

SERVANT LEADERSHIP LEARNING STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AT THE ATHALIA SCHOOL

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Abstract

Strong leadership is crucial for success in the 21st century. However, student leadership development has yet to be consistently implemented for all students. Servant leadership is considered the best model for high school students, but research on this model is limited in that context. Previous studies focused on servant leadership's contribution to spirituality but were confined to theological education. Further research is needed to provide servant leadership training in a broader student context. Athalia High School aims to develop servant leaders and requires sufficient data on the impact of servant leadership strategies on students' spiritual formation to realize the school's vision. This qualitative phenomenological study addresses these challenges. Eight students participating in the spiritual formation project within the servant leadership program at Athalia High School were interviewed using purposive sampling. The study reveals that servant leadership learning facilitates students' spiritual formation, with four common themes emerging: self-awareness, meaningful routines, life changes, and challenges in spiritual formation. These findings emphasize the importance of implementing servant leadership principles to foster students' spiritual growth and leadership abilities.

Keywords: Servant leadership, spiritual formation, learning strategy.

Abstrak

Kepemimpinan kuat merupakan kebutuhan untuk berhasil di abad ke-21. Sayangnya, pengembangan kepemimpinan murid belum dilakukan reguler, untuk semua murid tanpa kecuali. Meski ahli menegaskan bahwa model kepemimpinan terbaik untuk dikembangkan bagi para murid di sekolah menengah adalah servant leadership, namun penelitian model kepemimpinan ini juga masih sangat kurang di jenjang tersebut. Penelitian servant leadership yang berkontribusi bagi spiritualitas memang pernah dilakukan sebelumnya karena kesadaran akan saling pengaruh positif antara kepemimpinan dan spiritualitas, namun implementasinya masih terbatas pada pendidikan teologi. Penelitian selanjutnya membutuhkan pelatihan servant leadership untuk pendidikan menengah dalam konteks murid yang lebih luas. SMA Athalia membentuk muridnya secara reguler untuk mampu memimpin dengan cara dan prinsip servant leader. Namun SMA Athalia membutuhkan data yang cukup sejauh mana implementasi strategi pembelajaran servant leadership yang diterapkan dapat membangun formasi spiritual murid sehingga dapat mewujudkan visi sekolah. Penelitian kualitatif fenomenologi ini dirancang untuk berkontribusi bagi kendala-kendala di atas. Sumber data penelitian ditentukan dengan purposive sampling yang dihimpun melalui wawancara kepada delapan murid SMA Athalia yang memilih formasi spiritual dalam proyek penerapan

karakter servant leadership. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan pembelajaran servant leadership memfasilitasi murid mengalami formasi spiritual. Ada empat tema umum yang dialami: kesadaran diri, rutinitas bermakna, perubahan hidup, dan tantangan formasi spiritual.

Kata kunci: Servant leadership, formasi spiritual, strategi pembelajaran



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INTRODUCTION

Strong leadership is a necessity to succeed in the 21st century. Greenleaf has stated that educational institutions hold an important key to shaping a child's leadership in the future.¹ Research shows that the formation of leadership from the middle school age influences the success of later stages of leadership in universities, even in adulthood.² Leadership development at school age is indeed very possible and has enormous opportunities because students spend much of their time at school.³

However, on the one hand, the development of student leadership in secondary schools has not been widely discussed in the leadership literature, and even if there are discussions, they predominantly focus on student leadership within student organizations, certain extracurricular participants, and students with outstanding talents, thus neglecting leadership development for regular students as a whole.⁴ Research on leadership at school age still has gaps in the literature compared to discussions of leadership at adult age.⁵

Servant leadership is the best leadership model to develop for high school students. Patel confirmed that servant leaders dedicate their life to the interests of many people rather than self-interest. Therefore, providing servant leadership training at the school age will cultivate

¹ Robert K. Greenleaf, *The Power of Servant-Leadership: Essays*, ed. Larry C. Spears (Sydney, Australia: RHYW, 2014).

² Melody Baham, "Identifying Leadership Potential in High School Students" (Doctor of Philosophy, Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 2016).

³ Hanifi Parlar, Muhammet Emin Türkoğlu, and Ramazan Cansoy, "Leadership Development in Students: Teachers' Opinions Regarding Activities That Can Be Performed at Schools," *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 5, no. 2 (December 2017): 217–27.

⁴ Baham, "Identifying Leadership Potential in High School Students."

