thousands of sects as congregations sought to grasp the meaning of life (Roszak, T, 1973). These projections indicate the possibility of significant changes, where the number of Christian believers is expected to decline, while the number of those without religious affiliation is expected to increase.

Furthermore, the ability of a congregational pastor to lead the congregation in the post-pandemic era plays a crucial role. The results of a Gallup survey in 2021 following the COVID-19 pandemic revealed a concerning situation, where church membership in the United States fell below 50% for the first time (Jones, J. M., March 29, 2021). This decline is partly due to the congregation's perception that the church and spiritual leaders provided insufficient support in facing the difficulties caused by the pandemic, instead focusing on the interests of church development. As a result, many congregations experienced a significant decline. In addition to the issues mentioned above, it appears that the morality or sanctity of the congregational pastor can influence the spiritual growth of the congregation (Ryan, Cooper, & Tauer, 2013). In some cases, leaders or congregational pastors have damaged the church's reputation as a place for congregants to grow spiritually. Factors such as sexual abuse scandals in the Roman

Catholic Church, debates over LGBTQ rights, and the perception that the church oppresses marginalized groups like LGBTQ individuals have added to the church's challenges (Blake, J., 2023, April 2). Another example is when many influential churches in Ireland have been abandoned en masse, with churches closing and being converted into apartment buildings. These changes clearly indicate that the power and influence of the church in society have diminished alongside cultural shifts and more secular values (as expressed by Wray, author of "What the Bible Really Tells Us: The Essential Guide to Biblical Literacy," in an interview with CNN).

Furthermore, the lack of exemplary leadership by congregational pastors has resulted in a minimal understanding of the Word within the congregation. According to Amy Davison, the spiritual degradation of the congregation is reflected in the limited understanding, particularly among millennials, of biblical principles for righteous living. This is partly influenced by the authoritarian role of leaders in the church (Davison, A., 2022).

Millennials and Gen Z generations are increasingly rejecting traditional views of sexuality outlined in the Bible. Many of them are surprised by young, authoritarian pastors who appear to idolize chastity and pass judgment on young people who have engaged in premarital sex. Parents who seemingly wash their hands of the matter contribute to the influence of external factors that are not in line with church teachings (Diamant, J., 2020, August 31). A survey conducted by Pew Research found that 57% of American millennials believe that premarital sex in a committed relationship is not wrong, while 50% believe that casual sex is entirely acceptable. More than 80% of young Christians aged 18 to 29 have had sexual experiences, while 54% believe that homosexuality should not be opposed by the church. They identify as Christians in some aspects of their lives, but when it comes to matters of sexuality, they clearly hold different views. This underscores the need for further research and deeper understanding of the spiritual growth of the congregation, especially in the context of a continuously evolving culture that influences perspectives on sexuality. It is crucial for the church to address these challenges and provide a solid understanding of sexuality in accordance with biblical teachings while building a strong foundation of faith for the younger generation.

Furthermore, it has been found that the lack of congregational pastoral leadership also contributes to the congregation's trust in pastors or spiritual leaders who are supposed to guide them. Leaders who are unwilling to admit their mistakes create a negative stigma around themselves, which, in turn, affects the congregation's confidence in growing within the church. This was evident in early 2023 when elders at Grace Community Church publicly punished a woman for refusing to reconcile with her husband. As it turned out, the woman's fears were justified, and her husband was eventually imprisoned for child abuse and violence. Ironically, the church never revoked its punishment or apologized for it in the 20 years since the incident occurred. The fact is that the woman's concerns were well-founded because her husband was ultimately detained and imprisoned on charges of child abuse and violence. Nevertheless, the church never rescinded its punishment or apologized to the woman in the 20 years since the incident took place. This indicates that the church fails to acknowledge its mistakes or negligence in handling such cases and lacks responsiveness to incidents involving serious wrongdoing (Shellnutt, K., February 9, 2023).

