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Implementation of Christian Education by the Church Council to Enhance Men's Participation in Worship at GKI Diaspora Hawai Congregation, Sentani Classis

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Abstract
Men's participation in worship at GKI Diaspora Hawai Congregation, Sentani Classis, remains limited despite the recognized importance of the Men's Fellowship for spiritual formation and family leadership. This study examined factors affecting men's participation and the implementation of Christian education by the Church Council to strengthen involvement in worship. A descriptive qualitative approach was used through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentary review. Of 129 registered male members, only about 25 were considered active, while observed attendance at two fellowship services was 13 and 11 participants. Interviews with six men identified work demands, family responsibilities, health limitations, transportation difficulties, scheduling, weak communication, and repetitive activities as major barriers. Christian education was found to be most effective when integrated with contextual biblical teaching, pastoral accompaniment, personal communication, flexible worship, and meaningful participation. These strategies can strengthen marturia, koinonia, and diakonia while supporting men's spiritual growth and congregational engagement within church and family.

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1. INTRODUCTION

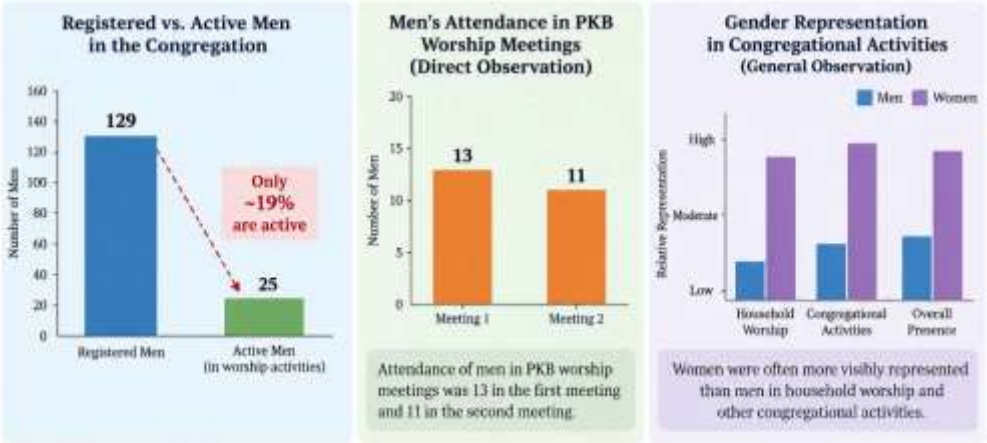
Church fellowship is an important arena for Christian spiritual formation because it provides opportunities for believers to strengthen faith, receive biblical teaching, participate in worship, and develop relationships of mutual support. Within Gereja Kristen Injili (GKI) di Tanah Papua, the Men's Fellowship (*Persekutuan Kaum Bapak*, PKB) functions as a congregational organization for adult male members and is intended to strengthen their roles in the family, church, and wider community. Christian men are expected to serve not only as heads of households but also as spiritual examples who demonstrate faith through worship, leadership, service, and responsible conduct.

Christian men are expected to provide guidance and leadership both at home and within church settings. This includes addressing challenges related to non-functioning families and churches, and restoring spiritual and leadership responsibilities in line with biblical principles (Darmawan & Benjamin, 2025; Freeks & Alard, 2023). Men are called to be spiritual leaders (often referred to as "Imams" in some contexts), setting examples of faithfulness, worship, and devotion for their families and communities (Darmawan & Benjamin, 2025; J.M.P., 2025; Thomas, 2018). This role is especially significant because the church understands fellowship as more than attendance at religious meetings; it is connected with spiritual growth, Christian witness, mutual support, and service.

Low participation among men in congregational worship is not merely an organizational concern but also a Christian education issue because it may weaken opportunities for spiritual formation and the development of men as models of faith within their families and congregation. Congregational participation is widely recognized as a primary context for faith formation and Christian education. Declining participation, especially among men, challenges the effectiveness of educational approaches that rely on a strong, identity-bearing community. This can make traditional models of Christian education less relevant and effective, potentially weakening opportunities for spiritual formation within families and congregations (Turpin, 2018).

