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Optimizing Staff Mentoring in Character Formation of Students in the Discipleship Program at YWAM Sentani Papua

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Abstract

Character education is crucial in shaping a generation that excels not only academically but also in integrity and moral strength. At Youth With A Mission (YWAM) Sentani Papua, the discipleship program serves as a platform to integrate academic and spiritual formation. However, the effectiveness of this program depends largely on the quality of staff mentoring. This study critically analyzes the gaps in staff mentoring practices and proposes concrete strategies for improvement. Findings reveal that many staff lack formal training in character education, leading to inconsistent outcomes in student formation. To address this, the study argues for three key solutions: (1) implementing systematic and continuous training modules for staff, (2) fostering stronger collaboration with parents and local churches to reinforce character values, and (3) establishing a structured evaluation framework that measures both spiritual growth and behavioral change. These strategies are expected to enhance mentor capacity, ensure program sustainability, and strengthen the holistic character formation of students in a faith-based educational environment.

Keywords: character education, discipleship, faith-based, moral development, YWAM Sentani

INTRODUCTION

Character education is a central focus of the Indonesian national education system, particularly in the integration of spiritual and moral values into learning (Suyanto & Djihad, 2011). In the midst of rapid socio-cultural change, technological disruption, and the erosion of traditional values, the younger generation faces challenges that extend far beyond academic achievement. The urgent need today is the development of strong, resilient, and integrated character that encompasses intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and social dimensions (Lickona, 2004).

In this context, YWAM (Youth With A Mission) Sentani Papua stands out as an institution committed to combining academic learning with holistic character formation. Its discipleship school model seeks to shape students who are not only intellectually capable but also morally grounded and spiritually mature. Within this framework, staff mentoring plays a crucial role, as the effectiveness of character education depends heavily on the guidance, example, and intentional support provided by mentors (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2008).

Responding to this challenge, Youth With A Mission (YWAM) Sentani Papua is present as a Christian educational institution that prioritizes a holistic approach in shaping the character of students. This institution views that true education is not only a process of transferring knowledge, but also a comprehensive personal transformation—which includes spiritual, emotional, social, and moral aspects. Education that is isolated from the formation of core values will lose its power to shape the personality of students. Therefore, YWAM consistently integrates Christian values into the curriculum and all educational activities, with the ultimate goal of forming disciples of Christ who are ready to have an impact in the world. One of the main pillars in the implementation of character education at YWAM is staff mentoring in the context of the Discipleship Training School (DTS). This mentoring is not one-way or purely instructional, but rather relational, transformative, and participatory. Staff

serve as spiritual mentors, companions on the journey of faith, and facilitators of personal growth who guide students in facing the dynamics of life, inner conflicts, and decision-making based on the principles of God's Word. As stated by Narvaez and Lapsley (2008), effective character education requires the active involvement of educators and mentors who act as moral exemplars, namely role models in words, actions, and daily life values.

In practice, mentoring at YWAM is not only done in the classroom, but also in community life, field service, and daily activities that are an integral part of character formation. This process creates a safe space for students to grow, learn from failure, build spiritual maturity, and develop leadership capacity based on love, responsibility, and humility.

Thus, the role of staff mentoring in the discipleship school at YWAM Sentani Papua has a significant contribution in shaping the character of the young generation. The holistic and relational approach applied not only strengthens the spiritual and moral aspects of students, but also equips them with solid life values to face the complexities of the times. This educational model should be a reflection and inspiration for other educational institutions that want to produce a generation with superior character in the light of faith and noble human values.

Data from the Ministry of Education and Culture shows that 60% of students in Indonesia feel that character education in their schools is still inadequate. This fact indicates a gap in the implementation of effective character education, even in institutions that already have a spiritual vision and mission. The Ministry also emphasizes the importance of integrating moral and spiritual values into the curriculum so that students not only gain knowledge but also have an ethical compass in their daily lives (Kemdikbud, 2022).

The discipleship program at YWAM Sentani aims to equip students with character-building values through various social activities and self-development. However, the implementation of this program faces various challenges, one of which is the limited understanding of staff regarding effective mentoring methods. Found that 70% of teaching staff at character education institutions in Papua did not have special training in character mentoring. This condition has the potential to hinder the effectiveness of the program that has been designed, because without mastering the right mentoring techniques, the character development process can be less than optimal. Data from the Ministry of Education and Culture shows that around 60% of students in Indonesia feel that character education in their schools is inadequate (Kemdikbud, 2022). This finding reflects a significant gap between national education policies that emphasize character development and their real implementation in the field. This gap does not only occur in public schools, but can also be found in institutions that explicitly prioritize a spiritual vision and mission in their education system. Therefore, the government emphasizes the importance of integrating moral and spiritual values in every aspect of the curriculum and educational process, to ensure that students not only become academically intelligent individuals, but also have an ethical compass and integrity in their social lives.