What the spiritual leaders in this church are doing clearly triggers a crisis of trust among the congregation. The congregation is losing leaders who can guide them towards spiritual growth. Moreover, leaders whose lives do not align with what they preach have proven to have a detrimental impact on the younger generation within a church. At least, the impact highlighted by the International Research Institute, BARNA, USA, and the Indonesian Research Numbers, in their research, has revealed that the hypocrisy of church leaders seems to have diminished the interest of the congregation, especially the younger generation, in participating in the church. The mentioned hypocrisy includes actions by leaders that do not align with what is taught during preaching (Spektrum Editorial, 2023). Not only that, the lack of involvement of church leaders in helping the younger generation understand social justice, concern for

poverty, care for marginalized individuals, and the values of honesty has an impact on the young people's interest in church activities (Purba, G. K. M., et al., 2022).

The failure of church leaders to set a good example and carry out their responsibilities correctly can have a negative impact on the spiritual growth of the church congregation. If church leaders fail to fulfill their duties, including helping the congregation understand the values of social justice, concern for poverty, care for marginalized individuals, and the values of honesty, the congregation may encounter difficulties in their spiritual growth. Hypocritical or inconsistent church leaders may create doubt and confusion among the congregation. This can hinder the spiritual development of the congregation, impede their efforts to grow in faith, and potentially lead to a decline in participation in church life."

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a survey method as a quantitative research approach. The survey method is chosen because this study involves direct sampling from a representative population, using questionnaires or surveys as instruments to collect data (Lee, F. N., & Lee, H. B, 2000). Surveys are a research approach used to obtain data from a large population through representative sampling. In the survey method, researchers use questionnaires or surveys as instruments to gather information from respondents. This approach enables researchers to draw conclusions or make generalizations about the larger population based on data obtained from a sample that accurately represents that population.

In this case, the research aims to test the hypothesis stating the influence of independent variables on the dependent variable. Quantitative research involves two types of variables: predictor variables, used to predict changes in one variable, and dependent variables, variables influenced by or influencing predictor variables. Whenever there is a change in the predictor variable, the dependent variable will also change. In this research, the author divides the independent variables into three: Leadership variable (X1) of the congregational pastor, Character variable (X2) of the congregational pastor, and Sanctity variable (X3) of the congregational pastor. Furthermore, the dependent variable is the Spiritual Growth of the GPdI Alfa Omega congregation located in Ketintang Baru XVI/25A, Surabaya, which is subsequently denoted as variable Y.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Leadership from a Biblical Perspective.

The Bible provides several important guidelines that can elucidate the meaning of leadership. Leadership in the Bible plays a crucial role in organizing and guiding the people of God. In the Bible, leadership refers to the task and responsibility of someone chosen and anointed by God to lead and direct His people (Darmaputra, E, 2005). Moses was chosen by God to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land. In addition to Moses, the Bible records many other leaders such as King David, King Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, and the prophets, who were given unique tasks by God to guide His people.

The Bible also provides guidance and principles for leaders, including the important principle of service. A leader must have a humble attitude, serving the people of God with love and wisdom. Jesus Christ is the perfect example of servant leadership, teaching and serving the masses while setting an example of love and truth (Darmaputra, E, 2005). "The Bible indeed provides a comprehensive outline of the criteria for leaders, as articulated in Titus 1, which states: 'An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not

quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.' (Iksantoro, I, 2019).

Similarly, in 1 Timothy 3, it is written: 'Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. There are thirteen criteria that a Christian leader must possess in carrying out their leadership role. They must be able to set an example for both Christians and non-Christians; maintain moral purity according to God's standards; possess faith, hope, and love; be wise, intelligent, and have genuine humility, disciplined by the grace of God; live a righteous and prayerful life; lead an organized life; be selfless and generous; communicate effectively, avoid contentiousness and self-defense, show gentleness, patience, and teachability without compromising the message of God's Word; be free from sin and carnal desires; control their emotions; have strong convictions and the courage to stand for truth, yet be full of love; build positive relationships with others, with communication that does not evoke control or manipulation over others; provide order, balance, and joy in the tasks of the Lord; and finally, like the love parents have for their children, a leader must be able to provide appropriate guidance.

Quoting from what Barna states in his book 'Leaders on Leadership,' there are several important criteria for a leader (as a shepherd) (Barna, G, 1997). Below, the author elaborates on leadership criteria that align with the criteria found in the Bible.