The presence of committed members in congregational life is crucial for spiritual growth and mutual support. When men are less involved, there are fewer opportunities for them to serve as spiritual role models within their families and the broader congregation, which may impact the development of faith in others, especially children and youth (Minor et al., 2023; Turpin, 2018). This concern is particularly evident at GKI Diaspora Hawai Congregation, Sentani Classis. The preliminary data reported in the study show that 129 men were registered in the congregation, yet only approximately 25 were considered active in worship activities.

Chart 1. Participation of Men and Women in Congregational Activities
GKI Diaspora Hawai Congregation, Sentani Classis



During the researcher's direct observation of two PKB worship meetings, attendance was only 13 men in the first meeting and 11 in the second. The document further reports that women were often more visibly represented than men in household worship and other congregational activities. Initial observations associated the limited participation of men with several practical and personal conditions, including demanding employment as civil servants or military personnel, work schedules, fatigue, unsuitable worship times, and the perception that some PKB activities were insufficiently engaging. These observations demonstrate a clear discrepancy between the theological importance attributed to men's participation and their actual involvement in congregational worship.

The central research problem therefore concerns how the Church Council can respond to the inactivity or limited participation of male congregants and how Christian education can be implemented to strengthen their involvement in worship. Inactivity cannot be explained solely by weak spirituality. Participants identified occupational obligations, family responsibilities, health limitations, transportation difficulties, scheduling problems, insufficient communication, limited pastoral approaches, and the repetitiveness of some fellowship activities as important barriers.

Barriers are often systemic, involving both physical infrastructure and social attitudes within congregations (Carter et al., 2024, 2025; Koll, 2011; McMahon-Panther &

Bornman, 2023; Stewart-Ginsburg et al., 2024). Many congregations express uncertainty about how to support meaningful participation, highlighting the need for better training and inclusive strategies (Carter et al., 2017; Koll, 2011). These barriers often interact, compounding the challenges faced by individuals and families (McMahon-Panther & Bornman, 2023).

At the same time, respondents generally continued to regard PKB as spiritually important and associated participation with stronger faith, Christian character, fellowship, and the responsibility of men as spiritual leaders in the family. A viable solution must therefore combine spiritual formation with practical congregational strategies. Christian education by the Church Council can be understood as a continuous process of biblical teaching, pastoral accompaniment, communication, mentoring, contextual worship, and opportunities for meaningful participation rather than as instruction delivered only through formal teaching sessions.

Kalintabu & Palar, (2022) emphasize that pastoral leadership plays an important role in motivating congregational members, encouraging spiritual growth, and strengthening participation in worship. Their perspective supports the need for church leaders to move beyond administrative supervision and develop motivational and relational forms of leadership. Similarly, the discussion of church leadership in the document presents pastors and elders as instruments through whom congregational faith and participation can be strengthened. In the context of GKI Diaspora Hawai, this implies that the Church Council and PKB leadership should actively identify less-active members, build personal communication, encourage participation, provide pastoral attention, and design activities that respond to members' real-life circumstances. Such an approach aligns Christian education with pastoral leadership because both seek to guide believers toward mature faith and more active involvement in the life and mission of the church (Kalintabu & Palar, 2022).

A second relevant solution concerns the organization and educational quality of worship itself. Yogo et al., (2021) as cited in the study, argues that the essential character of Christian worship should remain centered on the presence and proclamation of the Word of God, while the form or structure of worship may be adjusted creatively according to congregational needs. This perspective is directly relevant to participants who requested less monotonous worship, small-group sharing of biblical passages, vocal groups, choirs, Bible quizzes, sports, family activities, recreation, and culturally appropriate programs.

The purpose of such adaptation is not to transform worship into entertainment but to make Christian formation more accessible, participatory, and contextually meaningful. The study also stresses that sermons are regarded by many participants as a particularly important part of worship because preaching can connect Scripture with family life, employment, social relationships, and daily ethical responsibilities. Thus, contextual worship and relevant biblical teaching can function as concrete instruments of Christian education for strengthening men's participation (Yogo et al., 2021).