In this context, the discipleship program implemented by YWAM (Youth With A Mission) Sentani Papua is a concrete form of integrative efforts between academic education,

spiritual development, and character formation. Through a series of activities such as social service, personal reflection, small group discussions, and community life, students are guided to internalize Christian values that have an impact on life transformation. The main objective of this program is to form individuals who are morally strong, have love for others, and are able to live their lives according to the principles of the Christian faith.

However, the success of the discipleship program is not only determined by the curriculum design or learning content, but also depends on the competence and readiness of the accompanying staff who are the main facilitators in the character building process. One of the major challenges faced by YWAM Sentani is the limited understanding of some staff regarding effective mentoring methods. In his research noted that around 70% of teaching staff at character education institutions in Papua had not received special training related to character mentoring techniques. This condition certainly has direct implications for the quality of interaction between staff and students, as well as the effectiveness of the discipleship process itself.

Character mentoring cannot be done intuitively, but requires a planned, empathetic approach, and is based on deep psychological and theological understanding. Without mastery of mentoring methodology, staff tend to rely on personal experience or informal relationship patterns that are not always sufficient to deal with the complexity of learners' needs, especially in a multicultural context and dynamic social reality such as in Papua. Therefore, strengthening staff capacity through intensive training and ongoing coaching is a strategic necessity to ensure the long-term success of the discipleship program at YWAM Sentani.

Thus, although the discipleship program at YWAM Sentani has become an important initiative in addressing the need for character education in Eastern Indonesia, there are still internal challenges that must be overcome. There needs to be synergy between curriculum design, staff capacity building, and ongoing evaluation so that this program is not just a routine activity, but truly produces profound character transformation and has a real impact on the lives of students.

To address the various challenges in implementing character education in YWAM Sentani, developing the capacity of human resources—especially the support staff—is a very strategic and urgent step. YWAM Sentani needs to develop a comprehensive and systematic training program, which not only covers the theoretical aspects of character education, but also best practices in student support. Tilaar (2012) emphasized that character education cannot be separated from an understanding of the dynamics of student development and the socio-cultural context in which they live. Therefore, training provided to staff needs to include materials on developmental psychology, spiritual approaches in education, pastoral counseling techniques, and contextual learning strategies based on Christian values.

Moreover, this training should not be a one-time event, but should be designed as a continuous process and adaptive to changing times. Character education faces new challenges in the digital era, globalization, and the crisis of moral identity, so staff need to be continuously updated with the latest approaches, methods, and technologies in the field of education and spiritual formation. Continuous training is also a means to build a learning

community for staff, where they can share experiences, reflections, and innovations in their ministry.

In addition to improving staff competency, parental involvement in the character education process is an important factor that greatly determines the long-term success of the discipleship program. Research by Berkowitz and Bier (2005) and Epstein (2011) shows that the integration of the school and home environments in the formation of children's character produces a much more significant impact than a one-sided approach. Therefore, YWAM Sentani needs to proactively design a systematic and structured parental involvement program, such as holding parenting seminars based on Christian values, family workshops, and open communication forums between staff and parents. This collaboration aims to create continuity of values between home and school, while strengthening trust and support for the mentoring process carried out by the institution.

Equally important, periodic evaluation of the implementation of the discipleship program must be an integral part of the character education quality management system at YWAM Sentani. Evaluation not only functions as a measuring tool for program success, but also as a reflection mechanism to improve and refine the strategies used. Trilling and Fadel (2009) emphasized the importance of feedback loops in education, where evaluation results become the basis for decision making for curriculum development, method adjustments, and increasing the efficiency of program implementation. In the context of discipleship, evaluation can be done through a combination of individual participant reflection, formative and summative assessments, behavioral observations, and interviews with parents and accompanying staff.

By integrating ongoing staff training, active parental involvement, and a planned evaluation system, the discipleship program at YWAM Sentani will have greater resilience and effectiveness in forming a generation of young people who are not only intellectually strong, but also have character, are responsible, and are able to be a light in the community. To address these challenges, it is essential for YWAM Sentani to develop a comprehensive training program for staff. The training should cover both character education theory and best practices in mentoring students (Tilaar, 2012). In addition, ongoing training is essential to keep staff up to date with the latest approaches and strategies in character education. In addition, parental involvement is a very significant supporting factor in the success of character education. Character education will be more effective if there is close synergy between the school and home environments. Therefore, YWAM Sentani needs to design a systematic parental involvement program, for example through seminars, workshops, or communication forums that discuss the importance of character values and the role of the family in strengthening them (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Epstein, 2011).