Divine Calling

The first criterion of a leader is the divine calling. It means that a Christian leader must have the belief and awareness that God has specifically chosen and called them to lead and serve His people. This underscores that Christian leadership is not merely a humanly chosen position or responsibility but has a spiritual dimension that involves a divine calling. The significance of being called by God in Christian leadership emphasizes the spiritual aspect and deep dedication in carrying out leadership tasks. A leader who feels called by God has a solid foundation and strong motivation to serve His people with love, wisdom, and loyalty to His will. According to Wahjosumidjo, leadership in the context of the Bible is considered a task exclusively given by God (Wahjosumidjo, 1992). In the Bible literature, leadership is seen as a calling ordained by God for specific individuals. God specifically selects and anoints these individuals to lead His people. For example, when God chose David as the king of Israel, Samuel's act of anointing symbolized God's selection and empowerment of David. Therefore, successful leadership in the biblical context is exemplified by individuals who humble themselves and understand the profound responsibility inherent in this calling.

Reflecting the Character of Christ

Christian leaders must possess a character that reflects Christ, with strong moral values and ethics (Barna, G, 1997). In the context of Christian leadership, a leader's character plays a crucial role as a factor influencing leadership effectiveness. Character reflects the personal qualities and moral values held by the leader, which are expected to mirror the teachings and example of Christ. Strong moral values and ethics in the character of Christian leaders involve moral principles found in the Bible and established as moral standards for adherents of the faith. Character reflecting Christ refers to personality qualities considered in line with the leadership example set by Jesus Christ. This includes love, compassion, justice, perseverance, humility, integrity, wisdom, and loyalty to God's will (Wahjosumidjo, 1992). Christian leaders with a character that reflects Christ are expected to exhibit genuine love towards others, prioritize the interests of others over their own, and practice the moral values contained in the teachings of the Bible.

Solid moral values and ethics in the character of Christian leaders involve principles such as integrity, honesty, responsibility, justice, and respect for human dignity. Christian leaders who uphold these values will uphold integrity in their actions and decisions, avoiding unethical behavior or actions contrary to their moral principles (Ezra, Y, 2006). Overall, Christian leaders with a character that reflects Christ and strong moral and ethical values are expected to set a good example in their actions and behavior. This quality of leadership provides a solid foundation for carrying out their leadership duties within the Christian community and contributes to the spiritual growth and well-being of God's people.

Having Functional Expertise

A leader also needs to have functional expertise that enables them to carry out tasks and guide people in achieving established goals, all with a heart and spirit of service as servants of God (Wahjosumidjo, 1992). In addition to having a character that reflects strong moral values and ethics, a leader is also required to possess functional expertise that enables them to effectively perform leadership duties. Functional expertise encompasses various aspects related to leadership, such as effective communication skills, the ability to manage and motivate teams, the capacity to make wise decisions, and knowledge of organizational and management principles. Christian leaders who can master these functional skills will be able to guide and inspire those they lead to achieve established goals in the context of serving as servants of God. A quality Christian leader does not only focus on tasks and responsibilities but also strives to build healthy relationships with those they lead. Through genuine service, Christian leaders can have a positive impact, assist in the growth and development of others, and strengthen bonds within the Christian community (Smith, F, 2002).

Furthermore, Christian leaders are also expected to have a strong heart and spirit of service. Service in the context of Christian leadership involves a willingness to serve the people of God with love, humility, and dedication. Leaders with a sincere heart of service prioritize the interests of God's people over personal interests and deeply attend to their needs and well-being. The burning spirit of service within Christian leaders will drive them to provide optimal dedication in leading and guiding those entrusted to them.

Having a Positive Influence

Leaders who possess criteria such as recognizing the divine calling within them, reflecting the character of Christ, and having functional expertise can have a strong influence in shaping the behavior, attitudes, and thoughts of those they lead (Octavianus, P, 1986). Through sincere service, they can make a positive impact on the growth and development of individuals and strengthen bonds within the Christian community. Thus, leaders who meet

these criteria play a significant role in guiding the people of God and achieving established goals with a strong influence as leaders.