Christian fellowship is described as participation in a community grounded in Christ, while marturia concerns Christian witness and diakonia concerns practical service to others. Participation in a community grounded in Christ, emphasizing shared life, mutual support, and unity among believers. It is seen as a core dimension of church life, fostering emotional and spiritual bonds within the congregation (Aitkobo & Sonata, 2025; Resane, 2019). The respondents similarly associated worship with sharing faith through conduct in the family, workplace, and community; strengthening relationships among church members; and participating in assistance for widows, widowers, older people, orphans, sick members, and economically vulnerable persons.

The educational significance of worship therefore lies not only in increased attendance but also in whether participants become doers of the Word and demonstrate renewed Christian life. This understanding broadens the proposed solution: increasing men's participation should not be treated merely as an attendance-management problem but as a process of forming mature Christian men who can witness, build fellowship, and serve others through the church's threefold calling.

Nevertheless, a specific research gap remains. The study notes that previous research has tended to emphasize factors associated with men's inactivity in church fellowship, limited involvement in worship, low participation in collective prayer, or the general relationship between pastoral leadership and congregational activity. The literature cited in the proposal also addresses related issues such as pastoral leadership, church growth, worship renewal, spirituality, and men's spiritual formation (Anabokay, 2023; Damanik et al., 2022; Kalintabu & Palar, 2022; Yogo et al., 2021). However, these discussions do not specifically examine how Christian education can be implemented by the Church Council to respond to men's inactivity within the distinctive organizational and congregational context of GKI Diaspora Hawai, Sentani Classis. They also do not integrate the practical barriers identified by the men themselves with the educational-pastoral responsibilities of the Church Council and the outcomes of marturia, koinonia, and diakonia. This contextual and integrative gap provides the rationale for the present study.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the factors that hinder men from actively participating in fellowship and worship at GKI Diaspora Hawai, Sentani Classis, to examine the Church Council's responsibility toward less-active male congregants, and to understand how Christian education can contribute to stronger participation in worship. The novelty of the study lies in integrating men's participation, Christian education, Church Council leadership, and the three ecclesial dimensions of marturia, koinonia, and diakonia within one specific congregational setting.

Rather than interpreting inactivity only as a personal or spiritual deficiency, the study considers the interaction of spiritual motivation, work, time, health, transportation, leadership, communication, worship organization, and pastoral support. The scope is limited to GKI Diaspora Hawai Congregation and primarily involves PKB members, the Church Council, and PKB leadership. Using a descriptive qualitative approach based on observation, interviews, and documentary or literature review, the study seeks to generate a context-sensitive understanding of how Christian education and pastoral leadership may strengthen men's participation in worship and congregational life.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The study applies a descriptive qualitative approach that is appropriate for examining the participation of men in church fellowship and worship activities at GKI Diaspora Hawai, Sentani Classis. This design allows the researcher to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, motivations, and barriers in their actual congregational environment. The methodological orientation is particularly relevant because the problem concerns behavior, spiritual engagement, leadership influence, and participation patterns that cannot be adequately understood through numerical measurement alone. Preliminary observations also provide an important empirical basis for the study, showing that, from 129 registered male members, only approximately 25 were considered active, while attendance observed during two PKB worship meetings was 13 and 11 participants, respectively. These figures reinforce the significance of investigating why participation is low and how church leadership may respond to the issue.

The participant selection reflects the qualitative character of the research because the study prioritizes informants who have direct knowledge of the congregation and PKB

activities. The document identifies the Church Council leadership, PKB management, and other relevant participants as potential information sources. The reported interview data include six male participants aged 49–71 years, with church membership ranging from 27 to 41 years. Their occupational backgrounds include active and retired Indonesian Army personnel, a retired civil servant, and a self-employed participant, while their PKB participation status ranges from active to less active. This diversity is methodologically valuable because it reveals different explanations for non-participation, including occupational duties, physical limitations, transportation difficulties at night, business responsibilities, scheduling problems, and personal motivation.

