



THE ROLE OF CHURCH LEADERSHIP IN MANAGING ETHNIC DIVERSITY IN CHURCH SERVICES IN KASIH PERUMNAS, SORONG CITY

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Abstract: *This research explores the function of pastoral leadership, with a particular focus on the pastor as the chair of the congregational council in the Gereja Kristen Indonesia (GKI) Sorong, in addressing ethnic diversity within a pluralistic social setting. The presence of multiple cultural and ethnic groups presents distinctive challenges for the church in building an atmosphere of inclusive and harmonious ministry. Employing a descriptive qualitative method, the study demonstrates that the pastor's leadership is central in cultivating tolerance, facilitating dialogue, and formulating ministry programs that embrace diversity. In practice, GKI Sorong adopts strategies such as inclusive pastoral leadership, ensuring ethnic representation in church governance, and incorporating local cultural traditions into liturgy and worship. The findings underscore that the pastor's leadership extends beyond administrative duties, serving as a theological vocation that embodies the Gospel through a fellowship grounded in mutual respect and unity in the body of Christ.*

Keywords: leadership, ethnic diversity, GKI.

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1. Introduction

The diversity of ethnicity and culture is a priceless wealth in a congregation. However, differences in background, values, and traditions also have the potential to cause conflict and differences of opinion¹. These differences, if not managed wisely, can disrupt harmony and unity in the congregation. Therefore, it is important to anticipate

¹ Suang Manik, "Membangun Kesatuan Gereja di Tengah Keberagaman Budaya di Indonesia" 3 (2025).



and identify potential conflicts early, and find and implement effective solutions to create an inclusive and peaceful environment. Fellowship that is oriented towards group interests can be a trigger for conflict². This certainly has an impact on the division of fellowship between individuals and groups. The potential for conflict in diversity can occur due to differences in worship styles, differences in values and norms, stereotypes, prejudices, differences in language, differences in interpretation of the Bible, each tribe or culture has different preferences for worship styles, such as music, dance, or liturgical procedures.³ In this case, peace needs to be sought and maintained so that the relationship between people and God is maintained in a harmonious, harmonious, and peaceful atmosphere⁴.

Sorong City is one of the important cities in Southwest Papua and is known as a center of diversity. Its people come from various ethnic, cultural, and social backgrounds. Sorong City is one of the important cities in Southwest Papua and is known as a center of diversity. With a population of approximately 294,978⁵ people as of mid-2023, Sorong is inhabited by people from various ethnic backgrounds. Based on research conducted by Ananta (2016), indigenous Papuans in this city account for approximately 29.93%, while ethnic groups from outside Papua also have a significant proportion, including Javanese (13.79%), Bugis (10.50%), and Ambonese (10.15%). This condition confirms that Sorong City is a miniature Indonesia with diverse ethnic representation, both from Papua and outside Papua.⁶

The inclusive and comprehensive model developed by the Gereja Kristen Indonesia in Sorong City demonstrates a concrete effort to embrace the congregation's ethnic diversity through cross-ethnic representation, local cultural integration, cross-cultural programs, and social services focused on shared needs. These initiatives not only strengthen the congregation's collective identity as the body of Christ, but also serve as a tangible manifestation of the Gospel's witness by providing a just, open, and respectful space for fellowship. Therefore, GKI Sorong has made a significant contribution to multicultural church practice in Indonesia, as God's word says, "Be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one mind and having one purpose." (Philippians 2:2).⁷

However, this study also highlights the challenges in implementing These challenges require wise pastoral leadership to maintain a balance between respect for cultural integrity and a commitment to congregational unity.⁸ If managed appropriately, GKI can not only maintain internal harmony but also serve as a professional example of a

² Richard B Manalu, "Gereja Dalam Masyarakat Majemuk," *Teologi dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 1, no. 1 (2015): 1-18.