⁵ Despoina Karagianni and Anthony Jude Montgomery, "Developing Leadership Skills among Adolescents and Young Adults: A Review of Leadership Programmes," *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth* 23, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 86–98.

generations of servant leaders in the future.⁶ Previously, Chan & So also confirmed that servant leadership must be cultivated in secondary schools because it contributes greatly to community development and offers a framework for individuals to find meaning in life. Despite recognizing its importance and the development of servant leadership in high school, Chan & So realize that research on this leadership style is still lacking at that level.⁷

Other studies have found that there is a very strong interplay between leadership and spirituality. On one hand, Cruz & Diaz state that leadership will have a greater impact if it is supported by the spirituality that is integrated into a leader's daily life.⁸ On the other hand, Nolan-Arañez & Ludvik propose including self-reflection as an activity in leadership development programs. Self-reflection will help students experience the expected spiritual formation.⁹

Leadership training that contributes to spirituality has been conducted by Du Plessis & Nkambule for theology students. They propose a research model that begins with an in-depth study of servant leadership from biblical figures such as Moses, David, Paul, and Jesus Christ. This is followed by training that focuses on the characteristics, competencies, or skills of servant leadership in contemporary figures. They found that when theology students, who received this training, understood the principles of servant leadership as part of spiritual formation, they were more likely to view service as fulfilling and were better equipped to persevere when faced with difficult challenges.¹⁰ However, the training model proposed by Du Plessis & Nkambule is currently limited to the context of theological education aimed at students majoring in theology. Further research is needed to explore the implementation of servant leadership training in secondary education and within a broader context of pupils.

Athalia High School is a Christian school that molds its students to be able to lead in ways and principles of servant leadership based on Christian values. The formation of servant leadership through a character curriculum is not only aimed at a specific group of students but

⁶ Aarti Patel, "Developing Leaders in Schools: Unique Servant Leadership Youth Development Curriculum," *M.A. in Leadership Studies: Capstone Project Papers*, May 11, 2019.

⁷ Kong Wah Cora Chan and Gloria So, "Cultivating Servant Leaders in Secondary Schooling," *Servant Leadership* 4 (2017): 20.

⁸ Paulette Cruz and Alexa Diaz, "Peer-to-Peer Leadership, Mentorship, and the Need for Spirituality From Latina Student Leaders' Perspective," *New Directions for Student Leadership* 2020, no. 166 (June 2020): 111–22.

⁹ Shannon Nolan-Arañez and Marilee Bresciani Ludvik, "A Framework for Cultivating Students' Spirituality & Skills Employers Demand at a Public Institution," *Open Journal of Leadership* 06, no. 03 (2017): 104–11.

¹⁰ Amanda L. Du Plessis and Carol M. Nkambule, "Servant Leadership as Part of Spiritual Formation of Theological Students in Contextualisation of 21st Century Theological Training," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 76, no. 2 (August 11, 2020).

for all students regularly. As a Christian school, the spiritual formation of students is an important part of Athalia High School's efforts to realize its vision of making students disciples of Jesus Christ. Athalia High School also aims to strengthen the spiritual formation of students through character learning and servant leadership. However, Athalia High School does not yet have sufficient data to assess the extent to which the character learning strategies applied can build the spiritual formation of students.

This research is aimed at determining the role of character learning in the spiritual formation of Athalia High School students. It is also expected to provide important data regarding the extent to which the applied learning strategy contributes to the student's spiritual development. Furthermore, this research is intended to contribute to the broader field of student leadership research. The specific purposes of this research are to explore the spiritual formation experienced by students while implementing character learning strategies at Athalia High School, to identify the general themes that emerge from students' experiences of spiritual formation in learning servant leadership, and to understand the role of implementing servant leadership character learning strategies in fostering the spiritual formation of the students at Athalia High School.

THEORETICAL BASIS

Leadership Learning Strategy in Schools

Hodell states that a learning strategy is a way of practicing learning that has been designed in the context of students to whom knowledge and skills are transferred.¹¹ Instructional designers need to identify strategies used in learning to achieve goals and facilitate student learning.¹² Therefore, according to Ornstein & Hunkins, learning strategy is an important aspect that must be seriously considered by instructional designers. Learning strategies will determine how students learn and experience learning content.¹³

Jenkins shows that leadership learning strategies generally emphasize personal growth, conceptual understanding, feedback, and skills development.¹⁴ McCauley et al. suggested

¹¹ Chuck Hodell, *Introduction to Instructional Systems Design: Theory and Practice* (Alexandria, VA: ATD Press, 2021).

¹² Walter Dick, Lou Carey, and James O. Carey, *The Systematic Design of Instruction*, Eighth edition (Boston: Pearson, 2015).

¹³ Allan C. Ornstein and Francis P. Hunkins, *Curriculum: Foundations, Principles, and Issues*, Seventh edition, global edition (Harlow, England, Munich [und 20 andere]: Pearson, 2018).

