



THE ROLE OF EARLY MORNING WORSHIP IN DEVELOPING SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE AMONG THIRD-YEAR FEMALE STUDENTS AT AKPER BETHESDA SERUKAM

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Abstract

Spiritual intelligence refers to an individual's ability to understand the meaning of life, cultivate a relationship with God, and apply moral values in everyday conduct. Bible reading as a component of early morning worship is believed to support students' spiritual development. This study aimed to explore the role of Bible reading during early morning worship in enhancing the spiritual intelligence of Class XXI students residing at the Women's Dormitory of Akper Bethesda Serukam. A qualitative research design with a descriptive phenomenological approach was employed. Six participants were selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered via in-depth interviews and analyzed using the Colaizzi method. Four main themes emerged from the findings: (1) Bible reading during early morning worship strengthens students' spirituality; (2) Bible reading shapes positive character; (3) laziness and excessive smartphone use constitute major barriers to Bible reading; and (4) Bible reading encourages attitudes of love, forgiveness, and prayer for others. The results indicate that regular Bible reading positively contributes to spiritual intelligence through faith growth, character transformation, and the strengthening of social relationships. It is concluded that Bible reading during early morning worship plays a significant role in fostering students' spiritual intelligence. Accordingly, spiritual formation programs should be continually developed to sustain and enhance students' spiritual growth.

Keywords: Bible reading, early morning worship, spiritual intelligence, students, phenomenology.

INTRODUCTION

Akper Bethesda Serukam is a nursing education institution grounded in Christian values, with a vision to produce professional nurses guided by love and excellence in community nursing. In pursuit of this vision, the institution organizes various spiritual formation programs for dormitory residents, including early morning worship, Bible reading, devotions, communal prayer, chapel services, youth worship, and weekly church services. Early morning worship is conducted as a regular program with the objective of cultivating spiritual discipline, strengthening students' relationship with God, and supporting the formation of character and spiritual intelligence.

Preliminary interviews conducted by the researcher with several third-year female students revealed a range of experiences regarding their participation in early morning worship. Some students noted that the program helped them pray more consistently, read the Bible, understand spiritual values, and manage life's challenges more effectively. They also reported positive behavioral changes following their involvement in various dormitory spiritual activities. However, other students acknowledged attending early morning worship only out of institutional obligation, without fully internalizing its meaning. Some also reported difficulty attending due to the requirement to wake up earlier than usual, which disrupted their rest.

Reports from counselors and dormitory supervisors further indicated that some students had not yet demonstrated the expected spiritual character traits such as gratitude, humility, responsibility, and the ability to maintain positive interpersonal relationships despite their participation in various spiritual formation activities throughout their studies. Supervisors also observed that a number of third-year students showed suboptimal engagement in early morning worship and other spiritual activities. This situation raises questions about the extent to which early morning worship contributes to the development of students' spiritual intelligence.

Prior research has predominantly focused on the role of family and general religious activities in developing individual spiritual intelligence. However, studies specifically examining the role of early morning worship as a component of dormitory-based spiritual formation in developing the spiritual intelligence of nursing students remain limited. Given that nursing students are future healthcare professionals who are expected to demonstrate both professional competence and strong spirituality and character in serving the community, this study is particularly relevant. Therefore, this research was conducted to analyze the role of early morning worship in developing the spiritual intelligence of third-year female students at Akper Bethesda Serukam. The findings of this study are expected to serve as a basis for evaluating and developing spiritual formation programs at Akper Bethesda Serukam, as well as to contribute to the advancement of Christian-values-based nursing education in producing graduates who are professional, characterized, and spiritually intelligent.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Spiritual intelligence is an individual's capacity to understand the meaning of life, moral values, and the purpose of one's existence in relation to God, fellow human beings, and the environment. According to Zohar and Marshall, spiritual intelligence is the intelligence used to face and resolve issues of meaning and value in life, enabling individuals to place their behavior and actions within a broader and more meaningful context. Spiritual intelligence plays a vital role in shaping character, integrity, gratitude, empathy, and the ability to navigate life's challenges with wisdom. For nursing students, spiritual intelligence is particularly important, as the nursing profession demands not only academic competence and clinical skills, but also compassionate attitudes, empathy, ethical conduct, and service grounded in human values.

The development of spiritual intelligence is influenced by various factors, one of which is an environment that provides consistent spiritual guidance and value formation. Hapsarini and Suprihati (2019) argued that the family plays a significant role in personality and faith development, both of which ultimately contribute to an individual's spiritual intelligence. However, the rapid advancement of technology and increasing use of digital devices have frequently diminished positive habits such as prayer, Bible reading, personal devotions, and spiritual reflection. Therefore, an environment that actively facilitates ongoing spiritual formation is essential for the optimal development of spiritual intelligence.