³ Ayang Emiyati, John Mardin, dan Ricard Ricard, "Peran Gereja Dalam Mengajarkan Perdamaian Di Tengah Masyarakat Majemuk," *Didache: Journal of Christian Education* 4, no. 2 (2023): 149-65, <https://doi.org/10.46445/djce.v4i2.649>.

⁴ Samel Sopakua et al., "Sosialisasi Moderasi Beragama: Merawat Kemajemukan Melalui Moderasi Beragama di Sekolah," *Abdimas Universal* 5, no. 2 (2023): 258-63, <https://doi.org/10.36277/abdimasuniversal.v5i2.344>.

⁵ BPS Kota Sorong, "Jumlah Penduduk menurut Jenis Kelamin," *Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Tangerang Selatan* (Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Sorng, 2023).

⁶ S. Latuputty 2021)

⁷ Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia, *ALKITAB* (Jakarta: Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia, 2021).

⁸ Rizal Mubit, "Peran Agama Dalam Multikulturalisme Masyarakat Indonesia," *Epistemé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 11, no. 1 (2016): 163-84.

church capable of building true brotherhood in a diverse society.

Diversity differences can also trigger fierce theological debates and divide the congregation⁹. In the context of the Gereja Kristen Indonesia (GKI) ministry in Sorong City, differences in cultural and ethnic backgrounds have the potential to give rise to theological debate and social friction within the congregation. This situation emphasizes the crucial role of church leadership, particularly the pastor as the head of the congregation's daily management team, in managing the dynamics of this diversity. The main research question that arises is: how does pastoral leadership in the GKI Sorong City manage the congregation's ethnic diversity, and what strategies are employed to prevent conflict?¹⁰

Research on the role of leadership in the church, especially in the context of diversity, has been conducted by various previous researchers, including Manullang (2019) in his research on inclusive leadership in the church, explaining that the success of service in a multicultural society is largely determined by leaders who are able to build dialogue, foster mutual respect, and avoid the dominance of certain cultures in church services¹¹. Then Novi Saria Harita & David E (2022) emphasized that church leaders need to provide healthy teachings about the identity of a true Christian to congregation members, about the character of Christ¹². Next, Markud D.J. Dawa (2006) discusses becoming a multicultural congregation for Indonesian Chinese Evangelical Churches living in the midst of ethnic conflict and racial discrimination¹³.

2. Research Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a qualitative descriptive research type. This approach was chosen because the main focus of the study is to deeply understand the dynamics of church leadership in managing ethnic diversity contextually and narratively. To obtain valid and in-depth data, several techniques were used, including semi-structured interviews with church leaders and congregations from various ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, the researcher was directly involved in worship activities, assembly meetings, and cross-ethnic service activities.

In principle, this paper aims to examine the role of church leadership, especially in the GKI environment in Sorong City. It is hoped that this study can contribute to the development of church services that are relevant to the social context of a pluralistic society.

⁹ Juwita Georgina Menanga dan Alvary Exan Rerung, "Mencegah Konflik Dalam Gereja Dengan Penerapan Prinsip-prinsip Pelayanan Berdasarkan Analisis Teologis Efesus 4:11-16," *Skenoo: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 3, no. 1 (2023): 41-53, <https://doi.org/10.55649/skenoo.v3i1.43>.

¹⁰ M Hafizh Abdulloh, "Pendekatan Inklusif dalam Mengatasi Konflik Budaya Masyarakat Multikultural" 2, no. 2 (2025): 449-52.

¹¹ Megawati Manullang, "Misi Dalam Masyarakat Majemuk," *Jurnal Teologi Cultivation* 3, no. 2 (2019): 49-63, <https://doi.org/10.46965/jtc.v3i2.267>.

¹² Novi Saria Harita dan David Eko Setiawan, "Peranan Pemimpin Gereja Bagi Jemaat Dalam Menjaga Keutuhan NKRI Dari Ancaman Radikalisme," *KINAA: Jurnal Kepemimpinan Kristen dan Pemberdayaan Jemaat* 3, no. 1 (2022): 1-13, <https://doi.org/10.34307/kinaa.v3i1.32>.