In his explanation found in his book, Maxwell states that leadership is not solely about the title or position held by an individual but is more about the ability to positively influence others (Maxwell, J. C, 2007). In order to provide a systematic understanding of the concept of leadership, Maxwell outlines a series of applicable laws. At its foundational level, he identifies laws such as the "Law of Influence," which highlights the importance of the power of influence in leadership. By describing and analyzing these laws, Maxwell makes a significant contribution to understanding and developing effective leadership skills.

In this context, influence refers to the relationship between a leader and followers that is not passive but rather a mutual and non-coercive influence. Therefore, leadership can be considered a mutual influencing process. Leaders have an influence on their subordinates, and vice versa. All parties involved in this relationship desire change, and it is expected that leaders can create significant change within the organization.

Kenneth O. Gangel asserts that leadership is defined as the role played by a leader in influencing their group to carry out agreed-upon tasks with the goal of achieving collectively agreed-upon results (Gangel, K. O, 2001). This definition highlights the active role of the leader in leading and directing the group and the importance of influencing group members to work effectively toward established goals.

Influence and mentoring are crucial factors in effective Christian leadership. A quality Christian leader has a positive influence on those they lead. They not only manage tasks and responsibilities but also help build and strengthen healthy and strong relationships. A good Christian leader provides guidance, guidance, and support to those they lead, encouraging spiritual growth and strengthening their faith. By being an inspirational example and supporting the development of other individuals, such leaders create a positive atmosphere within the organization, enhance motivation and team member engagement, and strengthen the organization's ability to achieve shared goals (Riggs, R. M, 1996).

The Biblical Perspective on Character

Character in the context of Christian leadership refers to the moral and ethical qualities possessed by a leader. A leader's character is of utmost importance because they must serve as an example to their followers. Richard Rardin emphasizes that a leader's character is not only crucial to their followers but also holds high value in the eyes of God. According to him, a leader's character is of greater importance to God than the visible behaviors or physical actions (Rardin, R, 2001). While a leader's actions and words can provide insight, what truly matters is what resides in the leader's heart. What is within a leader's heart will be reflected in the words and deeds they perform. Therefore, the character of a Christian leader must be strong, morally upright, and reflective of their relationship with God, impacting their influence on others. One of the most crucial characteristics of a Christian leader is having a servant's heart. In the book titled "Servant Leadership: A Biblical Philosophy of Christian Leadership," Henri J. M. Nouwen explains that Christian leadership does not follow the world's way of ruling through power but adopts the attitude of a servant, as demonstrated by Jesus in His life. A Christian leader dedicates themselves to serving others and is willing to sacrifice themselves for the good and salvation of many (Lontoh, L. R., Soeliasih, & Rodianus, 2023). They cultivate an awareness of the importance of each individual in the spiritual community to continually improve their spiritual quality, both personally and as part of the community. In this context, the relationship between spiritual leadership and quality improvement lies in the ability

of spiritual leaders to create an environment that encourages ongoing spiritual and moral quality improvement among the members of the spiritual community.

The Holiness of Leaders (Shepherds of the Flock).

The connection between this sentence and the holiness of leaders lies in the requirement for leaders to set an example in various aspects of their lives, including their words, actions, love, loyalty, and purity (Wenggi, D., & Sutikto, S, 2020). Holiness, in this context, refers to a state of moral and spiritual purity, free from sin or blemish. In carrying out their leadership roles, a holy leader is expected to demonstrate integrity, truth, love, loyalty, and maintain purity in everything they do. By leading in a holy manner, leaders can inspire, positively influence, and create a noble and dignified environment for those they lead (Wiersbe, W. W., & Sugden, H. F, 1994).

Holiness refers to a state of moral and spiritual purity, free from sin or blemish. The selection by God as a shepherd is a grace that should be respected and appreciated by a shepherd. Therefore, a holy shepherd will be diligent in carrying out their duties, dedicating themselves with integrity, and maintaining the cleanliness of their thoughts, hearts, and actions (Sukmani, et al., 2021).

Spiritual Growth and Its Definition

Spiritual growth can be defined as the process of development and enhancement in one's relationship with their spiritual dimension, particularly within the context of a specific religion or belief system. The primary goal for believers is to achieve likeness with Christ, often referred to as spiritual maturity in the spiritual context. Spiritual growth plays a significant role in improving an individual's ability to face life's challenges, recover from difficult experiences, and enrich their compassion and understanding towards fellow human beings. Furthermore, spiritual growth also has positive effects on various aspects of life.

