Repositioning the Role of the Church in to Eradicate Poverty, Enlightenment Congregation, and Developing Peaceful Living in the Context of Pluralism

Daniel Maniur Nainggolan

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Katharos Bekasi

Email: Daniel.nainggolan@yahoo.com

Article Info	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Poverty Alleviation, Congregational Education, Peaceful Living	The task of the church in the contemporary Indonesian context demands a repositioning of the church's role to be relevant and transformative. This article explores the repositioning of the role of the church in three main dimensions: alleviating poverty, congregation educating, and developing peaceful living in a plural context, with an emphasis on practical innovations that can be adopted according to social, economic and political dynamics in 2024. This innovative approach will be focused on developing the creative economy, using digital technology, increasing digital literacy, and transforming learning through online platforms, and. Through a theological approach and contextual analysis, this article identifies challenges, opportunities and strategies that the church can implement in carrying out its mission holistically.
	Corresponding Author: Daniel Maniur Nainggolan E-mail: Daniel.nainggolan@yahoo.com

INTRODUCTION

The church as a community of faith is called to be "the salt and light of the world" (Matthew 5:13-14). Therefore, the church has five main tasks, namely Marturia, Koinonia, Diakonia, Kerygma and Leiturgia. The five form a perfect unity for the church to have an impact on its presence. In the context of Indonesia in 2024, efforts to restore socio-economic conditions after the pandemic, digital transformation, and political dynamics after the 2024 Election, the church faces challenges and also opens up new opportunities that must be addressed with demands to provide a more innovative meaning to the church's tasks and roles. Economic poverty due to the pandemic, the digital divide, political polarization, and the potential for social conflict are the main concerns that must be responded to proactively by the church. Post-COVID-19 pandemic poverty, the digital divide, and political polarization do have the potential to cause social conflict in Indonesia. This is supported by

the views of the following experts: The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in its 2023 report stated that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused an increase in poverty rates in Indonesia, especially among vulnerable communities. Poverty as a Source of Dissatisfaction and Social Conflict. Many experts argue that poverty creates widespread social dissatisfaction. When most people live in poverty while a handful of people enjoy wealth, this can trigger a sense of injustice and social jealousy. This dissatisfaction can lead to protests, riots, and even greater social conflict. Poverty Hinders Human and Economic Development. Poverty is also considered an obstacle to human and economic development. Poor people tend to have limited access to education, health, and other basic services. This hinders the development of their potential and reduces overall economic productivity. As a result, poverty can slow economic growth and exacerbate social inequality. Poverty Weakens Political and Democratic Institutions. Poverty can weaken political and democratic institutions. Poor people are often excluded from political decision-making processes and underrepresented in government. This can lead to distrust of government and political institutions, which in turn can lead to political instability. Poverty Increases Vulnerability to Extremism. Some experts argue that poverty can increase a society's vulnerability to extremist ideologies. Extremist groups often exploit the dissatisfaction and desperation of poor communities to recruit members and spread their ideologies. This can threaten socio-political stability and national security. Poverty as a Threat to International Peace and Security. Widespread poverty in a country can also be a threat to international peace and security. The socio-political instability caused by poverty can trigger internal conflicts, even civil wars. Such conflicts can spread to neighboring countries and create a larger humanitarian crisis. Experts' views on the impact of poverty on socio-political stability show that poverty is not only an economic problem, but also a social, political, and security problem. Therefore, poverty alleviation efforts are not only important to improve people's welfare, but also to maintain socio-political stability and world peace. Education is also the goal of forming a sovereign government that educates its people. The church also plays an important role in this. Education as a Biblical Mandate. Theologians emphasize that education is part of the great commission of Jesus Christ to make all nations His disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). Education is not only about religious teaching, but also about developing all aspects of human life, including intellectual, moral, social, and spiritual. The church is called to equip the congregation with the knowledge and skills needed to live as responsible disciples of Christ who have a positive impact on society. Education as a Means of Empowerment. Sociologists and educationists see education as a means of empowering society. Education can help the congregation to understand social problems, develop critical thinking, and take appropriate action to address the problems. The church can be a place for the congregation to learn together, discuss, and develop creative solutions to problems faced by society. Education as an Investment in the Future. Economists and development experts view

education as an important investment in the future of the church and society. An educated congregation has a greater potential to contribute to economic, social, and political development. Churches that invest in the education of their congregations will reap long-term benefits in the form of improved quality of life for their congregations and society as a whole. Education as a Means of Spiritual Growth. Psychologists and spiritualists emphasize that education is not only about intellectual development, but also about spiritual growth. The church can provide an environment conducive to congregations to learn, reflect, and deepen their faith. Education can help congregations to understand religious teachings more deeply, develop spiritual values, and apply them in their daily lives. Education as a Social Responsibility of the Church. Ethicists and social philosophers emphasize that the church has a social responsibility to participate in educating society.

METHOD

The author uses a qualitative approach. Qualitative writing method is a research approach used to understand social and humanities phenomena in depth through the collection of descriptive data, such as books, journals, words, r, or actions. This method emphasizes understanding the meaning and interpretation from the perspective of the participants. Definitions according to experts: Creswell (2014): "Qualitative research is a process of exploration and understanding based on different methodological traditions that explore social or human problems. This process is done by building a complex, holistic picture, and often focuses on the views of participants, and is carried out in a natural setting." (p. 4). Denzin & Lincoln (2011): "Qualitative research is an activity that places researchers in the world. Researchers enter the setting, conduct interviews, collect documents and artifacts, take field notes, analyze photos and videos, and record sound. Researchers go to places where people do their daily activities, where they work, play, worship, shop, and do various other activities." (p. 3). Ways of qualitative writing: Determining the focus of the research: Researchers need to determine the topic or problem they want to study in depth. Collecting data: Qualitative data can be collected through a variety of methods, such as in-depth interviews, participant observation, document analysis, and focus group discussions.