The combination of observation, semi-structured interviews, and literature or documentary study strengthens the research because it enables the phenomenon to be examined from several sources. Observation provides contextual evidence about actual participation, while interviews allow participants to explain the reasons underlying their attendance patterns and spiritual experiences. The interview guide is relatively comprehensive because it addresses both the causes of inactivity and the broader meaning of worship through the categories of marturia, koinonia, and diakonia. It also explores leadership, acceptance within the fellowship, preferred activities, communication, spiritual motivation, and participants' expectations for future PKB development. The interviews conducted between 25 and 30 August 2025 therefore provide detailed qualitative material for identifying both internal and external factors affecting participation.

The analytical procedure is based on data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification, following the qualitative analysis framework described in the document. This approach enables the researcher to organize extensive interview responses into recurring themes such as employment obligations, health and mobility, worship schedules, spiritual commitment, pastoral attention, leadership, communication, and the attractiveness of PKB activities. However, several methodological elements are not clearly documented in the proposal, including the formal sampling strategy, saturation criteria, interview duration, transcription procedure, participant consent process, ethical approval, and procedures for establishing qualitative credibility such as triangulation or member checking. These omissions do not invalidate the study, but they should be clarified in the final research article to improve methodological transparency, reproducibility, and scholarly rigor.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Factors Influencing Men's Participation in PKB Fellowship and Worship

The findings indicate that participation in the *Persekutuan Kaum Bapak* (PKB) at GKI Diaspora Hawai remains substantially below the number of registered male members. The congregation recorded 129 male members, but preliminary observation identified only approximately 25 as actively participating in worship activities. During two observed PKB worship meetings, attendance was only 13 and 11 persons, respectively. This pattern confirms that low participation is not merely a perception of church leaders but an observable congregational issue requiring systematic pastoral and educational attention.

The six interviewed participants also demonstrated different levels of involvement. Two participants were categorized as active, while four were categorized as less active. Nevertheless, all respondents recognized PKB fellowship as important for strengthening faith, building Christian character, developing spiritual experience, and supporting men in their responsibilities as heads of households. Christian character is primarily shaped through communal worship and shared practices, which foster ethical norms, values, and personal growth (Mironova & Popov, 2017; Sim et al., 2024; Wells, 2004). Several participants explicitly described men as spiritual leaders or "priests" within their families.

Thus, reduced attendance did not necessarily indicate rejection of PKB or a lack of appreciation for Christian fellowship; rather, a gap existed between theological awareness and practical participation.

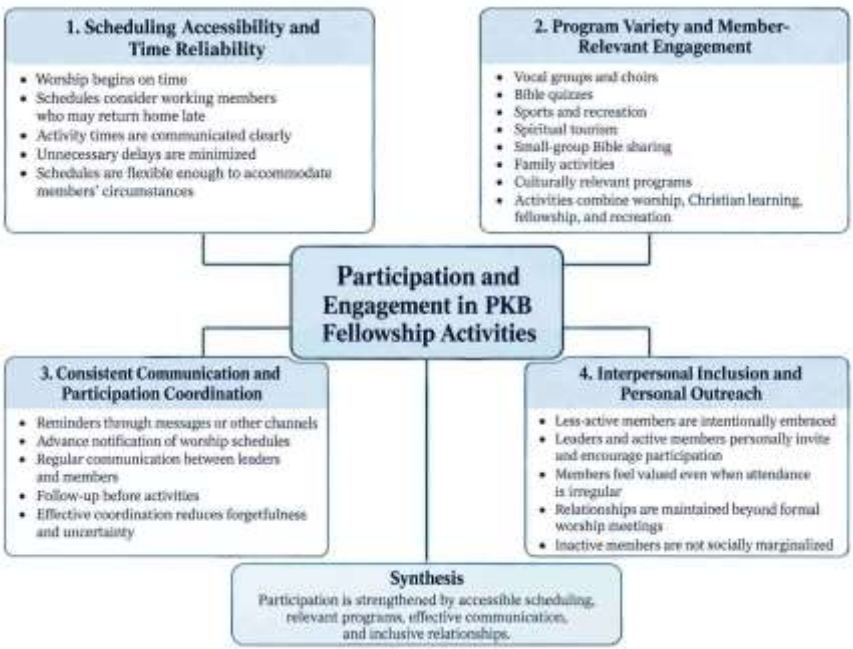
Employment responsibilities emerged as one of the most important barriers. Participants serving in the Indonesian Army explained that duty schedules could not always be adjusted to accommodate PKB meetings. One participant stated that military responsibilities prevented regular attendance, while the broader research observations similarly identified employment among civil servants, military personnel, and other workers as a major reason for absence. These findings suggest that occupational responsibilities compete directly with the fixed scheduling of church activities, particularly when members work irregular hours or are assigned to locations away from the congregation.