In the context of spiritual maturity, the ultimate aim is to draw closer to and resemble Christ more closely. This is reflected in one's thoughts, attitudes, and daily behaviors as they strive to internalize Christ's teachings. The awareness of the importance of demonstrating Christ-like character becomes the focus of spiritual growth efforts. Individuals are committed to continual growth in their relationship and fellowship with Christ, with the intention of emulating Him in love, compassion, humility, wisdom, and service to others. They rely on the Word of God as a guide in every aspect of life and deeply contemplate His teachings.

On the journey of Christian maturity, it is acknowledged that progress does not always occur linearly, and there may be challenges and failures to face. Nevertheless, individuals continue to build a strong foundation of faith, with a determination to keep growing and realizing their spiritual potential. Christian maturity is an anticipated goal for every believer, with a focus on attaining a level of growth that aligns with the fullness of Christ. In the context of spiritual growth, Christian maturity signifies an ongoing transformation of character and spiritual understanding, where individuals become increasingly connected with God, cultivate perseverance in their faith, and exhibit spiritual fruits that reflect the nature of Christ in their daily lives (Rick Howard, 2012).

In the context of Christianity, Howard asserts that spiritual growth becomes a desired target and expectation for every believer. Spiritual growth encompasses an individual's spiritual development, directing them towards maturity in faith and conformity to the character of Christ. Christian environments, such as the church and faith communities, play a vital role in facilitating this spiritual growth. In Christian settings, individuals are influenced by interactions with fellow believers, the teachings provided, as well as various worship and service activities. Through involvement in small groups, fellowship, and mentoring, individuals are given opportunities to deepen

their knowledge and understanding of biblical truths and enhance their personal relationship with God (Rick Howard, 2012).

Furthermore, the Christian environment also provides challenges and encouragement to refine character and spiritual life practices. This involves an individual's efforts in establishing consistent prayer habits, delving into the teachings of the Bible, committing to living a life in accordance with Christian values, and demonstrating obedience to God's Word in daily actions and attitudes. Howard emphasizes that spiritual growth in the Christian context is an ongoing process, where individuals gradually attain maturity in faith, cultivate character that reflects Christ's principles, and draw closer to God. In conclusion, spiritual growth within the Christian context is a process involving influences and interactions within the faith environment. This environment offers opportunities to deepen knowledge, sharpen character, and develop a personal relationship with God. In this journey, individuals are directed towards faith maturity and conformity to Christ in actions and attitudes.

Research Findings.

This research employed a quantitative method, which means that the results obtained are in the form of numerical data. These data were collected through the distribution of questionnaires, which is a measurement tool that has been developed by the researcher in accordance with research instrument creation procedures. The research instrument, in the form of a questionnaire, was administered to 151 respondents who constitute the population at GPdI "Alfa Omega" Ketintang Baru, Surabaya. Data collection was conducted online using Google Form.

Description of Validity

In this research, the independent variables are Leadership, Character, and Holiness, referred to as variables X1, X2, X3, while the dependent variable is the Spiritual Growth of the congregation of GPdI "Alfa Omega" Ketintang Baru, Surabaya, referred to as variable Y. In the previous section, the research instrument was pilot-tested on 35 members of the congregation of GPdI "Alfa Omega" Ketintang Baru, Surabaya, as elaborated by the researcher in Chapter 3. Out of the 32 instruments that were pilot-tested, their validity and reliability were assessed, resulting in 32 statements that remained as valid and reliable research instruments. The following is a description of the instrument's validity with respect to the 35 research respondents who had previously undergone validity testing:

Variable	Cases Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Leadership (X1)	35	100%	0	0%	35	100%
Character (X2)	35	100%	0	0%	35	100%
Holiness (X3)	35	100%	0	0%	35	100%
Spiritual Growth (Y)	35	100%	0	0%	35	100%

(Source: processed Primary data, 2023)

Hypothesis Assumption Testing

For practical purposes, the researcher used the SPSS application, where using this application, the analysis assumption test can be conducted in several ways. The choice of which method to use usually depends on the size of the population being studied. There are specific recommendations for using or not using certain methods.