¹⁴ Daniel M. Jenkins, "Exploring Instructional Strategies in Student Leadership Development Programming," *Journal of Leadership Studies* 6, no. 4 (December 2013): 48–62.

adopting the concept of andragogy in leadership lessons to bridge the gap between students' leadership knowledge and experience.¹⁵ Linden and Fertman, in Pierce et al., stated that student leadership development needs to be seen as an ongoing process that occurs in three distinct stages: the awareness stage, the interaction stage, and the mastery stage.¹⁶

Servant Leadership

A servant leader is someone whose initial desire to serve and conscious choice have led to a desire to be a leader. Therefore, a servant leader prioritizes meeting the needs of the people served.¹⁷ There are two important aspects to understanding a servant leader, namely: the aspect of existence (being) and the aspect of action (doing). A servant leader embodies the existence of a servant, and their action is to lead. Therefore, it is more appropriate to refer to them as a servant who leads.¹⁸

From the definition, it appears that servant leadership is a people-oriented leadership style manifested by prioritizing the needs and interests of individual followers. It involves reorienting followers from self-concern to caring for others in the organization or the wider community.¹⁹ This leadership approach creates and maintains mutually empowering working conditions, supporting the psychological empowerment of followers, which, in turn, increases their commitment to the organization.²⁰ Therefore, servant leadership is a construct of multiple factors consisting of ethical behavior, development, emotional recovery, empowerment, pioneering, relationship building, and wisdom.²¹

Van Dierendonck & Nuijten found eight valid dimensions to measure servant leadership, namely: standing back, forgiveness, courage, empowerment, accountability, authenticity,

¹⁵ Kelly Davis McCauley, Emily Hammer, and Amanda S. Hinojosa, "An Andragogical Approach to Teaching Leadership," *Management Teaching Review* 2, no. 4 (December 1, 2017): 312–24.

¹⁶ Scott Pierce, Karl Erickson, and Mustafa Sarkar, "High School Student-Athletes' Perceptions and Experiences of Leadership as a Life Skill," *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* 51 (November 1, 2020): 101716.

¹⁷ Robert K. Greenleaf, *The Servant as Leader*, [Revised edition] (Westfield, IN: Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, 2008).

¹⁸ Sen Sendjaya, *Personal and Organizational Excellence through Servant Leadership*, Management for Professionals (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2015).

¹⁹ Nathan Eva et al., "Servant Leadership: A Systematic Review and Call for Future Research," *The Leadership Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (February 1, 2019): 111–32.

²⁰ Stuart Allen et al., "Exploring a Model of Servant Leadership, Empowerment, and Commitment in Nonprofit Organizations," *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 29, no. 1 (2018): 123–40.

²¹ Khawaja Fawad Latif and Frederic Marimon, "Development and Validation of Servant Leadership Scale in Spanish Higher Education," *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 40, no. 4 (January 1, 2019): 499–519.

humility, and stewardship.²² Sendjaya limited it to six dimensions, each with a certain value: voluntary subordination, authentic self, covenantal relationship, responsible morality, transcendental spirituality, and transforming influence.²³ Liden et al. mention seven dimensions relevant to the characteristics of a person as a servant leader: emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skill, empowering, helping subordinates grow and succeed, putting subordinates first, and behaving ethically.²⁴ Grobler and Flotman conducted research in the South African context using a questionnaire with seven dimensions of Liden and found considerable validity in that context.²⁵

Servant Leadership in a Christian Perspective

Some experts suggest a critical review of the concept of servant leadership rather than seeing it as solely Bible-based leadership. Kimotho emphatically writes that the concept of servant leadership is fatuous and deficient to be called a Christian leadership theory.²⁶ Meanwhile, Locke and Smith state that this leadership model needs to be critically evaluated and transformed in the light of Christian theology and ethics. Christians or Christian institutions can adopt any leadership theory they believe can expand the Kingdom of God, but must always critique those theories in the light of God's Word.²⁷ Beadles states that "some aspects of the theory prevent it from being thoroughly biblical," so, according to him, this concept needs to be purified from several aspects that are not in accordance with the Bible's view.²⁸

Responding to the experts' suggestions mentioned above, the author believes that the Biblical perspective on servant leadership should be constructed from the Gospel of Mark, specifically Mark 10:35-45. According to the author, the concept of servant leadership and the calling to be a Christian servant in Mark 10:35-45 have several similarities and differences.

²² Dirk van Dierendonck and Inge Nuijten, "The Servant Leadership Survey: Development and Validation of a Multidimensional Measure," *Journal of Business and Psychology* 26, no. 3 (September 2011): 249–67.

²³ Sendjaya, *Personal and Organizational Excellence through Servant Leadership*.

²⁴ Robert C. Liden et al., "Servant Leadership: Validation of a Short Form of the SL-28," *The Leadership Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (April 1, 2015): 254–69.

²⁵ Anton Grobler and Aden-Paul Flotman, "The Validation of the Servant Leadership Scale," *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology* 46, no. 0 (June 17, 2020): 12.

²⁶ Stephen Gichuhi Kimotho, "Is Servant Leadership a 'Christian Theory'? A Critical Examination of Greenleaf's Servant Leadership Concept," 2019, 8.

²⁷ Larry G. Locke and Baylee Smith, "Guest Post: Is Servant Leadership Christian?," *Christian Scholar's Review* (blog), January 15, 2021.

²⁸ Nicholas A. Beadles II, "Stewardship-Leadership: A Biblical Refinement of Servant-Leadership," *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business* 6, no. 1 (2000).