Analyzing data: Qualitative data is analyzed inductively, that is, by looking for patterns, themes, or categories that emerge from the data. Interpreting data: Researchers interpret data by considering the social and cultural context in which the data were collected. Writing a report: Qualitative research reports are usually presented in narrative form that is rich in descriptions and direct quotes from

participants. Expert quotes: Miles & Huberman (1994): "Qualitative data analysis is an iterative and interactive process, in which the researcher continually moves between data and interpretations." (p. 10). Charmaz (2006): "Grounded theory is a systematic qualitative methodology for collecting and analyzing data to build theory.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The introduction highlights a critical issue: the widening digital divide, which reflects the uneven distribution of technology and information across different societal levels. This disparity not only triggers social dissatisfaction but also heightens the risk of conflict (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023, p. 15). Lingga (2023), in his book "Church Development Strategy in the Digital Era," underscores that this digital divide can obstruct access to information, education, and economic opportunities, potentially worsening poverty and triggering social conflict. Lingga also notes that political polarization can exacerbate these social and economic disparities, further increasing the risk of conflict (Lingga, 2023, p. 56). Similarly, Siahaan (2020) in "Challenges and Opportunities for the Church in Today's Indonesia" argues that political polarization divides society and fosters horizontal conflicts. Siahaan highlights poverty and social inequality as significant drivers of conflict if not adequately addressed (Siahaan, 2020, p. 123).

According to Bappenas (2023), the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan identifies risks of social conflict linked to poverty, the digital divide, and political polarization. These include agrarian conflicts, natural resource disputes, identity-based social conflicts, and political conflicts. Bappenas stresses the need for comprehensive conflict prevention and management efforts to maintain social and political stability in Indonesia (Bappenas, 2023, p. 67). The experts' perspectives collectively illustrate that post-pandemic poverty, the digital divide, and political polarization pose serious threats to harmony and peace in Indonesia. Thus, collaborative efforts from the government, civil society, and religious leaders are crucial to address these issues and prevent social conflict.

In this context, the church emerges as a vital actor in conflict prevention and resolution. It can serve as a mediator, facilitator of dialogue, and peace advocate in a polarized society. Additionally, the church can contribute to poverty alleviation and enhance digital literacy among its congregation to mitigate social

conflict risks. Indicators of the digital divide among church members include access to ICT devices, ICT skills, internet availability, and the use of ICT in church activities.

Challenges related to the digital divide faced by church members include a lack of education and training in ICT, the cost of devices and internet access, distrust of technology, and inadequate ICT infrastructure in some areas. The church must address these challenges by advocating for pro-people policies and providing support for digital inclusion (National Human Rights Commission, 2023, p. 87).

To combat poverty exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the church should adopt innovative approaches. Utilizing digital technology can enhance fundraising, aid distribution, and skills training for the poor, as well as improve transparency and accountability in managing church social assistance funds (Lingga, 2023, p. 56). Encouraging the development of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the creative economy sector aligns with global trends, which indicate resilience and potential for job creation and income generation (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023, p. 23). The church can support MSMEs through training, mentoring, and market access, leveraging digital platforms to promote creative products.

Implementing specific steps can help the church develop the creative economy in both urban and rural areas. This includes identifying local potential and resources, improving congregational skills through training, encouraging the formation of cooperatives, utilizing digital technology, and collaborating with various stakeholders. By acting as a catalyst, facilitator, and partner, the church can significantly impact economic development and social welfare, addressing both the digital divide and poverty effectively.

Repositioning the Church in Educating Congregations in the Era Digital

Digital transformation has significantly changed the educational landscape. The church needs to adapt to this development by: Developing online learning platforms: The church can provide wider access to education for the congregation through interactive and relevant online learning platforms. Learning content can be in the form of theological materials, character development, life skills, and other topics relevant to the needs of the congregation (Siahaan, 2020, p. 123). Improving the congregation's digital literacy: The church needs to provide digital literacy training to the congregation so that they can use technology wisely and productively. Digital literacy not only includes technical skills in using technology,

but also an understanding of digital ethics, information security, and critical thinking skills in dealing with information circulating in cyberspace (Sugianto, 2021, p. 45). Integrating Christian values in education: The church needs to ensure that Christian values remain the foundation of every educational program held, both online and offline (Aritonang, 2019, p. 98). Repositioning the Church in Developing Peaceful Living Amidst Political Polarization . After the 2024 Election, the potential for political polarization in Indonesia is increasing (Bappenas, 2023, p. 67). The Church needs to play an important role in maintaining harmony and peace by: Encouraging dialogue and reconciliation: The Church needs to facilitate dialogue between groups with different political views and encourage post-election reconciliation. This dialogue can be carried out through discussion forums, seminars, or joint activities involving various community groups (Pattiasina, 2022, p. 101). Teaching political ethics based on Christian values: The Church needs to provide political education to the congregation so that they can participate in the political process responsibly and with integrity. This political education can include material on the rights and obligations of citizens, the election system, political ethics, and Christian values in national and state life (General Election Commission, 2023, p. 34). Being a role model in maintaining harmony: The Church needs to be an example in maintaining harmony and avoiding actions that can trigger conflict. The church can act as a mediator and facilitator in resolving conflicts in society (Election Supervisory Agency, 2023, p. 78).

CONCLUSION

The year 2024 is an important momentum for the church to reposition its duties and roles in responding to existing challenges and opportunities. By adopting an innovative approach that is in line with social, economic, and political dynamics, and utilizing digital technology and the creative economy, the church can become a relevant and transformative agent of change for Indonesian society.

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