

Strengthening Character Values through Church Choir Activities at the Gpm Bethel Congregation

Ferdyanto Ramschie¹, Dewi Tika Lestari² and Junita Batubara³

¹Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Ambon, Indonesia.

²Postgraduate in Church Music, Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Ambon, Indonesia.

³Universitas HKBP Nommensen, Indonesia.

Abstract: This study aims to analyze the strengthening of character values through church choir activities at the Protestant Church of Maluku (GPM) Bethel Congregation. Within the context of church ministry, choir activities are not merely artistic expressions or liturgical complements, but also function as instruments for character formation, spiritual growth, and social interaction among members of the congregation. This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving choir members, conductors, church administrators, and congregational leaders. The findings indicate that church choir activities contribute significantly to the development of important character values, including discipline, responsibility, cooperation, solidarity, humility, and spiritual awareness. Discipline was cultivated through regular rehearsals, punctuality, and commitment to achieving musical harmony collectively. Responsibility emerged from participants' understanding of choir ministry as a form of service to God and the congregation. Furthermore, collaborative musical experiences strengthened social solidarity, emotional connectedness, and mutual respect among choir members. Participation in choir activities also enhanced participants' spiritual lives through worship songs, prayer practices, and involvement in diaconal ministry. This study concludes that church choir ministry can serve as an effective medium for character education by integrating musical, spiritual, social, and cultural dimensions within congregational life.

Keywords: Character Education; Church Choir; Spirituality; GPM Bethel; Music Ministry.

INTRODUCTION

Character education has become one of the important issues in education and community development in contemporary society. Rapid social, cultural, and technological developments are often accompanied by various moral challenges, such as declining levels of discipline, responsibility, and social concern. Therefore, various educational institutions and social communities have sought to integrate character values into a range of developmental activities, both through formal education and non-formal programs. According to Santika (2020), character education is oriented toward developing individuals who possess noble character, demonstrate a balance among cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions, and are capable of behaving appropriately within society. Character is not formed solely through the transfer of knowledge, but also through repeated social practices within a community. Character develops not merely by knowing what is good, but by repeatedly practicing goodness within a community context (Lickona, 2021:5–7). Thomas Lickona is one of the prominent scholars in character education who emphasizes that good character is concerned not only with knowledge of moral values but also with moral feelings and moral actions. According to Lickona, character education is a deliberate effort to help individuals

understand, love, and practice core ethical values in everyday life. Good character is formed through the integration of three principal dimensions, namely moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action (Lickona, 2021).

The moral knowing dimension concerns an individual's ability to understand moral values, moral awareness, perspective-taking, moral reasoning, decision-making, and self-knowledge. In the context of church choirs, members develop an understanding of the importance of discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and humility through the formative processes that take place during rehearsals and liturgical ministry. The moral feeling dimension refers to the affective aspects that encourage individuals to love and appreciate moral values. Elements such as conscience, empathy, respect, self-control, and humility develop through repeated social experiences. In church choir activities, interaction among members, the habit of helping one another, and a shared spirit of service become effective means of cultivating empathy, solidarity, and social concern.

Furthermore, the moral action dimension emphasizes an individual's ability to translate moral values into concrete actions. Lickona explains that moral action emerges from moral competence, moral will, and moral habit. In the

context of this study, moral action is reflected in members' commitment to attending rehearsals punctually, their willingness to serve the congregation voluntarily, their ability to work collaboratively to create musical harmony, and their involvement in the church's diaconal ministry. In addition to these three principal components, Lickona also developed the concept of ten essential virtues that constitute the foundation of character formation: wisdom, justice, fortitude, self-control, love, positive attitude, hard work, integrity, gratitude, and humility. These virtues are highly relevant to church choir activities, which require members to rehearse consistently, respect fellow members, accept correction, and serve with a motivation centered on the glorification of God.

Thus, Thomas Lickona's character education theory provides a strong conceptual framework for explaining how church choir activities can function as a medium for character formation. Through continuous musical learning, social interaction, and spiritual service, choir members acquire not only musical skills but also develop the dimensions of moral knowledge, moral feeling, and moral action that constitute the core of character education.

Church choir activities as a form of collective musical practice have been widely examined as an effective medium for character formation. In addition, collective musical experiences enable the internalization of values through repeated and meaningful social interactions (Aprilia & Nugroho, 2022:58). In an international context, participation in choirs has also been shown to develop empathy, cooperation, and emotional regulation among individuals (Park & Kim, 2021:214). These findings confirm that a choir is not merely an artistic activity, but also an effective pedagogical space for experience-based character formation.

Within the context of arts-based education and development, music plays a strategic role in the process of character formation. Music functions not only as an aesthetic form of expression but also as an educational medium capable of instilling social, spiritual, and moral values. Collective music-making activities, such as choir singing, require cooperation, discipline, responsibility, and the ability to listen to and appreciate others. Accordingly, musical activities develop not only artistic abilities but also shape individuals' attitudes and character within social life.

A choir is a form of musical activity that is collective and collaborative in nature. In practice, choral performance involves various musical elements, including harmony, rhythm, dynamics, and coordination among different voice parts, namely soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. The rehearsal and performance processes require each member to demonstrate discipline, commitment, and the ability to work collaboratively in order to achieve a harmonious musical unity. Through this process, participants learn not only vocal techniques but also internalize character values such as responsibility, discipline, cooperation, and mutual respect.

