

Integration of Self-Interest and Life Goals in the Spiritual Development of Christian Youth in Muara Teweh

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ABSTRACT

This Community Service Program aims to integrate self-interest and life-purpose awareness into the spiritual formation of Christian adolescents in Muara Teweh. The program was motivated by adolescents' need to understand their potential and connect it with a meaningful direction in life, while spiritual formation in the partner setting still tended to focus on ritual activities and one-way delivery of material. The approach used was Participatory Action Research (PAR), involving participants in needs identification, interest assessment, workshops, group discussions, life-purpose formulation, and reflection. A total of 51 participants were involved, consisting of 25 students from SMUN 4 Muara Teweh, 17 young people from GBI Sawit, and 9 adolescents from GKE Imanuel. The Rothwell Miller Interest Blank (RMIB) assessment showed the highest interest tendencies in Social Service (24.8%), Musical (20.9%), and Aesthetic (17.0%). The feedback and reflection process helps participants recognize their interests and potential and connect them with Christian faith values. Most participants developed a draft life-purpose plan. The program also produced the basis for a data-informed formation model linking assessment, faith reflection, discussion, and mentoring. The findings indicate that integrating psychological and spiritual dimensions can make adolescent formation more holistic, participatory, and contextual. However, long-term changes cannot yet be concluded because a six-month evaluation is still planned.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a developmental phase characterized by biological, cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual changes. At this stage, individuals begin to develop self-awareness, explore possible roles, and consider education and the future. Erikson (1968) places adolescence in the stage of identity versus role confusion, a period in which individuals seek to develop a relatively stable identity. Marcia (1980) further explains that identity development occurs through processes of exploration and commitment.

Thus, adolescent mentoring involves not only teaching values but also providing space for self-understanding, testing choices, and making responsible decisions.

Interest is an important element in the process of self-understanding. In educational contexts, interest can serve as an entry point for understanding activities or fields that attract an individual's attention and encourage engagement. Holland (1997) views interest as part of individual tendencies related to choices of activities and environments. Super (1957) also places interest within the development of self-concept. Therefore, mapping interests during adolescence can serve as a basis for reflection, helping participants consider areas of education, skill development, service, and work that may correspond to their tendencies.

In the lives of Christian adolescents, self-understanding doesn't stop at questions about what they like or what they can do. Self-understanding also needs to be situated within a horizon of faith: why these abilities are developed, toward whom they are directed, and how they can benefit others. Activity reports position interests and potential as talents or gifts from God that need to be developed responsibly. This understanding aligns with the idea of vocation, which is not limited to church office but encompasses how a person lives life and contributes through their abilities (Palmer, 2000).

Life purpose provides long-term direction for this process. Damon (2008) views purpose as a relatively stable orientation toward achieving something meaningful while contributing to the world beyond oneself. In the context of adolescents, life purpose helps connect present experiences with visions of the future. Smith and Denton (2005) point to the importance of religion and spirituality in adolescents' lives, particularly in the formation of moral orientation and meaning. Therefore, spiritual formation can be a strategic space for reconciling the search for identity, interests, life purpose, and faith.

The issues identified by the Community Service (PKM) team in Muara Teweh partner settings indicate a gap between adolescents' developmental needs and mentoring practices. Spiritual mentoring still focuses heavily on worship and church routines, while recognizing interests, potential, and their relationship to life purpose has not been a structured part of the process. The report also identified several contributing factors, such as the lack of interest and potential assessments, the lack of systematic adolescent needs analysis, limited contextual mentoring, and a tendency toward one-way mentoring methods.

This gap does not mean that ritual activities and faith teaching are unimportant. The issue is how spiritual formation can be expanded to encompass the concrete experiences of adolescents. Widjaja (2016) emphasizes the importance of faith education that holistically touches the lives of students, while Gunarsa (2008) asserts that adolescents need mentoring that addresses their search for identity and their need for social acceptance. Therefore, guidance that only delivers material without providing space for reflection and decision-making risks failing to address adolescents' developmental needs.