¹³ Markus Dominggus L. Dawa, "Menjadi Jemaat Multikultural: Suatu Visi untuk Gereja-Gereja Tionghoa Injili Indonesia yang Hidup di Tengah Konflik Etnis dan Diskriminasi Rasial," *Veritas: Jurnal Teologi dan Pelayanan* 7, no. 1 (2006): 127-44, <https://doi.org/10.36421/veritas.v7i1.157>.

3. Results and Discussion

Field observations at the Kasih Perumnas congregation show structured worship practices based on specific ethnic groups. These services are held separately by the congregation, using regional languages and liturgical traditions unique to each tribe. From the results of an interview with A.T., one of the pastors at the Kasih Perumnas congregation, "Perhaps the main purpose of this activity is to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood within the congregation, the practice of inter-ethnic worship within the congregation can actually create social barriers that limit wider congregational interactions. In my opinion, it is better if tribal worship within the congregation does not need to be carried out, tribal worship is usually carried out within tribal associations, for example the Batak Protestant Christian Huria or the Toraja ethnic group and others." and according to the response of the Head of the daily congregation " I try to encourage tribal representatives to participate in public worship to bridge the gap between congregations. Inter-ethnic worship can lead to congregations misprioritizing their group worship or following the congregation's worship routine.." Several interviews with Majority S.A. " In fact, inter-tribal worship does not need to be held in congregations because it can divide the community." A member of the Majority minorities Congregation explained in an interview: " A member of the Majority Congregation explained in an interview: "This inter-tribal worship is actually not prohibited, the positive thing is that it strengthens the fellowship between members of the tribal group. The negative thing is that it can give rise to a sense of exclusivity and social conflict. As has happened several years before as a result of the leadership of the pastor who was not neutral and sentimental, tending towards one tribe, which resulted in debates between the majority, PHMJ and other tribal groups."¹⁴

Based on interviews, field observations, and direct involvement in the ethnic group worship community at the Kasih Perumnas Congregation, several important findings emerged. First, worship practices tended to emphasize the dominant ethnic identity, thus underachieving the goal of strengthening fellowship in Christ. Second, minority groups within the congregation felt less involved in church dynamics, as they were far outnumbered by the majority. Third, within the congregation's social interactions, there was a tendency toward artificiality or formality, where interethnic relations appeared harmonious on the surface, yet harbored social distance within.

A. The Role of Church Leadership

A church leader needs to build awareness among the congregation about the importance of respecting ethnic differences. Through education and teaching, leaders can instill the values of tolerance and mutual respect. Building awareness and understanding within the church, especially in the context of ethnic diversity, is an

¹⁴ Observasi dan wawancara GKI Kasih Perumnas, "Data hasil wawancara" (Sorong, 2025).

important step in creating an inclusive and harmonious environment ¹⁵.

Here are some ways that the church can achieve this goal

1. *Building Awareness and Understanding*

Building awareness and understanding needs to be done by a leader in a group consisting of a pluralistic society, so the things that need to be done in building awareness and understanding are carrying out educational and training activities, dialogue and discussion, social and cultural activities, use of media and communication, Inclusive policies and practices, and Involvement of Church members.¹⁶

There are many things that the Church can do in carrying out its role as a leader to build awareness and understanding of ethnic diversity in the congregation ¹⁷. In ethnic diversity, cultural values, and challenges faced, there needs to be training for church leaders on how to manage diversity and promote inclusion in ministry, hold forums or discussion groups where church members can share their experiences and views on ethnic diversity, which provides a question and answer session where church members can ask questions about issues related to diversity.¹⁸