Based on the author's view, the concept of servant leadership and the calling to be a Christian servant in Mark 10:35-45 emphasize the primacy of serving. The concept of servant leadership emphasizes the necessity of having a desire to serve. As the term "servant leader" suggests, serving precedes leading. This is also stated in Mark 10:43-44, which emphasizes that ministry and servanthood are necessary to become the leader. Additionally, both emphasize ministry and servanthood to the community. Servant leadership is a leadership model that empowers and builds the community. Service is performed to meet the needs of the community. This passage in Mark also affirms the meaning of contributing to the community, as seen in the phrases "of all" and "for many." Ministry and servanthood are present to meet the community's needs. Jesus' death was even for the benefit of many people. Furthermore, both emphasize the principle of willingness. Both Greenleaf's servant leadership and Christian service in the Gospel of Mark highlight the prohibition against the arbitrary use of authority. Service must be based on willingness.

The author notes a fundamental difference between the concept of servant leadership and the Christian calling to serve. Servant leadership originates from a syncretism of universal theological concepts with existing traditions, so its practice does not require adherence to a specific religion.²⁹ Conversely, according to the author, the Christian calling to serve in Mark 10:35-45 is rooted in emulating Christ, which necessitates a relationship with the Person of Jesus. According to Greenleaf, a servant leader is a servant (being) who leads (doing), while the Gospel of Mark depicts the Son of Man as a Divine Person (being) who serves, suffers, and dies (doing); and Jesus' followers are disciples (being) called to emulate (doing) Jesus as the Son of Man. Followers of Jesus are called to serve solely to emulate the Son of Man. Servant leadership focuses on restoration and service to build the wholeness of others and oneself, whereas the servant in Mark is depicted as a figure who denies and sacrifices oneself in obedience to God.

The popularity of servant leadership has attracted various institutions, including Christian institutions, to study and implement it. The author emphasizes that the application of this leadership in Christian institutions should be based on fundamental Biblical principles, with a critical and transformative approach in adapting the evolving concept of servant leadership, including Greenleaf's own ideas. The author agrees with Khoe that a Christian servant leader must have a personal relationship with Jesus, experience a new birth, and

²⁹ Sendjaya, *Personal and Organizational Excellence through Servant Leadership*.

enhance their relationship with God through prayer, Bible reading, and Christian community.³⁰ Meanwhile, in the author's view, the universal characteristics of a servant leader, such as serving, willingness, and community development, are acceptable as long as they are grounded in Biblical truths. A servant in Christian institutions bases their identity and actions as a disciple on emulating their Master, Jesus Christ. Ultimately, service in Christian institutions should lead to obedience to God, not merely stop at human self-development, as obedience to God prevents Christian leaders from being entangled in human interests.

Servant Leadership Learning Strategies at Athalia High School

Athalia School strives for successful character learning by applying the right strategy. The strategy for implementing the character curriculum at Athalia School, according to Badudu & the Athalia School Team, includes repetition, strengthening, and application; focus on implementation and character growth; top-down approach; alignment of each decision/rule with the characters to be developed.³¹

To apply the character traits being trained, Athalia High School provides a template that serves as a reference for students in designing the application of these traits. According to Badudu et al., the character project template includes several elements: the name of the character trait being studied, such as humility, enthusiasm, courage, or resilience; the name of the character project, which is freely determined by the student; the student's identity, including name and class; the project's background, which includes the reasons the student chose the project, the life context, and the goals they hope to achieve through the project; the objectives or specific actions the student aims to achieve through the project; the project's target or orientation, which includes the individuals the project is aimed at, such as relationships with God, parents, friends, others, the nation and country, nature, and more; the steps of implementation outlined in a table; reflections, which consist of reflective questions related to the project's execution; and attachments, which contain documentation of the student's project implementation.³²

Character building of servant leaders at Athalia School is carried out in stages. At the junior high school level, students are trained to pay attention to others and develop a profile of caring & sharing. Furthermore, at the senior high school level, students are directed to be able

³⁰ Yao Tung Khoe, *Terpanggil Menjadi Pendidik Berhati Gembala* (Yogyakarta: Andi, 2016).

³¹ Rizal Badudu and Tim Sekolah Athalia, "Manual Kurikulum Karakter Sekolah Athalia," 2022.

³² Ibid.

to lead themselves and others, forming a profile of influencing & contributing. In senior high school, the character qualities to be achieved are love as the main character, humility and enthusiasm in grade 10, courage and endurance in grade 11, and strengthening all characters in grade 12.

Christian Spiritual Formation

When asked about the future of spiritual formation, Houston states that Christian spiritual formation is very simple, to build a personal relationship with Jesus every day. It can "be taken seriously with daily devotions, spending time in continual prayer, reading and meditating each day on a passage of the Bible, and the celebration of God's daily presence."³³

Spiritual formation is an effort to reform the damaged human soul in a process of recovery from separation from God. In short, it is soul reform.³⁴ Therefore, spiritual formation cannot be rushed; it takes time and patience as its trademark.³⁵ Spiritual formation is nothing but the process of transforming the innermost reality of oneself in such a way that life with God, as stated in the Bible, can naturally and freely occur within oneself.³⁶