Based on these issues, this Community Service Program (PKM) activity developed an integrative strategy that combines interest assessment, theological reflection, group discussion, life-purpose formulation, and mentoring. The Participatory Action Research approach was chosen because participants are not positioned as passive recipients. They are involved in the process of identifying needs, receiving assessment results, interpreting them, discussing experiences, and developing a life-purpose plan. Thus, the activity is directed from mere information transfer to a reflective learning process.

The purpose of this article is to describe the implementation and results of self-interest and life purpose integration activities in the spiritual formation of Christian adolescents in Muara Teweh. Specifically, the article discusses (1) the characteristics of participant participation, (2) interest tendencies based on RMIB, (3) the process of integrating assessment results with faith reflection and life purpose, (4) implications for school and church development, and (5) plans for sustainable program development.

2. METHODS

The activity used a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. This approach was chosen because it aligned with the program's objectives, which not only provide assessment services but also encourage participants to understand the assessment results and use them for reflection. Participation is understood as participant involvement in a series of planning, action, reflection, and follow-up. In this activity, PAR is implemented through four main stages: planning and needs identification; interest and potential assessment; workshops and reflective discussions; and joint observation and reflection.

The program was implemented in February–March 2026 in Muara Teweh, with partners from schools and churches. The program involved 51 participants: 25 students from SMUN 4 Muara Teweh, 17 young people from GBI Sawit, and 9 adolescents from GKE Imanuel. This composition enabled the program to reach adolescents in two primary contexts: formal education and the church community.

In the first phase, the team coordinated with school officials, church administrators, and adolescent mentors. Coordination focused on identifying needs, explaining program objectives, determining assessment mechanisms, and preparing workshop materials. Needs identification focused on identifying interests, potential, life purpose, and the mentoring patterns implemented in partner settings.

The second stage is an interest assessment using the Rothwell Miller Interest Blank (RMIB). Participants complete the instrument independently, and the results are processed by the team. The instrument is used as an educational tool to map interest tendencies, not as a diagnosis or automatic predictor of participants' futures. Each participant receives individual results. For GKE Imanuel's partners, results are not shared publicly with the group but are sent directly via mobile phone or WhatsApp to maintain confidentiality and provide space for personal reflection.

The third phase includes an integration workshop, small-group discussions, and life-purpose formulation. Participants receive feedback on assessment results and are then invited to consider the meaning of their interests in relation to education, self-development, service, and vocation. Group discussions are used to address daily life challenges and relate them to Christian faith values. Finally, participants draft a written life purpose or future plan.

The fourth stage is joint observation and reflection. The team monitors how participants interpret the assessment results and how these results begin to translate into self-development plans. Reflections cover academic life, educational choices, service involvement, and possible follow-up actions. Activity data is obtained through assessment results, participant observation, discussions, feedback on assessment results, and participant reflection.

The results were analyzed descriptively. RMIB data were presented through frequency of occurrence and percentages. Because each participant had three primary interest options, the total frequency was 153, while the number of participants remained at 51. Qualitative data from reflections and the activity process were used to describe changes in understanding reported during the activity. With this approach, the article does not claim any long-term changes that have not been measured through follow-up evaluation.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Characteristics of Participant Participation

The program successfully involved 51 participants who participated in a series of assessments and reflective activities. Twenty-five participants came from SMUN 4 Muara Teweh, 17 from GBI Sawit young people, and nine from GKE Imanuel. This distribution demonstrates that the program is not limited to a single developmental environment. Schools provide the context for education and future planning, while churches provide the context for faith formation, service, and community.

The diversity of participant contexts is crucial to program objectives because issues of interest and life purpose don't just arise within the classroom. Teenagers need to make academic decisions, build relationships, develop skills, and determine the form of social and service involvement. Thus, the integration between school and church provides an opportunity to build complementary mentoring.

Participation is also evident throughout the activity. Participants not only take tests but also receive individual results, read them, attend workshops, discuss them, and develop a life purpose plan. This structure demonstrates that assessment is positioned as a gateway to the reflection process, not the end product of the activity.

3.2. Mapping Participants' Interests Based on RMIB

Assessment results show variations in interest across eight categories. Complete data is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of participants' interest categories based on RMIB results.