2. *Creating a space for dialogue*

Church leaders must be able to create space for inter-ethnic dialogue, open discussions can help congregations understand each other's backgrounds and cultures, thereby reducing prejudice and stereotypes, increasing understanding, and overcoming differences, in Christian ministry leaders must always be servant leaders.¹⁹ Here are some ways that churches can create effective dialogue spaces: providing regular discussion forums, using a moderated approach, holding special events, encouraging active participation, building trust and openness, using media and technology.²⁰

3. *Developing an Inclusive Service Program*

Service programs designed with ethnic diversity in mind can increase the participation of congregations from various backgrounds. Church leaders need to

¹⁵ Harita dan Setiawan, "Peranan Pemimpin Gereja Bagi Jemaat Dalam Menjaga Keutuhan NKRI Dari Ancaman Radikalisme."

¹⁶ Sonius Wenda, Neri Payage, dan Amardius Bawan, "Upaya Peningkatan Pertumbuhan Iman: Studi Kasus Efektivitas Program Pelayanan Gerejawi Jemaat GKII Yerusalem Amsangi Daerah Silimo Yerusalem Amsangi Daerah Silimo," *Journal of Knowledge and Collaboration* 1, no. 6 (2024): 283–89.

¹⁷ Emiyati, Mardin, dan Ricard, "Peran Gereja Dalam Mengajarkan Perdamaian Di Tengah Masyarakat Majemuk."

¹⁸ Pratama Putra Yohanes, "Etnosentrisme daam jemaat multikultur," 2021, 167–86.

¹⁹ Yakub Hendrawan Perangin Angin dan Tri Astuti Yeniretnowati, "Teladan Tokoh Alkitab Bagi Model Pendidikan Kepemimpinan Kristen," *CARAKA: Jurnal Teologi Biblika dan Praktika* 3, no. 2 (2022): 261–82, <https://doi.org/10.46348/car.v3i2.99>.

²⁰ Janes Sinaga et al., "Pemahaman Konsep Keterlibatan Anggota Jemaat Dalam Pelayanan Dan Penginjilan Terhadap Pertumbuhan Gereja Berdasarkan Ayat Kisah Para Rasul 2:46-47," *Jurnal Teologi Kontekstual Indonesia* 3, no. 1 (2022): 11.

involve representatives from various ethnicities in the planning and implementation of programs, developing inclusive service programs in the church is an important step to ensure that all members of the congregation, regardless of ethnic background, social background, or ability, feel accepted and valued.²¹

Here are some ways to develop an inclusive service program, including: identifying the needs of the congregation., building diverse service teams, designing responsive programs, creating a welcoming environment, conducting collaborative activities, evaluation and follow-up.

Identifying congregational needs is a crucial step in building relevant and contextual church services. From Sherry Arnstein's theory of the Ladder of Citizen Participation, the level of congregational member involvement can range from mere consultation to shared decision-making. Churches serving in multicultural contexts like the GKI need to develop practical instruments to assess the congregation's real needs.²² One way to do this is through structured congregational surveys, where members are asked to express their aspirations regarding worship, faith education, social services, and pastoral support. Furthermore, focus group discussions involving representatives from each ethnic group or age group can serve as a two-way communication tool that allows minority voices to be accommodated.²³ Furthermore, congregational involvement should not stop at the needs identification stage, but should be followed up with active participation in the program planning and implementation process. For example, forming an inclusive ministry team with members representing various ethnicities can ensure that program designs truly reflect the diversity of congregational experiences. Concrete examples could include child education mentoring programs designed in collaboration with parents from diverse backgrounds, or community-based social service activities that utilize the local wisdom of each ethnic group.²⁴ This can help the church understand the issues facing particular groups, holding open discussion sessions to hear directly from members about their experiences and what they expect from ministry programs, building ministry teams that reflect the diversity of the congregation, providing training to ministry teams on the importance of inclusion and how to minister sensitively to differences, developing programs that focus on social service, such as assistance for low-income families, support for people with disabilities, or educational programs for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, holding celebrations of cultural diversity, such as food festivals, art shows, or cultural exhibitions that involve different ethnic groups, ensuring that church facilities are

²¹ Rizky Rimona Lekatompessy dan Samel Sopacua, "Merawat Kemajemukan : Peran Pendidikan Agama Kristen dalam Menjaga Keharmonisan Antar Agama di Negeri Maneoratu" 2, no. 1 (2024): 21–41.