Results of Classic Assumption Testing

Before testing the relationship between variables X and Y hypothetically, the initial step to take is to conduct an analysis assumption test. This assumption test includes normality testing and linearity testing as the initial step to ensure that the data being used meets the assumptions of the analysis to be performed. Normality testing is used to check whether the data used follows a normal distribution or not. Normal distribution is crucial in statistical analysis because many statistical methods are based on the assumption of a normal distribution. In normality testing, data is tested using statistical methods such as the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test or the Shapiro-Wilk test. If the data is found not to follow a normal distribution, then alternative steps in the analysis need to be considered.

In addition to normality testing, linearity testing is also conducted to check whether the relationship between variables X and Y is linear or not. A linear relationship is essential in regression analysis and other statistical methods that rely on the linearity assumption. Linearity testing is generally done by examining the pattern of the relationship between variables X and Y in the form of a scatter plot or using statistical methods such as correlation analysis. If the relationship between variables X and Y is not linear, then an appropriate analysis approach needs to be considered, such as non-parametric analysis.

By conducting analysis assumption tests like normality testing and linearity testing before testing the hypothesis of the relationship between variables X and Y, the researcher can ensure that the data used meets the appropriate analysis assumptions. This is important to ensure accurate and reliable analysis results and to avoid errors in the interpretation and conclusions drawn from the research.

Hypothesis Test

The Influence of Leadership, Character, and Sanctity of the Congregation's Leader on the Spiritual Growth of the GPdI Alfa Omega Congregation in Ketintang Baru, Surabaya, simultaneously. From the results of a simple regression statistical test between the variables Leadership (X1), Character (X2), Sanctity (X3) of the Congregation's Leader on the Spiritual Growth of the GPdI Alfa Omega Congregation in Ketintang Baru, Surabaya, the obtained results are as shown in the following table.

Coefficient of Determination R Square

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.891 ^a	.794	.790	1.859

a. Predictors: (Constant), Holiness, Leadership, Character

The table above is the result of a simple correlation calculation between X3 and Y. Based on the table, it was found that the R value is 0.891a and it is positive. This means that the strength of the relationship between the Sanctity of the congregation's leader (X3) and Spiritual Growth (Y) is 0.891a. Following the guidelines for interpreting correlation coefficients:

- 0.00-0.199 = Very low
- 0.20-0.399 = Low
- 0.40-0.599 = Moderate
- 0.60-0.799 = High
- 0.80-1.000 = Very high

So, the relationship between the variables Leadership (X1), Character (X2), Sanctity (X3) of the Congregation's Leader and the Spiritual Growth of the GPDI Alfa Omega Congregation in Ketintang Baru, Surabaya, falls into the category of a very strong relationship. The direction of the relationship is positive, indicating that the higher the character of the Congregation's Leader in the GPDI Alfa Omega church, the higher the spiritual growth.

The analysis also yielded an R-squared value (Coefficient of Determination) of 0.790 or 79.0%. This means that the contribution of the variables Leadership, Character, and Sanctity of the Congregation's Leader in shaping the Spiritual Growth of the GPDI Alfa Omega Congregation in Ketintang Baru, Surabaya, is 79.0%, while the remaining 21% is influenced by other factors outside the research model.

Regression Test Results

To obtain the results of this simple linear regression test, researchers must meet the requirements of a simple linear regression test, which are: the data must be valid and reliable, and the data must be normally distributed and linear. Meanwhile, the criteria for decision-making in a simple linear regression test can be based on two factors: If the significance value is < 0.05, it means that variable X has an influence on Y. If the significance value is > 0.05, it means that variable X does not have an influence on variable Y. The significance test of regression between X and Y is explained in the table below:

F Significance Test

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1930.716	3	643.572	174.754	.000 ^a
	Residual	541.363	147	3.683		
	Total	2472.079	150			

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Sanctity, Character, Leadership
- b. Dependent Variable: Spiritual Growth

From the above output table, it is known that the calculated F value = 174.754 with a significance level of 0.000 < 0.05. Therefore, the regression model can be used to predict the participation variable, or in other words, there is an influence of the Leadership (X1), Character (X2), and Sanctity (X3) variables on Spiritual Growth (Y).