According to Mezirow, the transformation process typically unfolds through several phases: experiencing a disorienting dilemma, self-examining feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame, critically assessing assumptions, acknowledging dissatisfaction and beginning the transformation process, searching for new roles, relationships, and actions, planning actions, gathering the necessary knowledge and skills to implement plans, trying out planned new roles, building competence and confidence in these new roles and relationships, and integrating new roles or perspectives into one's life.³⁷

Porter recently observed a significant increase in interest in Christian spiritual formation, particularly that developed by figures such as Dallas Willard, Richard Foster, James Houston, Richard Lovelace, Eugene Peterson, and Henri Nouwen.³⁸ In response, Gruenberg and Asumang propose the need for an ideal assessment instrument for spiritual formation that

³³ James M. Houston, "The Future of Spiritual Formation," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 4, no. 2 (September 22, 2011): 131–40.

³⁴ Dallas Willard, "Spiritual Disciplines, Spiritual Formation, and the Restoration of the Soul," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 26, no. 1 (March 1, 1998): 101–9.

³⁵ Richard Foster, "Spiritual Formation Agenda," ChristianityToday.com, February 4, 2009.

³⁶ Lynda L. Graybeal and Julia L. Roller, *Learning from Jesus: A Spiritual Formation Guide* (New York: HarperCollins e-books, 2009).

³⁷ Jane I. Lu, "Educational Models of Spiritual Formation in Theological Education: Introspection-based Spiritual Formation," *Teaching Theology & Religion* 24, no. 1 (March 2021): 28–41.

³⁸ Steve L. Porter, "The Future of Christian Spiritual Formation," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care*, May 7, 2023, 193979092311739.

can be applied ecumenically, encompassing an interdisciplinary approach, being biblically grounded, theologically sound, and comprehensive. They recommend a four-axis assessment model that includes: the specific goals of spiritual formation articulated in particular theories, such as Christian growth or creation restoration; the underlying paradigmatic concepts, such as heart renovation or discipleship; a theological and philosophical foundation from various disciplines, including biblical theology, psychology, and philosophy; and recommended formative activities, such as prayer, fasting, and Bible reading.³⁹

Furthermore, Miller and Beazley state that schools play a role in training students' affection and love for the Christian worldview. This is the goal of Christian education, which is not only to provide information but also to carry out formation. They underscore the role of the teacher in the school as an imitator of Christ, who is the Ultimate Role Model. Then, the teacher becomes a role model for the students in both words and deeds.⁴⁰ Knoetze reminds us of the importance of relationships in spiritual formation. The God of Trinity is the relational God in himself and with all creation. Therefore, according to Knoetze, spiritual formation can only occur in a relationship with God, fellow believers, and other creatures.⁴¹ Meanwhile, Lu also emphasizes the importance of self-awareness as a significant factor for spiritual formation in educational institutions. She stated that self-awareness can deepen the relationship with Christ and manifest the knowledge of God in everyday life. The more one is aware of one's thoughts, emotions, and vulnerabilities, the more one will experience a deeper connection with God.⁴²

Based on the above explanation, the author believes that spiritual formation is the process of building spirituality and restoring a relationship with God. This formation begins with an awareness of one's poor relationship with God. This awareness can arise during a life crisis or through self-evaluation. Spiritual formation is concretely built through formative activities that are not only routine but also meaningful.

The author also emphasizes the importance of the role of Christian educational institutions, especially Christian schools, in facilitating the spiritual formation of students.

³⁹ Jeremiah Gruenberg and Annang Asumang, "Axes of Formation: A Model for Assessing Theories of Spiritual Formation," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 12, no. 2 (November 1, 2019): 212–31.

⁴⁰ Matthew R. Miller and JohnMark Bennett Beazley, "Christian Spiritual Formation in the Classical School," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 11, no. 2 (November 2018): 230–40.

⁴¹ Johannes J. Knoetze, "Theological Education, Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development in Africa: What Does God Have to Do with It?," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 78, no. 4 (June 3, 2022).

⁴² Jane I. Lu, "Educational Models of Spiritual Formation in Theological Education: Introspection-based Spiritual Formation," *Teaching Theology & Religion* 24, no. 1 (March 2021): 28–41.

Given the significant amount of time students spend at school, Christian schools need to design integrated and continuous programs to create moments that allow the growth of awareness of spiritual formation.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. The study will interview eight Athalia High School students who are participating in servant leadership character learning. The subjects were chosen because they have undertaken a spiritual formation topic as their character application project. The selection of subjects for this study was a purposeful sampling approach, where the subjects were deliberately chosen by the researcher to obtain rich information about the phenomenon being studied.⁴³

Data in this research was collected using the interview structure offered by Bevan, which consists of three stages: contextualization, capturing phenomena, and clarifying phenomena.⁴⁴ This interview structure is used to allow thorough investigation without violating the principle of phenomenology itself. Bevan emphasized that the structure of this interview is not intended to dictate what to ask but rather how to manage the process of asking.