²² Sinaga et al., "Pemahaman Konsep Keterlibatan Anggota Jemaat Dalam Pelayanan Dan Peningjilan Terhadap Pertumbuhan Gereja Berdasarkan Ayat Kisah Para Rasul 2:46-47."

²³ Gressia Carolina dan Esti Rahayu, "Kepemimpinan Kristen Transformatif Berbasis inklusif dan implikasinya bagi Lembaga Disabilitas Kristen di Indonesia Gressia Carolina, Romika, Esti Rahayu STTB The Way Jakarta" 11, no. 1 (2025): 1–10.

²⁴ Lewi Kabanga, "Pelatihan Peningkatan Efektivitas Pelayanan Jemaat Di Gereja Bethel Jemaat Sion Kemiri-Sentani," *SERVIRE: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 2, no. 2 (2022): 111–24, <https://doi.org/10.46362/servire.v2i2.119>.

accessible to all, including people with disabilities.²⁵ Partnering with local organizations that focus on diversity and inclusion to develop broader ministry programs, holding joint activities with other churches of different ethnic or denominational backgrounds to strengthen relationships across communities, regularly soliciting feedback from congregation members on ministry programs that have been implemented to find out what is working and what needs to be improved based on feedback, making adjustments to ministry programs to ensure that they remain relevant and inclusive.²⁶

4. Be a role model in action

Church leaders should be role models in attitude and action. The ideal model of Christian leadership as a barometer is Jesus himself. Lord Jesus is a concrete example of how to be an exemplary leader as well as being an example in organizing the people being led.²⁷ By demonstrating an inclusive attitude and respect for differences, leaders can inspire their congregations to do the same, being a role model in the church is an important responsibility for many individuals and groups. They should actively participate in church activities and support programs. inclusive programs. Young people in the church can be role models by demonstrating enthusiasm, creativity, and involvement in service. They can inspire other members of the congregation to become involved in church activities. Service team members, including volunteers, should demonstrate dedication and commitment to serving the congregation. Families who are active in the church can demonstrate what it is like to live in a supportive community that values differences. They should create a safe and inclusive environment for all. Another thing that can be done is to work with local organizations to model social service and support for the community. This includes collaborating with organizations that focus on diversity and inclusion.

B. Advantages and Disadvantages of Ethnic Diversity in the Congregation

Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."²⁸ Diversity is something that is an inseparable part of the congregation. Diversity has also existed since the beginning of this world created by GOD, which means GOD wants diversity to exist in a fellowship that can build, help each other for the glory of HIS name. Diversity has a negative and positive impact on the development of a congregation or fellowship in. The following are the advantages and disadvantages of ethnic differences in the congregation:

²⁵ Iman Pasrah Zai dan Malik Bambang, "Gereja dalam Menghadapi Tantangan Sosial, Politik, dan Budaya dari Abad Ke Abad," *Jurnal Budi Pekerti Agama Kristen dan Katolik* 3, no. 1 (2025): 51–66, <https://doi.org/10.61132/jbpakk.v3i1.998>.

²⁶ Wenda, Payage, dan Bawan, "Upaya Peningkatan Pertumbuhan Iman: Studi Kasus Efektivitas Program Pelayanan Gerejawi Jemaat GKII Yerusalem Amsangi Daerah Silimo Yerusalem Amsangi Daerah Silimo."