Personal and family circumstances constituted another important category. One respondent became less active because he frequently accompanied his wife to her work location in a remote area, while another could not regularly leave his shop because no one was available to manage the business. Two older participants reported difficulty attending evening worship because they could no longer safely ride motorcycles at night; one additionally reported diabetes and declining physical health. These findings demonstrate that inactivity should not be interpreted simply as spiritual indifference. Age, health, transportation, family responsibility, and livelihood can substantially restrict participation even when spiritual motivation remains present.

Older adults often value spirituality highly and derive resilience and meaning from it, but their participation is frequently limited by health, mobility, and transportation issues—not by lack of spiritual interest (Manning et al., 2019; Upchurch & Mueller, 2005; Waldman-Levi et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2024). Health challenges (physical or cognitive) are major barriers to participation, even among those with strong spiritual motivation (Granger et al., 2014; Martinez et al., 2009). The timing and format of PKB worship also affected participation. The source document identifies delayed starting times and evening scheduling as recurring difficulties.

Participants who arrived according to the announced schedule could become discouraged when worship started considerably later, whereas working members sometimes had not yet returned home when activities began. Respondents consequently proposed more engaging and flexible activities, including vocal groups, choirs, Bible quizzes, sports, recreation, spiritual tourism, small-group Bible sharing, family-oriented events, and culturally relevant activities. These suggestions indicate a preference for fellowship that combines worship, Christian learning, relational interaction, and meaningful recreation. The research findings are illustrated in this figure.

Figure 2. Participation and Engagement in PKB Fellowship Activities



Communication and interpersonal inclusion were also prominent. One less-active respondent stated that members needed to be "embraced" and encouraged more intentionally, while another recommended that information or text messages be sent so members would not forget scheduled worship. Respondents generally evaluated PKB leadership positively, but their answers show that positive perceptions of leaders alone are insufficient. Participation also depends on consistent communication, personal invitation, coordination between leadership and members, and the sense that less-active men remain valued members of the fellowship.

These findings correspond with the theoretical discussion in the document concerning pastoral and congregational leadership. Kalintabu & Palar, (2022) emphasize the role of pastoral leadership in motivating congregational participation and spiritual growth. The participants similarly expected pastors, church council members, and PKB leaders to provide motivation, pastoral attention, and appropriate spiritual guidance. One respondent specifically identified insufficient pastoral approach as a possible reason why inactive members may feel overlooked. Leadership in this context therefore functions not only administratively but educationally and relationally.

Men's inactivity is produced by an interaction between internal and external conditions rather than by one single cause. The original analysis reports that approximately 60% of motivation for worship was associated with internal spiritual factors, particularly longing for God, gratitude, and the desire to hear God's Word, whereas approximately 40% was associated with external support such as pastoral leadership, church workers, worship organization, and church facilities. This distinction is useful analytically, although the interview narratives further show that both categories frequently overlap. Strengthening participation therefore requires attention to spiritual formation while simultaneously addressing scheduling, communication, pastoral accompaniment, accessibility, and the attractiveness of PKB activities.

3.2. Christian Education, Church Leadership, and the Development of Marturia, Koinonia, and Diakonia

The interview findings show that Christian education within PKB is closely connected with the participants' understanding of worship as a process of spiritual formation. Respondents repeatedly stated that participation strengthens faith, deepens knowledge of God, builds Christian character, and equips men to become spiritual leaders within their families. From this perspective, Christian education is not limited to formal teaching sessions but occurs through preaching, liturgy, fellowship, Bible study, shared experiences, prayer, and participation in ministry. Faith is transmitted through informal processes, including socialization within the church community, where knowledge, habits, attitudes, and beliefs are cultivated through shared life and interaction, not just structured lessons (Lamport, 2011). This interpretation is consistent with the research focus on implementing Christian education through the Church Council to increase men's involvement in worship.