Regular Bible reading and active participation in spiritual activities have been shown to enhance spiritual intelligence and reinforce individual faith (Betakore et al., 2021). Consistent engagement in spiritual practices helps individuals build a closer relationship with God, internalize life values, and develop character that aligns with Christian teachings. These findings underscore the importance of structured spiritual formation in shaping an individual's spirituality and character.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design with a descriptive phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of third-year female students in participating in early morning worship at the Women's Dormitory of Akper Bethesda Serukam. The descriptive phenomenological approach was selected to understand the meaning of participants' lived experiences in relation to the phenomenon under investigation (Blacius, 2021). The study was conducted at the Women's Dormitory of Akper Bethesda Serukam, Bengkayang Regency, West Kalimantan. Data collection took place between January and October 2025, encompassing the phases of preparation, data collection, data analysis, and report writing. Six participants from Class XXI, aged 19 to 21 years, were selected using purposive sampling. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews and analyzed using the Colaizzi method.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Bible Reading During Early Morning Worship Strengthens Students' Spirituality

The findings indicate that Bible reading during early morning worship plays a significant role in building students' spirituality. Participants reported that this activity helped them distinguish right from wrong, increased their trust in God, and provided peace in facing various life challenges. These findings demonstrate that the regular reading and reflection of God's word can deepen an individual's relationship with God and enhance spiritual awareness. This finding aligns with the study by Mau et al. (2021), which found that regular Bible reading contributes to spiritual, moral, emotional, social, and character development. It is further supported by Betakore et al. (2021), who explained that cultivating the habit of Bible reading can enhance spiritual intelligence and strengthen individual faith. Additionally, Zohar and Marshall posited that spiritual intelligence enables individuals to find meaning in life and confront challenges with greater wisdom.

B. Bible Reading Shapes Positive Character

This study demonstrates that regular Bible reading positively influences students' character. Participants reported improvements in emotional regulation, reduced feelings of fear and anxiety, and increased trust in God. The teachings encountered through Bible reading serve as guiding principles in decision-making and everyday behavior. This finding is consistent with the research by Warouw and Kasingku (2025), which demonstrated that the application of biblical teachings in character education can shape individuals who are not only morally grounded but also spiritually strong, capable of facing life's challenges, and committed to building harmonious and responsible relationships. Hapsarini and Suprihati (2019) further noted that sustained spiritual formation contributes to personality development and spiritual intelligence. Emmons also affirmed that spiritual intelligence supports individuals in developing moral values, empathy, and self-management skills.

C. Barriers to Bible Reading: Laziness and Smartphone Use

The findings reveal that laziness and excessive smartphone use are the primary barriers preventing students from reading the Bible consistently. Participants noted that extensive use of mobile devices frequently reduced the time available for spiritual activities such as Bible reading, prayer, and personal devotions. This finding is in line with Klaudia (2018), who found that excessive smartphone use can hinder students' spiritual growth by reducing their involvement in spiritual activities. Accordingly, personal discipline is necessary to ensure that the use of technology does not impede spiritual development.

D. Bible Reading Encourages Love, Forgiveness, and Prayer for Others

The study indicates that Bible reading not only impacts an individual's relationship with God, but also influences their relationship with others. Participants reported becoming more capable of loving, forgiving, respecting, and praying for others, including those who had hurt or disappointed them. This finding aligns with Mau et al. (2021), who demonstrated that the habit of Bible reading contributes to individuals' moral and social development. It also supports the concept of spiritual intelligence advanced by Zohar and Marshall, which encompasses an individual's capacity to internalize life values and apply them in relationships with others. Thus, regular Bible reading not only enhances spirituality, but also shapes Christian character expressed through attitudes of love, forgiveness, and compassion toward others.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Bible reading plays a vital role in enhancing the spiritual intelligence of Class XXI students at the Women's Dormitory of Akper Bethesda Serukam. Regular Bible reading, particularly during early morning worship, helps students build their spirituality through a deepened relationship with God, inner peace, and greater discernment between right and wrong. Furthermore, Bible reading contributes to the formation of positive character, including self-control, increased trust in God, and behavioral improvement. Nevertheless, certain factors particularly laziness and excessive smartphone use were identified as barriers to consistent Bible reading. The study also found that the application of biblical teachings in daily life is reflected in students' attitudes of love, forgiveness, and prayer for others. In conclusion, regular Bible reading is an effective means of supporting the growth of spiritual intelligence and character formation among students. Therefore, spiritual formation programs should continue to be developed and strengthened to sustain students' spiritual and character development.

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