²⁷ Simon dan Alvonce Poluan, 2021)

²⁸ Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia, *ALKITAB*.

a. Advantage

1. Cultural Wealth

Ethnic diversity brings various traditions, music, and worship practices that can enrich the spiritual experience of the congregation, and each member of the congregation can learn from each other, thus broadening their horizons and understanding of different cultures.²⁹

2. Unity in Diversity

Churches that reflect ethnic diversity can be a living example of unity in diversity, showing that faith can unite people from different backgrounds and create interactions between ethnic groups that can increase tolerance and reduce prejudice among congregation members.³⁰

3. Wider Service Opportunities

The church can develop more diverse and responsive service programs to the needs of various ethnic groups, allowing the church to reach and serve a wider community, including groups that may be neglected³¹.

4. Innovation and Creativity

Various ethnic perspectives can generate new ideas and innovative approaches in church services and activities can encourage creativity in designing events and programs that appeal to all members of the congregation³².

b. Deficiencies

1. Cultural Differences That Cause Conflict

Differences in values and traditions can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts among congregation members, not only differences but also the way messages are conveyed through different languages and communication methods can hinder interaction and collaboration.

2. Limitations in Leadership

If church leaders do not reflect the ethnic diversity of the congregation, this can lead to feelings of dissatisfaction and injustice among members of minority ethnic groups, which can become a problem that can lead to divisions in the congregation between the minority and the majority.

Leaders who do not understand or appreciate cultural differences cannot meet the needs of all congregation members.

3. Discrimination and Exclusion

It is not directly visible but there are members of certain ethnic groups who experience discrimination or exclusion, which can damage the sense of togetherness and trust within the church and cause other members to have

²⁹ Michael Hari Sasongko, "Musik Etnik Dan Pengembangan Musik Gereja," *Tonika: Jurnal Penelitian dan Pengkajian Seni* 2, no. 1 (2019): 32–47, <https://doi.org/10.37368/tonika.v2i1.41>.

³⁰ Remita Nian et al., "Fungsi Badan Ke-Esaan Gereja dalam Memperkuat Kesatuan Iman Kristiani," 2024, 217–29.

³¹ Tupa Pebrianti Lumbantoruan dan Andreas Yonatan Gultom, "Strategi Pembinaan Warga Gereja untuk Mengembangkan Potensi Pemuda / I," no. 1 (2025).

³² Aprianus Simanungkalit, "Kreatifitas Gembala Sebagai Strategi Meningkatkan Pertumbuhan Iman Jemaat Tuhan," *PNEUMATIKOS: Jurnal Teologi Kependetaan* 15, no. 1 (2024): 13–29, <https://doi.org/10.56438/pneuma.v15i1.121>.

difficulty balancing their ethnic identity with their identity as part of the church community.

4. Challenges in Building Relationships

Building strong relationships between members from different backgrounds can be challenging, especially if there is mistrust or misunderstanding between the majority and the minority, between one group and another, or even individuals who may feel less involved in church activities if efforts are not made to accommodate their needs.

d. Benefits of Managing Ethnic Diversity in the Congregation

The creation of Unity in the body of Christ means that the congregation can live side by side in peace, even though in different tribes and cultures, this is certainly based on the biblical view as a reference that says that all people are one in Christ (Galatians 3:28). Management in diversity is very important and beneficial for the congregation itself but also for its fellowship, one of which is that it can also increase the participation and involvement of all congregations, feelings of security and acceptance make them more active in every church activity which indirectly has fostered an attitude of tolerance where the congregation will learn to understand differences as wealth, no longer as a threat.³³ Maturing spirituality in relating to others will even be an example in building a peaceful society. Church services will be impactful because they reflect love through the attitudes and lifestyles of their congregations, of course through church leadership.³⁴ Who are trained to think globally and act inclusively, thus producing a generation of servants who are ready to serve in any cultural context.