The dimension of marturia, or Christian witness, was clearly evident in the interviews. Participants generally believed that worship should equip them to become witnesses of Christ through their actions, words, family relationships, occupations, and community involvement. One active military participant explained that Christian witness involved loving his wife and children, respecting superiors and colleagues, and protecting and serving members of society. Another participant associated witness with forgiveness, respect, and sharing personal experiences of God's help.

Christian education through worship therefore appears to be meaningful when biblical teaching is translated into observable conduct beyond the church building. Christian education aims for a loving communion with God, others, and nature. In worship, believers

experience the ethos of the church, but in society, they are called to bear witness to these values. This suggests that the true measure of Christian education is seen in how individuals embody and interpret biblical teachings in their everyday interactions and societal roles (Fotiou, 2009).

Preaching and liturgy were regarded as central mechanisms for this educational process. Respondents generally affirmed that sermons and worship should help believers understand and apply the Word of God in daily life. Several participants expected pastors and church leaders to recognize the current condition of the congregation and select biblical messages that respond to members' actual needs. This expectation supports the discussion of worship in the source document, which argues that the essence of worship remains grounded in God's Word even though its form may be creatively adjusted. Yogo et al., (2021) as cited in the document, similarly distinguishes the enduring substance of worship from forms that may be adapted to help congregations understand and apply Scripture.

The second major dimension, koinonia**,** was among the strongest findings. Participants consistently described fellowship at GKI Diaspora Hawai as characterized by togetherness, joy, mutual encouragement, solidarity, and shared spiritual growth. Worship was understood not only as a vertical relationship between the believer and God but also as a horizontal relationship among members of the congregation. Respondents mentioned combined PKB worship, family prayer, inter-area fellowship, prayer meetings, fellowship gatherings, and other communal activities as practical expressions of koinonia. The strength of this relational dimension helps explain why respondents who participated in PKB generally reported positive emotional and spiritual experiences.

At the same time, the findings reveal a significant opportunity to make koinonia more inclusive of less-active members. Respondents recommended stronger coordination, personal encouragement, communication, home visits, inter-community worship, family activities, and recreational or cultural programs. These suggestions imply that fellowship should extend beyond expecting members to attend a predetermined service. From the perspective of Christian education, relational accompaniment itself becomes educational because members learn Christian solidarity through being welcomed, supported, and involved. Such an approach could be particularly relevant for older members, those with health limitations, and those whose occupational responsibilities prevent regular evening attendance. Christian education should be tailored to the specific needs, interests, and life experiences of older adults, focusing on topics like spiritual maturity, coping with aging, and finding meaning in later life (Bergen, 2003; Boling, 2010; Rogler, 2010).

The third dimension, diakonia, was also strongly represented. Participants identified practical ministries including food assistance, financial support, Christmas packages for older people, widows, widowers and orphans, fundraising bazaars, and visits to sick members. Some participants had personally participated in these ministries, while one reported having received food assistance from the church. Respondents consistently expressed the hope that diaconal ministry would be strengthened and extended beyond the immediate congregation. These findings show that worship and Christian education are understood as incomplete if they remain only cognitive or ritual; they are expected to generate acts of compassion and service.

Table 1. Indicators of Participation and Engagement in PKB Fellowship Activities

Dimension	Definition	Proposed Activities	Target Groups	Expected Outcomes	Leadership Responsibilities
Marturia	Faith expression through Christian	New worship methods, worship outside conventional	The congregation at large and	Members become doers of God's Word,	Motivate members, communicate consistently,