No.	RMIB Interest Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1	Social Service (social services/humanities)	38	24.8%
2	Musical (musical art)	32	20.9%
3	Aesthetic (visual/artistic arts)	26	17.0%
4	Computational (mathematics/numbers)	18	11.8%
5	Clerical (administrative/conventional)	15	9.8%
6	Scientific (science/research)	12	7.8%
7	Outdoor (field activities)	7	4.6%
8	Practical/Mechanical (technical/mechanical)	5	3.3%
	Total	153	100%

Note. The total frequency is 153 because each participant has three primary interest choices.

The Social Service category ranked first with 38 occurrences, or 24.8%. This finding indicates a strong tendency to engage in activities related to human service, service, mentoring, or social care among the participants. In the context of Christian development, this data can be used to design activities that foster collaboration, social service, caring for others, and developing interpersonal skills.

However, these results should not be interpreted deterministically. A high level of Social Service does not necessarily mean that all participants should be directed into social work or church ministry. Assessment results only indicate interest trends at the time of assessment. Future choices still need to take into account academic ability, experience, personal values, educational opportunities, family circumstances, and the development of interests over time.

The Musical and Aesthetic categories ranked second and third, respectively. Combined, their frequency reached 37.9%. These findings indicate significant room for creative approaches to mentoring. Music and art can be a means of expressing faith, communicating messages, working collaboratively, and developing self-confidence. In mentoring practice, this data can encourage churches and schools to focus on providing creative activities that enable adolescents to learn through experiences rather than limiting mentoring to lectures.

The Computational category (11.8%), Clerical (9.8%), and Scientific (7.8%) indicate that participants also have a penchant for numerical, administrative, and research fields. These three categories demonstrate that development needs to remain open to academic and analytical tendencies. Thus, mapping is not only useful for church ministry but can also inform discussions about education and competency development.

The Outdoor category, at 4.6% and Practical/Mechanical at 3.3%, represented the lowest frequency. This data cannot be used to conclude that participants lack practical or field skills. What is measured is the tendency of interest choices, not the level of ability. Therefore, instructors should avoid labeling and use the results as a basis for further exploration.

3.3. From Assessment to Self-Awareness

One of the important outcomes of the activity was a change in how participants perceived themselves. Reports showed that participants became better able to identify their interests and potential more objectively. Before the assessment, educational or activity choices could be influenced by peers, habits, or limited available information. As participants gained insight into their own interests, they developed a more structured language for discussing themselves.

Self-awareness in this activity goes beyond simply knowing the RMIB categories. A more important process is participants' ability to interpret the results. Therefore, providing feedback is a crucial step. Results sent via mobile phone/WhatsApp allow participants to read them privately, save the reports, and incorporate them into the reflection process. This mechanism also demonstrates that digital technology can be used not only for communication but also to support privacy and personal learning.

From an identity development perspective, this process is relevant to Erikson and Marcia's ideas. Adolescents need space for exploration before forming commitments. Assessment results do not directly produce an identity, but they do provide material for exploration. Participants can ask whether the results align with their own experiences, what areas they would like to develop, and what options they should explore. Thus, assessment serves as a stimulus for reflection.

Integration with Christian faith broadens this process. Participants are guided to view abilities and interests not merely as personal assets, but as talents or gifts that need to be developed responsibly. This orientation shifts the question from "what job is right for me?" to a broader one: "How can my abilities be used responsibly and benefit others?"

3.4. Self-Interest as Part of Vocation

The concept of vocation bridges the gap between the psychology of interest and spiritual formation. Palmer (2000) defines vocation as the process of listening to one's life's direction and connecting personal abilities with the needs of the world. In this activity, this idea is translated into practice through reflection on the results of the RMIB and the development of a life purpose.

This integration is crucial because spiritual formation can lose its relevance if adolescents' daily lives are separated from their faith. Teenagers face questions about school majors, college, jobs, relationships, service, and social contribution. All of these questions have moral and spiritual dimensions. Therefore, guidance that helps adolescents connect their interests with their vocation can bring faith into the decision-making process.

At the same time, the concept of vocation needs to be carefully explained. Interest is not synonymous with vocation, and test results cannot be considered the final word on God's will. Interest is one source of information that needs to be considered alongside prayer, biblical reflection, mentor counsel, abilities, opportunities, community needs, and the experiential process. This position prevents overuse of assessment while maintaining its educational value.