e. Managing diversity in GKI in Sorong City

Managing diversity in a congregation is not an easy thing, it requires a congregation leader who is responsible and has good character spiritually and socio-culturally, a leader who has the attitude to build faith and has a strong prayer life and evangelizes consistently, is humble, patient, and full of love.³⁵

And faithful like Christ, regardless of ethnicity, race, social or cultural background and making all those differences a source of wealth in one body, namely Christ.³⁶ In relation to the management of the diversity of services of the Evangelical Christian Church (GKI) in Sorong City, Southwest Papua Province, which can be used as basic data for research on the Role of Church Leadership in Managing Ethnic Diversity in the Services of

³³ Sinaga et al., "Pemahaman Konsep Keterlibatan Anggota Jemaat Dalam Pelayanan Dan Penginjilan Terhadap Pertumbuhan Gereja Berdasarkan Ayat Kisah Para Rasul 2:46-47."

³⁴ Yuprinadie kurman Ngatang, Sudioanto, tulus Tu'u, Biddy Taylor, Enta Malasinta, "Kepemimpinan Dalam Gereja," *Jurnal Teologi* 2, no. 01 (2010): 18–38.

³⁵ This Final Project, Technology By, dan Management Program, "THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SPIRITUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE (CASE STUDY IN FOUR INDONESIAN ORGANIZATIONS) This Final Project as the requirement to obtain a Master degree of FITRIA INSI AULANI (Master of Science in Management Program) SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND MA" (2015).

³⁶ Alvary Exan Rerung dan Juliati Attu, "Sikap Gereja Terhadap Partisipasi Politik dan Relevansinya Bagi Gereja Toraja Mamasa Jemaat Sapankale," *KINAA: Jurnal Kepemimpinan Kristen dan Pemberdayaan Jemaat* 4, no. 1 (2023): 1–17.

the Evangelical Christian Church in Sorong City.³⁷ That in relation to the context of diversity, Sorong City is a city with a high level of ethnic heterogeneity, inhabited by: a) indigenous Papuans (especially the Moi tribe as the local indigenous tribe). b) immigrants from other regions of Indonesia such as the Minahasa, Toraja, Ambon, Batak, Maluku, Javanese, Bugis-Makassar, and others. Worship services in the Liturgy often use Indonesian as the lingua franca, but are also interspersed with spiritual songs in regional languages (Papuan, Batak, Ambon, Toraja, Javanese, etc.).

That church leadership plays an important role in maintaining the unity of a heterogeneous congregation. Through an inclusive approach, pastors and congregations strive to present ethnically neutral services, while still opening up space for cultural expression of each group in worship and other church activities. For example, worship at GKI Kasih Perumnas often features spiritual songs in regional languages such as Papuan, Ambonese, Batak, Javanese and others as a form of recognition of diversity in the body of Christ. Latuputty Dinamis, "Evangelical Christian Church in Papua and the development of Ecumenical spirituality in Eastern Indonesia."³⁸

The GKI Leadership Strategy in Managing Diversity is as follows: 1. Inclusive Leadership:

1. Church leaders (pastors, deacons) are required to be ethnically neutral and bridge interests between groups.
2. Council Recruitment Patterns: In many congregations, there is an unwritten principle of ethnic representation ensuring a variety of backgrounds are present in the ministry structure.
3. Dialogue and Conflict Resolution: Church leaders play an important role as facilitators of dialogue when there is potential for friction between ethnic groups.
4. Contextual Education and Preaching: GKI pastors in Sorong often convey themes of inclusivity, unity, and peace (*shalom*) in their sermons, emphasizing that Christian identity transcends tribal identity.