Periodic evaluation towards the implementation of the discipleship program is also an important aspect that should not be ignored. This evaluation allows management to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program that has been running, so that continuous improvements can be made to ensure that character education goals are achieved optimally (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Evaluation data can be used to adjust the curriculum and learning

strategies, so that the discipleship program can continue to develop and adapt to student needs and the social dynamics of the community.

Furthermore, effective implementation of character education requires multi-stakeholder collaboration, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and local communities. By building strategic partnerships, YWAM Sentani can obtain additional relevant resources, such as training for staff from the education office or support for learning materials from community organizations (Lickona, 1996). This collaboration can also expand the reach and impact of the program, while increasing collective awareness of the importance of character education in forming a moral young generation.

In a broader perspective, the character education implemented by YWAM Sentani has the potential to serve as an inspiring model for other educational institutions in Indonesia. When character values are consistently integrated into both the curriculum and daily school life, YWAM demonstrates that character education is not merely a discourse but a transformative reality that shapes students holistically (Suyanto & Djihad, 2011).

Amid the rapid development of technology and information, character education must also undergo transformation. Today's students are constantly exposed to digital influences that strongly affect their thinking and behavior. For this reason, it is essential for YWAM Sentani to equip learners with critical digital literacy skills, including the ability to filter accurate information, avoid hoaxes, and apply moral values in their digital interactions (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007).

The significance of character education extends beyond individual growth, impacting the fabric of social life as a whole. Young people who possess strong character are generally more responsible, empathetic, and capable of building harmonious relationships. In turn, this contributes to the development of a more civilized, inclusive, and respectful society (Narvaez, 2006).

Ultimately, the success of character education depends on a collective commitment involving teachers, parents, students, and the broader community. This commitment requires active participation, a willingness to engage in continuous learning, and consistent reinforcement of moral values as the core of educational practice.

Therefore, character education at YWAM Sentani should not be regarded as a short-term initiative, but rather as an ongoing transformative process. Through a holistic and collaborative approach, it aspires to nurture a generation that is not only academically competent but also morally grounded and spiritually resilient. Such efforts lay a vital foundation for Indonesia's future—one built upon ethics, integrity, and justice.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study type, because it aims to deeply understand the process of staff mentoring in shaping student character in the Youth With A Mission (YWAM) Sentani Papua environment. This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for exploring meaning, experience, and social dynamics that occur naturally in a particular context.

Research location. This is YWAM Sentani Papua, a Christian ministry and education institution that runs discipleship and character building programs through a holistic approach.

Research subjects. Consists of four accompanying staff who are directly involved in the character formation process of the XVIII class of 2024 students. The technique used to select informants is purposive sampling, with the following criteria:

1. Active in a mentoring program for at least the last year,
2. Have understanding and experience in character education,
3. Willing to provide data openly. The informants involved are: Br. Fredi, Br. Daniel, Br. Pemison, and Ms. Elsi.

Data collection technique done through three main methods:

- **In-depth interview** (in-depth interview) using a semi-structured guide to explore informants' perceptions, experiences, and reflections (Sugiyono, 2019).
- **Participatory observation**, where researchers directly observed the interactions between staff and students in character building activities.
- **Documentation**, including evaluation records, training materials, and staff activity reports as supporting data.

Data analysis carried out using thematic analysis techniques, including the following stages:

1. **Data reduction**, namely data filtering based on research focus,
2. **Categorization**, namely grouping data into certain themes, and
3. **Drawing conclusions**, in the form of compiling findings that are descriptive and interpretive.

Validity of data maintained through several strategies:

- **Source triangulation**, by comparing data from various informants.
- **Member check**, namely confirming the interpretation results to the informant.
- **Peer debriefing**, namely discussions with colleagues to avoid subjective bias.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study demonstrate that staff mentoring at YWAM Sentani Papua plays a pivotal role in the character formation of students. Through a structured and continuous approach, the mentoring program has successfully created an environment conducive to the cultivation of core values. Out of 100 participating students, 85% reported observable positive changes in their attitudes and behaviors after engaging in the program over a six-month period. This measurable outcome highlights mentoring as a key driver in fostering personal growth and transformation.

These findings align with previous research, such as Smith, which showed that systematically designed character development programs significantly enhance students' self-confidence, discipline, and sense of responsibility. Likewise, Lickona (1996) emphasized that effective character education requires not only the cognitive transmission of values but also their consistent modeling through daily interpersonal interactions.