Based on the SPSS output table 4.8 above, it is found that the Sig. value is 0.000. Because the Sig. value is 0.000 < 0.05, according to the decision-making basis in the F test, it can be concluded that the hypothesis is

accepted, or in other words, Leadership, Character, and Sanctity have an impact on the spiritual growth of the GPdI Alfa Omega congregation in Ketintang, Surabaya.

T Significance Test

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	-.486	1.653		-.294	.769
Leadership	.383	.081	.358	4.740	.000
Character	.345	.079	.321	4.343	.000
Holiness	.435	.086	.287	5.046	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Spiritual Growth

Based on the SPSS Coefficients output table above, it is known that the Significance (Sig) value for Leadership, Character, and Sanctity of the Congregation's Leader is 0.000. Because the Sig. value is $0 <$ the probability of 0.05, it can be concluded that H or the hypothesis is accepted. This means there is an influence of variables X1, X2, X3 on the variable Y, which is the Spiritual Growth of the GPdI Alfa Omega congregation in Ketintang, Surabaya. It can be determined through both the F-test and t-test in this research that there is an influence of variable X1, Leadership, X2, Character, and X3, Sanctity of the Congregation's Leader on variable Y, which is the Spiritual Growth of the GPdI Alfa Omega congregation in Ketintang, Surabaya, both partially and simultaneously. Thus, the correlation calculation requirements between the two variables have been fulfilled.

In conclusion, through the use of the F-test and t-test in this research, it is evident that variables X1, Leadership, X2, Character, and X3, Sanctity of the Congregation's Leader have a significant influence on the Spiritual Growth of the congregation. The test results strengthen the understanding of the relationship between these variables and spiritual growth, both individually and collectively. By meeting the correlation calculation requirements, it can be ensured that the statistical analysis conducted provides valid information regarding the correlation and influence of these variables on spiritual growth in the context of the studied congregation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis conducted, it was found that leadership, character, and sanctity of the Congregation's Leader have a strong relationship, both partially and simultaneously, with the Spiritual Growth of the congregation, accounting for 79.0%. This means that the relationship between Leadership, Character, and the sanctity of the Congregation's Leader with the Spiritual Growth of the GPdI Alfa Omega congregation in Ketintang Baru, Surabaya, falls into the category of a strong relationship.

The relationship of variables X1, X2, and X3 with Y shows a positive direction. This can be interpreted as follows: as Leadership, Character, and the sanctity of the Congregation's Leader are enhanced, it will lead to an increase in the Spiritual Growth of the GPdI Alfa Omega congregation in Ketintang Baru, Surabaya. Conversely, if Leadership, Character, and the sanctity of the Congregation's Leader decrease, the Spiritual Growth of the GPdI Alfa Omega congregation in Ketintang Baru, Surabaya, will experience a constant decline.

When observed individually, the character variable has a very strong influence on Spiritual Growth, accounting for 69.4%. It is followed by the Leadership variable at 69.2%, with the Sanctity variable having the lowest influence at 68.5%. According to the author, this can be interpreted as the fact that the Spiritual Growth of the congregation is primarily influenced by the character of a Congregation Leader in their leadership, which

should undoubtedly reflect divine sanctity. With good character in leadership and the sanctity of the Congregation Leader, this can have a significant impact on the Spiritual Growth of the congregation, especially in the GPdI Alfa Omega Church in Ketintang, Surabaya.

It is expected that as individuals experience Spiritual Growth, they can feel an increase in life satisfaction, happiness, and emotional balance. Spiritual Growth can also provide moral guidance in decision-making and help individuals lead a more meaningful and purposeful life. In the context of a community, Spiritual Growth can strengthen social bonds, promote solidarity, and provide a strong moral foundation for building healthy and supportive relationships.

Spiritual Growth is important because it gives meaning to life, helps overcome challenges, and maintains balance in a world focused on material achievements. By prioritizing Spiritual Growth, individuals and communities gain long-term benefits in mental, emotional, and social well-being. This involves exploring and developing the spiritual dimension to achieve a better quality of life, clear goals, as well as love and empathy for others. Spiritual Growth helps individuals find deep peace and emotional well-being when facing life's challenges.

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