In addition, the challenges in managing diversity in the GKI in Tanah Papua, especially in Sorong City, still find Primordial Sentiments, namely that there is still a tendency for certain ethnic groups to want to dominate or feel more worthy of leading the church, in addition to differences and challenges from the aspects of language and culture. Differences in language and cultural expression sometimes cause misunderstandings in inter-congregation communication,³⁹ even the economic gap between certain ethnicities (for example immigrants vs. natives) can infiltrate church relations. To anticipate differences in views and gaps that exist, the example of the GKI Congregation in Sorong City and demonstrates multicultural service practices through Multiethnic Leadership Training by the Regional Synod, the policy of rotating cross-ethnic servants among the congregation council, holding the Papua Church Day Celebration (October 26) as a momentum to strengthen the inclusive church identity. The GKI Synod

³⁷ Willem Oscar Makatita, "169 Tahun Pekabaran Injil di Tanah Papua, GKI Miliki Info Demografis Gereja, Simak Data Lengkapnya," *tribun news*, 2024, <https://sorong.tribunnews.com/2024/02/05/169-tahun-pekabaran-injil-di-tanah-papua-gki-miliki-demografi-gereja-simak-data-lengkapnya>.

³⁸ Latuputty Dinamis, "Gereja Kristen Injili di tanah Papua dan pengembangan spiritualitas Oikumene di Indonesia Timur."

³⁹ Hendi Wijaya, "Dunamis: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristiani.," *DUNAMIS: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristiani* 3, no. 1 (2018): 52-73, <https://doi.org/10.30648/dun.v9i1.1415>.

and Classis throughout Papua. place strong emphasis on the values of "togetherness in Christ" and adopt a pastoral approach that is responsive to the social realities of Papua, including ethnic diversity. The Sorong Classis actively organizes training and seminars on intercultural harmony in service. In addition, there are real efforts in the service structure, such as ethnic representation in the leadership of the congregation council proportionally and rotation of servants that are not exclusive to one group. The coaching program is also directed to prioritize "church as a common house" which does not only belong to one ethnicity, but all who believe in Christ.⁴⁰

3. Conclusion

The results of this study confirm that managing ethnic welfare in the GKI congregation in Sorong City cannot be viewed solely as a technical-organizational matter, but rather is closely linked to intertwined theological, social, and cultural dimensions. The church's ability to embrace ethnic plurality will be a benchmark for its presence as an authentic, contextual body of Christ, capable of having a transformative impact on the lives of a pluralistic society.

However, this research demonstrates that multicultural integration efforts do not always proceed smoothly. There remains a tug-of-war between the interests of dominant and minority groups, residual ethnic prejudices, and structural barriers in the form of socio-economic inequality. This situation demonstrates that diversity is not necessarily a strength but requires management through visionary, inclusive church leadership capable of navigating the complexities of difference.

Scientifically, this research contributes to the enrichment of theory on church leadership in a pluralistic society, emphasizing the need for a multicultural perspective in developing ministry strategies. The approach presented is not only descriptive but also reflective and critical, thus providing a foundation for further research on transformative leadership models in religious communities. Based on the description and analysis in this paper, here are some suggestions that can be put forward to support the management of ethnic diversity in the ministry of the Gereja Kristen Indonesia (GKI) in Sorong City, namely, strengthening the capacity of Multicultural leadership, preparing Multicultural ministry guidelines, active involvement of congregations from various ethnicities, increasing forums for dialogue and cultural encounters, empowering congregations as agents of peace, periodic evaluation of Inclusivity practices. Thus, this paper not only provides practical benefits for strengthening the ministry of the GKI Sorong City congregation but also opens up a space for academic discussion regarding the intersection of contextual theology, the sociology of religion, and leadership studies. Future research using a comparative approach across regions or church denominations will further enrich understanding of strategies for managing ethnic diversity as a manifestation of Gospel witness and a means of building peace in a pluralistic society.

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⁴⁰ Yohanes Triputra Sumual, "Pelayanan Yesus Sebagai Model Misi Gereja dan Implementasinya Bagi Pelayanan di Jemaat GMIBM Imanuel Sinindian," *Educatio Christi* 4, no. 2 (2023): 181–93.

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