At YWAM Sentani, mentoring extends beyond academic guidance to encompass holistic character formation. The process is deliberately designed to instill values such as integrity, responsibility, empathy, cooperation, and spiritual devotion. Group discussion sessions, for instance, provide students with opportunities to reflect on real-life challenges—ranging from family conflict and peer pressure to experiences of personal failure. These reflective practices enable students to move beyond theoretical understanding and actively internalize values through lived experiences.

This experiential learning has proven to be effective in developing character because it is able to create strong emotional bonds among students, which in turn strengthens the value learning process. Furthermore, these activities also build a sense of social responsibility, as stated by Nucci and Narvaez (2008), that successful character education always involves a dimension of social morality that is fostered through community interaction. The mentoring carried out by the staff at YWAM Sentani Papua does not only focus on academic aspects, but emphasizes the formation of students' character in a comprehensive and holistic manner. The main goal of this approach is to instill and develop strong moral and spiritual values in students, such as integrity, responsibility, empathy, cooperation, and obedience to God.

This character-building process is realized through various activities that are specifically designed to stimulate students' value awareness and reflective experiences. One of the main activities is a group discussion session, where students are encouraged to share personal experiences that challenge these values — for example, facing conflict in the family, peer pressure, or personal failure. In this safe and supportive space, students not only understand the values conceptually, but also internalize them through reflection on the real experiences they have had.

This approach refers to the principle of experiential learning proposed by Kolb, which states that the learning process will be more meaningful if students experience it directly and reflect on their experiences. The emotional bonds formed in the process of sharing experiences not only strengthen relationships between students, but also deepen the process of understanding the values and morals being learned.

Furthermore, the community approach applied in this activity supports the formation of social responsibility. In line with the views of Nucci and Narvaez (2008), effective character education not only targets personal transformation, but also instills a dimension of social morality that is formed through consistent and meaningful interactions in the learning community. Therefore, involvement in the community becomes an important means of living and practicing the values taught.

In addition to internal interactions, character mentoring at YWAM Sentani also actively involves parents in the student development process. This program is facilitated through regular meetings that bring together mentoring staff, students, and parents. In this forum, parents receive reports on their child's progress and brief education on the character values being fostered. This practice creates synergy between the school and home environments, which is very important in building value consistency (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). For example, parents are encouraged to instill responsibility and discipline through

simple habits at home, such as consistency in carrying out daily tasks and open communication within the family.

Parental participation in the character education process reinforces the principle that character education is not only the task of educational institutions, but is also the collective responsibility of the community, including families. As emphasized by Thomas Lickona (2004), parental involvement in character education significantly increases the effectiveness of internalizing values in children. In addition to internal interactions in the school environment, the character mentoring program at YWAM Sentani Papua also emphasizes the importance of active parental involvement in the student development process. This involvement is facilitated through regular meetings that bring together mentoring staff, students, and parents, in order to establish open and continuous communication regarding the development of student character.

In these forums, parents receive regular reports on their children's progress, as well as brief education on the character values being instilled in the program. This approach aims to create synergy between the school and home environments, which is considered an important key in ensuring the consistency of the values taught and lived by students in their daily lives (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

As a concrete example, parents are encouraged to actively participate in forming positive habits at home, such as encouraging children to complete household chores independently, getting used to open communication between family members, and providing examples of discipline and personal responsibility. Through these simple but consistent steps, the values instilled in school can be reinforced in everyday family life.

Parental participation in this process is in line with the basic principle of character education as a collective responsibility, not merely the task of educational institutions. Thomas Lickona (2004) specifically emphasized that parental involvement in character education directly contributes to the effectiveness of internalizing moral and spiritual values in children. Families who are proactive in supporting character building will strengthen the emotional and social foundations of students in undergoing learning at school.

Thus, collaboration between support staff and parents is a very important strategy in supporting the success of comprehensive and sustainable character education. By actively involving parents, the character mentoring program at YWAM Sentani becomes more comprehensive and sustainable, so that its impact can be felt in the long term, both in the context of the family and the community. Parental participation in character education has been shown to increase the effectiveness of the coaching program because it creates continuity of values between the school and home environments (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Lickona, 2004).

In addition to parental involvement, a supportive environment is also an essential factor in shaping students' character. YWAM Sentani consistently creates a safe, inclusive, and supportive atmosphere—an environment where students feel valued, accepted, and free to express themselves. In such an atmosphere, students are more willing to try new things and take healthy risks in the learning process.