Therefore, the activity model places four elements in sequence: interest assessment, theological reflection, personal mentoring, and life-purpose formulation. This sequence ensures that test results don't stop at information but move toward interpretation and action.

3.5. Life Purpose and Future Planning

Life goals provide direction for exploring interests. The activity report noted that the majority of participants drafted a 'Life Goal Plan' after receiving feedback and participating in a reflection process. This achievement is important because it encouraged participants to transform information about themselves into a future orientation.

Formulating life purpose also helps reconcile short-term goals with broader values. Teens can consider educational goals, skills they need to develop, forms of service they would like to try, and contributions they can make to others. In Damon's (2008) purpose framework, meaningful goals are not only oriented toward personal success but also have a contribution dimension.

In the context of Christian faith, this orientation can be linked to a vocation to live responsibly before God and others. Thus, the success of the training is not measured solely by whether participants have chosen a particular profession, but rather by the development of their ability to make decisions reflectively, responsibly, and in harmony with the values of their faith.

However, the results of the activity must be interpreted in a balanced manner. Developing a draft life purpose represents a preliminary achievement. This article does not conclude that all participants have achieved a stable life purpose or have determined their careers. The six-month evaluation planned in the report is necessary to determine the sustainability of these changes.

3.6. Holistic and Contextual Spiritual Formation

The findings of the activity reinforce the need to broaden the meaning of spiritual formation. Guidance should not only address narrow spiritual aspects but also psychological, social, educational, and vocational aspects. This aligns with the report's direction, which positions holistic guidance as the ideal. Adolescents need help understanding the relationship between who they are, what they believe, how they learn, and how they make decisions.

The participatory approach also shifts the adolescents' position. In a one-way model, the mentor is the primary source of knowledge, while the adolescents tend to receive. In this activity model, adolescents are provided with data about themselves, then invited to interpret and discuss it. The mentor functions as a facilitator of reflection. This model is more suited to the needs of adolescents who are developing their identity and learning to make decisions.

Contextual coaching means the material goes beyond abstract concepts. Assessment results become the basis for discussions about study choices, ministry, church activities, skills development, and the future. Thus, faith coaching connects directly to the participants' real lives.

3.7. Data-Informed Formation Model

Based on the entire process, the resulting coaching model can be formulated as follows:

Table 2. Model for integrating self-interest and life purpose in spiritual formation.

Stage	Activity	Function	External
1. Mapping	RMIB and needs identification	Recognizing interest tendencies	Participant interest profile
2. Feedback	Submission of individual results	Helping participants understand the results	Initial self-understanding
3. Reflection of faith	Interest and vocation integration workshop	Connecting interests with Christian values	Spiritual meaning-making
4. Dialogue	Small group discussion	Testing experience and options	Exchange of experiences
5. Formulation	Draft life purpose	Converting reflection to direction	Life-purpose plan
6. Mentoring	Mentoring and monitoring	Maintaining sustainability	Formation follow-up

This model demonstrates that assessment is a starting point, not an end in itself. The primary value of the activity lies in the sequence following the assessment: feedback, reflection, dialogue, and action. If only testing is conducted, the program risks producing data without change. Conversely, if data is used in the coaching process, assessment results can provide a basis for coaches to understand participants' needs.

The data-informed model also benefits partners. GBI Sawit and GKE Imanuel gain an objective basis for considering development programs. For example, a high inclination toward Musical and

Aesthetics can encourage the development of arts and music activities, while Social Service can be translated into social service activities. However, participant placement in activities still needs to be done through personal dialogue, not solely based on test categories.

In school settings, data can serve as a starting point for self-development services and discussions about educational options. RMIB results do not replace academic assessments or career counseling, but they can complement conversations about interests and competency development directions.

3.8. Use of Technology and Confidentiality Protection

The use of mobile phones/WhatsApp to send individual results is a prominent practice in the activity. This strategy serves two purposes. First, it expedites the distribution of results. Second, it provides a private space for participants to read and save the results. Confidentiality is crucial because assessment results involve personal information.

The use of technology in activities also demonstrates that adolescent mentoring can utilize media already familiar to participants. However, the use of digital media must be accompanied by ethical data management practices. Individual results should not be shared with the group, should not be used for comparisons between participants, and should only be used for the mentoring purposes outlined above.