Furthermore, the data obtained in this research will be analyzed using the analytical guidelines from Groenewald in Howitt.⁴⁵ To be precise, the method of data analysis chosen is data explication, according to Groenewald, to ensure that the integrity of the phenomena experienced is maintained in the analysis process.⁴⁶

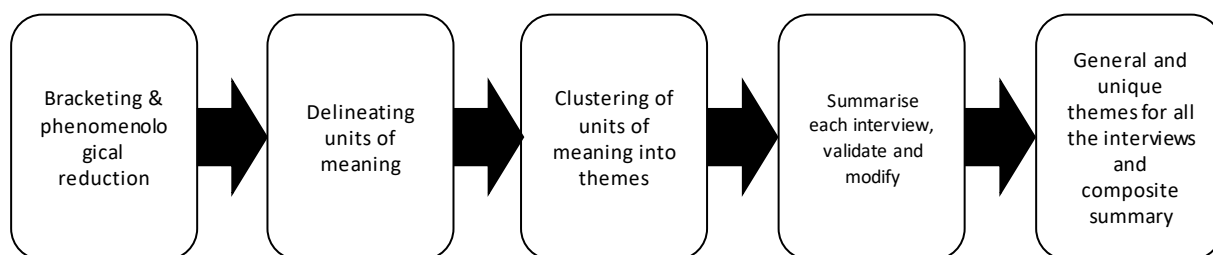


Figure 1. Steps of Analysis in Groenewald's Phenomenology Applied in This Research

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

⁴³ John W. Creswell, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*, 4th ed (Boston: Pearson, 2012).

⁴⁴ Mark T. Bevan, "A Method of Phenomenological Interviewing," *Qualitative Health Research* 24, no. 1 (January 2014): 136–44.

⁴⁵ Dennis Howitt, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods in Psychology: Putting Theory into Practice*, Fourth edition (Harlow, England ; New York: Pearson, 2019).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 297-299.

Student's Spiritual Formation Experience in Servant Leadership Learning

The implementation of servant leadership character learning strategies at Athalia High School, specifically the character application project that adopts the concept of andragogy, has given students the freedom to choose and design projects according to their needs. This space of freedom facilitates students who seek restoration of their relationship with God to design spiritual formation projects.

Leadership development through servant leadership character learning at Athalia High School takes into account three continuous stages: the stage of awareness, the stage of interaction, and the stage of mastery. The character projects created by students start with awareness arising from crises, negative emotions, or evaluations of themselves and their surroundings. Then, the interaction stage occurs in the project design process where the teacher acts as a facilitator, helping students prepare for the application of their characters. During the project design stage, students select and design the application of their respective characters. Students can discuss with the teacher to get the input they need. Finally, the mastery stage occurs when students carry out the activities they have planned.

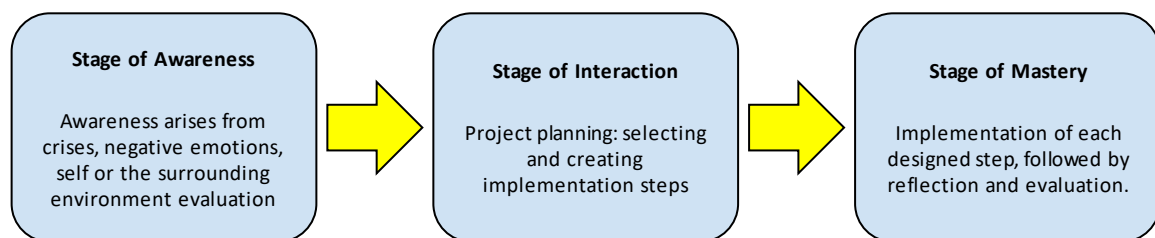


Figure 5. Three Stages of Leadership Development

Eight participants from Athalia High School experienced spiritual formation through the implementation of servant leadership character learning strategies. At least two indicators from the four-axis model as shown by Gruenberg and Asumang were experienced by these participants. The first indicator is that the participants have a formation goal, namely to grow, improve, or develop themselves and their relationship with God. The second indicator is that the participants engage in formation routine activity.

Common and Unique Themes from the Experiences of Athalia High School Students

There were four common themes and one unique theme shared by the eight participants. The first common theme: self-awareness as an element of spiritual formation. The participants generally have an awareness of their existence in relation to God. They realize that their relationship with God needs to be repaired, restored, or deepened through spiritual formation.

This awareness can arise from crises, negative emotions, self or the surrounding environment evaluation, which reveals that the condition of the relationship with God is not ideal.

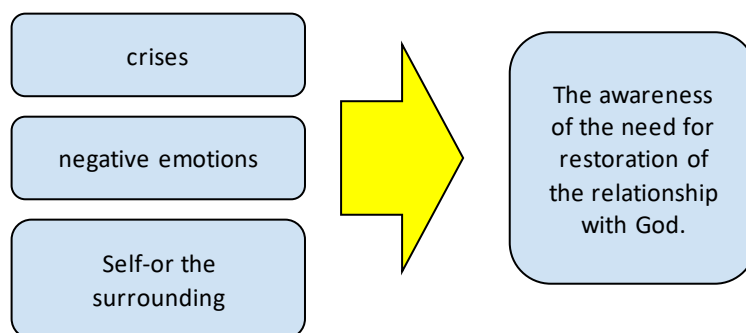


Figure 2. The Arising of the Spiritual Formation Awareness

The second common theme: spiritual formation as a meaningful routine. The awareness of the need to build a relationship with God led the participants to engage in spiritual formation regularly. Restoring a relationship with God does require time and a meaningful daily routine. Meaningful process is very important in the routine, and it is marked by the satisfaction that is present in the process.