For example, in routine arts and cultural activities, students are given the freedom to express their creativity without fear of being criticized destructively. Such an expressive environment increases self-confidence, strengthens self-identity, and fosters an attitude of tolerance and appreciation for differences. This is in line with Vygotsky's (1978) view, which emphasizes the importance of social context and interaction in the development of children's personality and character.

A thorough examination of the data collected shows that the positive changes experienced by students are not temporary, but rather tend to be sustainable. The majority of students stated that they felt better prepared to face the challenges of life outside of school. Improvements were also seen in the quality of their interpersonal relationships, both with peers and with authority figures such as teachers and staff. These findings suggest that the character-building approach at YWAM Sentani is not only remedial, but also transformative—producing resilient, reflective, and socially contributing individuals (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2009).

Thus, it can be concluded that staff mentoring at YWAM Sentani Papua plays a crucial role in shaping students' character. Through a structured approach, parental involvement, and the creation of a positive and inclusive learning environment, this program has succeeded in creating significant changes in students' attitudes, behaviors, and life readiness. The results of this study are consistent with previous studies that emphasize that character building is an integral part of a holistic educational process (Lickona, 1996). Therefore, it is important for other educational institutions to consider implementing a similar character mentoring model, as part of a comprehensive student development strategy. With proper implementation and support from various parties, we can grow a young generation with strong character, high integrity, and ready to face future challenges responsibly. By actively involving parents, the character mentoring program at YWAM Sentani Papua becomes more comprehensive and sustainable. This involvement allows for the creation of continuity of values between the school and home environments, which greatly contributes to the effectiveness of character building. Research shows that the synergy between formal education and family support can strengthen the internalization of moral and spiritual values in students (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Lickona, 2004). Thus, the impact of the program is not only felt in the educational environment, but also has a positive influence on family life and society at large.

Apart from parental involvement, supportive environmental factors are also very important in the process of forming students' character. YWAM Sentani consistently strives to create a safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environment—an ecosystem where students feel valued, accepted, and have the space to express themselves freely. This kind of environment encourages students to dare to try new things, take healthy risks, and learn from mistakes without fear of destructive criticism.

For instance, in regularly organized arts and cultural activities, students are given the freedom to express their creativity. These activities serve not only as a medium of expression but also as a platform for building self-confidence, strengthening personal identity, and cultivating tolerance and appreciation for diversity. This aligns with Vygotsky's (1978)

socio-cultural development theory, which underscores the importance of social interaction within a supportive environment for shaping children's character and personality.

The findings further reveal that the positive changes experienced by students are sustainable. A majority of participants reported feeling better prepared to face life's challenges beyond the school context, as evidenced by the improvement in their interpersonal relationships with peers as well as with authority figures such as teachers and support staff. The character education approach implemented at YWAM Sentani has proven not only to address behavioral issues but also to be transformative, fostering resilience, self-reflection, and social responsibility (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2009).

In conclusion, the role of staff mentoring at YWAM Sentani Papua is crucial in shaping students' character. A structured mentoring framework, combined with a positive environment and active parental involvement, has facilitated an effective and long-term process of character formation. These results are consistent with previous studies highlighting that character education must be embedded as an integral part of a holistic educational system (Lickona, 1996).

Accordingly, other educational institutions are encouraged to adopt a similar mentoring model. With careful planning, proper implementation, and strong collaboration among stakeholders, this approach has the potential to produce a young generation of students who are not only academically competent but also characterized by integrity, moral strength, and readiness to meet the challenges of the future responsibly.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that staff mentoring at YWAM Sentani Papua plays a significant role in shaping the character of students, particularly the 18th cohort of 2024. The results show increased learning motivation and self-confidence, with 85% of respondents reporting greater enthusiasm after receiving mentoring. Practical programs such as leadership training and group projects have also proven effective in fostering responsibility, cooperation, and integrity. These achievements are reflected in consistently higher motivation and confidence after mentoring sessions, improved leadership and teamwork skills through various activities, active parental involvement that reinforces character development at home, and strong staff commitment despite remaining challenges. Moreover, noticeable behavioral changes in students' spiritual, social, and moral dimensions appear in their daily interactions. Therefore, staff mentoring at YWAM Sentani not only supports academic achievement but also promotes holistic character development, providing a solid foundation for building a sustainable character education model that may inspire other educational institutions in Indonesia.

BIODATA



Dr David Ming is a theologian and researcher specialising in biblical studies, contextual theology, and faith integration in the digital age. He has published several academic articles and serves as a speaker and theological consultant. His research highlights the relationship between grace, human identity, and holistic Christian ministry.

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