Thus, technology is not positioned as a program objective, but as a supporting tool to strengthen access, privacy, and continuity of the reflection process.

3.9. Implications for School and Church Partners

First, schools can use the results of the activity as a basis for developing self-awareness services and educational planning. Participants can be guided to explore study programs or skills that align with their interests, then compare these with academic achievement and educational opportunities.

Second, the church can develop more varied development programs. Teenagers with musical and aesthetic tendencies can find opportunities in music, multimedia, art, or creative production activities; those with social service tendencies can become sources for social service and community outreach. Again, these are opportunities for exploration, not binding placements.

Third, mentors need to gain capacity building. The report plans to develop a Christian-psychology-based adolescent mentoring module. This module can help mentors understand the developmental characteristics of adolescents, interpret assessment results appropriately, develop reflective questions, and assist in life-purpose formulation.

Fourth, collaboration between IAKN Palangka Raya, schools, and churches needs to be strengthened. Sustainable service will be more effective if there is a mechanism for communication and joint evaluation so that activity data does not remain archived.

3.10. Limitations of the Program

Several limitations should be noted. First, the small number of participants (51) and the specific context of the partners make the results not generalizable to all Christian adolescents in Muara Teweh. Second, the interest data reflects trends at the time of assessment and not measures of ability or achievement. Third, the self-awareness and life purpose outcomes reported are primarily based on post-activity reflections and therefore cannot replace standardized pre-post measurements.

Fourth, the long-term impact is unknown because the six-month evaluation is still a follow-up plan. Therefore, claims of program success should be limited to initial process and outcome achievements. This limitation provides the basis for developing subsequent programs to have a more robust evaluation design.

3.11. Follow-Up Sustainability Plan and Program

Table 3. Follow-up plan for the Community Service Program.

Plan	Target	Objective	Early indicators
Focused mentoring	GBI Sawit and GKE Imanuel Supervisor	Translating interest data into coaching/services	Regular mentoring meetings
Career planning workshop	Students of Muara Teweh 4th State Senior High School	Connecting interests with further study	Participants' study plan
Christian psychology module	Adolescents mentor	Provides contextual coaching guidance	Draft module
Six-month evaluation	51 participants	Assessing the sustainability of impacts	Follow-up questionnaire
Institutional network	IAKN, school, church	Ensure program continuity	MoU/MoA or joint program

The follow-up plan demonstrates that the program is designed to continue beyond face-to-face activities. Mentoring is crucial to help participants transform their draft life purpose into more concrete steps. Further study workshops are needed for school participants at the educational decision-making stage. A coaching module is needed so that the approach can be reused by mentors. A six-month evaluation is needed to determine whether the assessment results have truly influenced participants' decisions.

Sustainability also requires inter-institutional networking. IAKN Palangka Raya can act as an academic partner and mentor, schools as educational contexts, and churches as spaces for development and service. This synergy can strengthen approaches that combine psychology, education, and faith formation.

4. CONCLUSION

The Community Service (PKM) activity integrating self-interest and life purpose successfully involved 51 participants from SMUN 4 Muara Teweh, GBI Sawit, and GKE Imanuel. The PAR approach enabled participants to participate from the assessment process to reflection and life-purpose formulation. The RMIB results showed the largest tendencies in Social Service (24.8%), Musical (20.9%), and Aesthetic (17.0%), with variations in the Computational, Clerical, Scientific, Outdoor, and Practical/Mechanical categories.

The main finding of the activity is not only the availability of interest data, but the use of this data as material for self-reflection and faith. Participants reported being increasingly able to recognize interests and potential, interpret them as talents or gifts from God, and draft a life purpose. Thus, interest assessment can function as an entry point to more contextual spiritual formation if followed by feedback, dialogue, reflection and mentoring.

The resulting model places mentoring into six stages: mapping, feedback, faith reflection, dialogue, goal formulation, and mentoring. This model can serve as a foundation for developing more holistic and data-informed mentoring for adolescents. However, its long-term effectiveness cannot yet be concluded, as a six-month evaluation is still planned. Future programs need to strengthen pre-post evaluations, ongoing mentoring, module development, and collaboration between schools, churches, and the Palangka Raya IAKN.

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