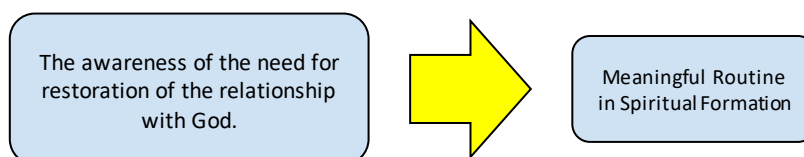


Figure 3. Awareness Leading to Spiritual Formation

The third common theme: life changes through spiritual formation. Changes occur within the participants while implementing the activity formation in the character project of servant leadership. These life changes are marked by the recognition of negative living habits, planning new actions, attempting to implement plans, and adopting new positive living habits.

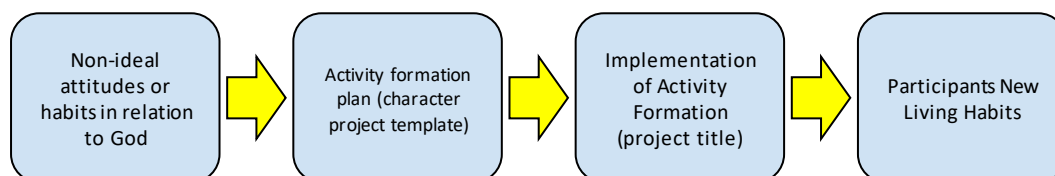


Figure 4. Participants' Life Change Patterns

Table 1. Life Changes of Each Participant Facilitated in Servant Leadership Character Learning

Particip- pant	Old Habit	Student Project Title in Servant Leader Character Education	New Habits as Spiritual Formation of the Partisipant

I	Prayer is less meaningful, does not pour out feelings, relies on self	2 Minutes in 24 Hours	Meaningful prayers, pouring out feelings, telling his detail activities to God, relying on God "I still do it until now, because it's part of my evening prayer too."
II	Lack of gratitude, complaining, forgetting God's blessings	Learn to be grateful to God	Write down things to be grateful for
III	Rarely pray, do not pray for daily activities	Rely on the Almighty	Pray just before doing daily activities, be more grateful
IV	Never asked for God's help, never read the Bible	Always Rely on God	"Prayer feels more like talking, talking to God like that," Read the Bible in his free time, "So my Bible reading habit came from that project" "until now. Just keep reading it"
V	Arrogant, neglect to be grateful	Writing for God	Write thanks to God
VI	Hard to be grateful, disrespectful to God, blaming God	Be Thankful Every Day	Grateful every day, can write down three things to be grateful for every Friday "Even after working on this project, I am still grateful every day and give more time to God. "
VII	Prayer is less specific, not free to pray for others	Pray Privately	Pray personally, pray more specifically, pray for others
VIII	Rarely go to church, parents don't go to church	Getting Closer to God	Persuade her mother to go to church, to church on Sunday. "From now on I will always remember to worship at the Church to give thanks and glorify His name."

The fourth common theme: spiritual formation challenges. The participants faced various challenges in carrying out activity formation. Building a new habit is, of course, not easy, and there are challenges to be faced. Common challenges experienced by the participants include an imbalance of priorities that may lead to negligence in the formation of activities. Additionally, they also encountered personality challenges, laziness, and negative influences from their surroundings.

Unique theme: Athalia High School character project role. Respondents felt that the application of character in the form of projects facilitated them to experience spiritual formation through activities that they freely chose. However, there is a unique view from Participant III and Participant V regarding this character project. Even though they both

underline the assignment in this character project, they have different impressions. Participant III saw the character project that was presented as an assignment to make the project have the power to do it. Interestingly, participant III did not see coercion as a negative thing, he argued that coercion through assignments can direct thinking to see that character development is important. Different things were experienced by participant V who saw that character projects in the form of assignments could eliminate self-initiative to grow.

The Role of Servant Leadership Learning for The Spiritual Formation of Athalia High School Students

Student experiences in implementing servant leadership character learning strategies have contributed to their spiritual formation. Servant leadership character learning facilitates the growing self-awareness of the importance of spiritual formation among some students. This awareness arises from various factors, such as crises, negative emotions, self or the surrounding environment evaluation, which lead the participants to recognize something lacking in their relationship with God.

The concept of andragogy in the design of character application projects for servant leadership enables students who feel their relationship with God is not ideal to get the space to improve, restore, or deepen that relationship. Students are brought to the experience of not only discovering their spiritual problems but also thinking about how to overcome these problems through the formation of spiritual activities. They may even experience situations where these problems are successfully overcome by them.