	witness and proclamation of the Word.	settings, inviting inspiring worship leaders, and relevant biblical teaching.	less-active members.	experience renewed life, and demonstrate stronger faith.	provide relevant biblical teaching, and model participation.
Koinonia	Development of supportive, inclusive relationships and fellowship among believers.	Home visits, personal encouragement, inter-community worship, family activities, recreational or cultural programs, and relational accompaniment.	Less-active members, older members, those with health limitations, and those with occupational constraints.	Christian solidarity, being welcomed and supported, and learning through involvement.	Strengthen coordination, provide accompaniment, and ensure leadership involvement in fellowship activities.
Diakonia	Translation of Christian love into practical service and acts of compassion.	Food assistance, financial support, Christmas packages, fundraising bazaars, and visits to sick members.	Older people, widows, widowers, orphans, and sick members.	Completion of worship and education through practical acts of service and compassion beyond the immediate congregation.	Facilitate practical ministries and extend diaconal outreach.

The three dimensions are therefore mutually reinforcing. Marturia expresses faith through Christian witness, koinonia develops supportive relationships among believers, and diakonia translates Christian love into practical service. Christian Life

Marturia is central to Christian self-understanding. It involves both the act of witnessing (living out and sharing faith) and the content of what is witnessed (the message of Christ). This testimony is not only personal but also communal, shaping the identity and mission of the Church (Pui, 2013; Turner, 2007).

The framework presented in the source document similarly places inactivity in PKB at the input stage, becoming doers of God's Word and experiencing renewed life as a formative process, and marturia, koinonia, and diakonia as expected expressions of congregational service. The interview findings provide empirical support for this conceptual relationship because participants repeatedly connected worship participation with stronger faith, fellowship, family responsibility, witness, and service.

The results consequently suggest that the Church Council's responsibility should be understood as an educational-pastoral function rather than simply an obligation to increase attendance statistics. Respondents expected church leaders to motivate members, communicate consistently, provide relevant biblical teaching, conduct pastoral visits, strengthen activities for men, accommodate practical limitations, and model participation

themselves. Effective leaders communicate with purpose, using storytelling and narrative to connect members to the church's mission and biblical metanarrative. Consistent, purposeful communication is essential for organizational objectives and member engagement (Crider, 2018; Kerfoot, 2004; Pastori, 2025). The recommendations in the document similarly propose introducing new worship methods, occasionally conducting worship outside conventional settings, inviting inspiring worship leaders, and ensuring stronger involvement of the pastor or Church Council leadership. Such measures position Christian education as a continuous process of teaching, accompaniment, example, fellowship, and service.

Ultimately, the findings demonstrate that increased participation among men at GKI Diaspora Hawai is most likely to occur when Christian education responds simultaneously to spiritual and practical realities. Men already recognize the theological importance of fellowship and their responsibilities as family leaders, but attendance is constrained by work, age, health, distance, schedules, communication, and the perceived repetitiveness of activities. A Church Council strategy that combines contextual biblical teaching, pastoral accompaniment, flexible organization, relational inclusion, and opportunities for marturia, koinonia, and diakonia would therefore be more consistent with the needs identified in the interviews than an approach centered solely on urging members to attend worship.

4. CONCLUSION

Men's limited participation in worship and *Persekutuan Kaum Bapak* (PKB) activities at GKI Diaspora Hawai Congregation, Sentani Classis, is influenced by a combination of personal, occupational, social, and congregational factors. Although the participants generally understand the importance of PKB for strengthening faith, developing Christian character, and fulfilling their role as spiritual leaders in the family, their involvement is often constrained by work responsibilities, family obligations, health conditions, transportation difficulties, worship schedules, limited communication, and less engaging forms of fellowship. Therefore, inactivity among male congregants should not be viewed merely as a lack of spiritual commitment, but as a complex condition that requires a contextual response from the Church Council and PKB leadership.

Christian education can become an effective strategy for increasing men's participation when it is implemented through relevant biblical teaching, pastoral accompaniment, personal communication, flexible and participatory worship, and activities that respond to the needs and interests of PKB members. The Church Council's role should therefore extend beyond administrative responsibility toward an educational and pastoral function that encourages men to become more active in worship, fellowship, and service. Such implementation is expected to strengthen marturia through Christian witness, koinonia through mutual fellowship, and diakonia through concrete acts of service, thereby contributing to the spiritual growth of male congregants and the wider life of GKI Diaspora Hawai Congregation.

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