Servant leadership character learning enables students to experience spiritual life changes and the emergence of new spiritual habits. Table 1 describes a summary of life changes, from old habits to new habits, experienced by each participant.

Recommendations for the Implementation of Character Learning Strategies in Athalia High School

The author recommends strengthening learning strategies that enable students to not only experience personal spiritual formation but also impact the spiritual formation of the community around them. This recommendation is based on the unique model of servant leadership and the emphasis on servant leadership as stated in the Gospel of Mark.

Servant leadership is a model that emphasizes meeting the needs of the people served,⁴⁷ reorienting followers from self-concern to caring for others in the organization or wider community,⁴⁸ and empowering others.⁴⁹

A similar emphasis is also seen in the example of servant leadership from the Lord Jesus. He emphasized that greatness is obtained by calling oneself a servant, deacon, and doulos (Mark 8:34; 9:35; 10:31). Stein stated that greatness in God's Kingdom does not lie in public recognition and authority to govern, but rather in humility and unmeasured service to “all” and “for many.”⁵⁰ Edwards writes that the Christian community does not exist for leaders and servants, but rather they exist for the community.⁵¹ Lane sees that service and community service are expressions of obedience, worship, and service to Jesus.⁵²

Based on these observations, the researcher recommends that the implementation of character learning should inspire and facilitate students to serve and meet the needs of others, rather than focusing solely on developing and fulfilling their own needs. The results of the research on eight respondents showed that their experience of spiritual formation was still focused and stopped only on developing their own spirituality.

The expected ideal results are similar to the experiences of participants VII and VIII, where their spiritual development does not stop at themselves but also extends to others. Participant VII chose the activity formation to pray for themselves and others, while participant VIII chose the activity formation to remind parents to worship.

CONCLUSION

This research was conducted using a qualitative phenomenological method. Phenomenological research was carried out to explore the spiritual formation experiences of Athalia High School students in implementing servant leadership character learning strategies. The research aimed to determine the spiritual formation experienced by students in implementing character learning strategies at Athalia High School.

⁴⁷ Greenleaf, *The Servant as Leader*.

⁴⁸ Eva et al., “Servant Leadership.”

⁴⁹ Khawaja Fawad Latif and Frederic Marimon, “Development and Validation of Servant Leadership Scale in Spanish Higher Education,” *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 40, no. 4 (January 1, 2019): 499–519.

⁵⁰ Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2008).

⁵¹ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich : Leicester, England: Eerdmans ; Apollos, 2002).

⁵² William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Nachdr., The New International Commentary on the New Testament 2 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publ, 2010).

This research aims to identify the general themes of students' spiritual formation experiences in servant leadership learning. Four general themes emerged from the spiritual formation experiences of the respondents: self-awareness as an element of spiritual formation, spiritual formation as a meaningful routine, life changes through spiritual formation, and challenges to spiritual formation.

Additionally, this research aims to determine the role of implementing servant leadership character learning strategies in fostering the spiritual formation of Athalia High School students. The study reveals three key roles: (1) servant leadership character learning facilitates some students' self-awareness of the importance of spiritual formation; (2) the character application project creates space for students to improve their relationship with God; (3) character learning allows students to experience life changes and cultivate new spiritual habits.

Finally, this research provides recommendations for the implementation of character learning strategies at Athalia High School. The author suggests that the learning strategies should be strengthened so that students can experience spiritual formation that not only focuses on themselves but also positively impacts the spiritual formation of the community around them.

Suggestion

Research on students' spiritual formation experiences in implementing servant leadership character learning strategies found only two of the four indicators in the four-axis model (the four axes) of ecumenical spiritual formation from Gruenberg and Asumang. The two indicators that have not emerged are the existence of a paradigmatic concept and the existence of a theological-philosophical basis. Researchers faced difficulties in finding these two indicators due to limitations imposed by the phenomenological research model, which prohibits the introduction of new concepts or terms in phenomenological interviews. Therefore, researchers suggest that further research on similar topics can explore other research models.

Strong leadership is a necessity for success in the 21st century. However, leadership development is still predominantly focused on specific groups of people. To address this, Athalia High School fosters student leadership development for all school students, rather than just a select group, through servant leadership character learning integrated into the curricular program. This study contributes to the existing body of leadership research. In this regard, researchers propose that more extensive research on schools implementing comprehensive leadership development for students regularly should be conducted, providing a valuable

reference for schools that have not yet implemented such programs.

Research Limitations

The limitations of this research lie in the subjectivity of the researcher. The researcher's background (life world) influences how each stage of this research is conducted. The researcher followed the suggestions in phenomenological research to carry out the process of bracketing to reduce or eliminate researcher preconceptions and conducted validation by consulting with each participant to see if the essence of the interviews was clearly captured by the researcher. When general and unique themes were formulated, the researcher consulted again with the participants to ensure that these themes aligned with their experiences. All eight participants confirmed and validated that the themes formulated accurately represented their experiences.

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