Various recent studies indicate that choir activities make a significant contribution to character formation. Habib and Shanie (2024:112) demonstrate that choir activities are effective in cultivating discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and religiosity through structured rehearsal processes. Similarly, Darmesti and Setyawan (2023) found that group singing builds social cohesion and empathy through emotional synchronization among members. Limbu and Purnomo (2025) emphasize that, amid the challenges of the digital era, consistency in choir rehearsals remains an important means of developing moral virtues such as discipline and commitment. In addition, Kurniawan and Lestari (2022) show that systematic vocal learning can effectively instill values of honesty, responsibility, and cooperation. A study by Clift *et al.* (2022) in the field of music health and psychology indicates that regular participation in group singing activities not only enhances emotional well-being but also contributes to the development of moral values such as empathy, patience, and social solidarity.

In addition to these studies, international research has also demonstrated that choir activities have significant effects on participants' character development, psychological well-being, and social cohesion. Research conducted by Stephen Clift and Grenville Hancox found that group choir singing provides broad benefits, not only in terms of physical health and emotional well-being but also in developing participants' sense of togetherness, trust, social solidarity, and collective identity. Through shared musical experiences, individuals learn to develop empathy, discipline, cooperation, and a sense of responsibility toward the group (Clift & Hancox, 2010). These findings indicate that a choir can be understood as an effective social learning environment for

cultivating character values through sustained participatory experiences. Within an ecclesiastical context, Monique M. Ingalls emphasizes that the practice of congregational singing within faith communities functions not only as a liturgical expression but also as a means of forming identity, spirituality, and communal life within the congregation. Through collective singing, congregants engage in processes of meaning-making, the internalization of theological values, and the strengthening of social relationships that contribute to the formation of Christian character (Ingalls, 2015).

Accordingly, church choirs do not merely produce aesthetic experiences but also function as a medium for character and spiritual formation through musical practices rooted in the life of faith. Wulandari (2021) emphasizes that church music functions not only as an aesthetic expression but also as a means of spiritual formation within the congregation. Sihotang (2022) further explains that participation in choirs strengthens congregational faith identity and liturgical participation. Meanwhile, Manuputty (2023) argues that church music rehearsals contribute to spiritual discipline and congregational involvement in ministry. As Westermeyer (1998) asserts, church music is “prayer that is sung,” and therefore the character of the singer is expected to be consistent with the theological message being conveyed. Through choir ministry, congregants are involved not only in artistic activities but also in processes of spiritual and communal formation.

White (2010) emphasizes that participation in choir singing represents an active form of congregational participation that contributes to the formation of Christian identity. The involvement of congregation members in church choirs encourages the development of Christian character values such as humility, responsibility in ministry, togetherness, and faithfulness in service. From the perspective of the Reformed theology embraced by GPM, this spirit is expressed through *Soli Deo Gloria*, meaning that all activities are undertaken solely for the glory of God.

The GPM Bethel Congregation, as one ecclesiastical community, has an active choir ministry involved in various liturgical services. Although, theoretically, choir activities can contribute to character formation, in the reality of congregational life this process often encounters internal challenges. Phenomena such as fluctuations in members' attendance during

rehearsals, differences in perceptions regarding repertoire selection, and challenges in maintaining humility during performances demonstrate that character strengthening does not occur automatically. In addition, members' social commitments and individual responsibilities outside church ministry often affect the consistency and harmony of choir members. This situation requires a structured pattern of formation so that musical activities do not stop at the level of aesthetics alone but also contribute to behavioral transformation among congregation members. Therefore, the choir in this congregation should not merely be regarded as a liturgical ornament but as a character laboratory in which Christian values are tested and cultivated through commitment to rehearsals and humility in receiving guidance from the conductor.

This study offers several aspects of novelty that distinguish it from previous research. First, this study positions the church choir as a medium for congregational character education within the context of local church ministry, rather than merely as a musical activity or liturgical accompaniment. Most previous studies have focused on choirs in formal educational environments, school extracurricular activities, or the development of musical skills, whereas this study examines how choir activities function as a means of character formation among congregants through rehearsals, liturgical ministry, and social interaction within the church community. Second, this study was conducted in the context of the GPM Bethel Congregation in Maluku, which possesses distinctive social, cultural, and ecclesiastical characteristics. Research examining the relationship between church music and character education within the context of the Protestant Church of Maluku (GPM) remains very limited, particularly in international academic publications. Therefore, this study provides an important contextual contribution by presenting a local Maluku perspective that has been relatively underrepresented in the literature on church music, character education, and religious community studies.

Third, the principal novelty of this study lies in the integration of musical dimensions, Christian spirituality, and character formation within a single analytical framework. This study does not merely identify universal character values such as discipline, responsibility, and cooperation, but also explores distinctively Christian character values that develop through choir ministry, including

humility, love, faithfulness in service, the spirit of diakonia, and values corresponding to the concept of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). Thus, this study expands the perspective of character education from a moral-social approach toward an approach that integrates theological and spiritual dimensions.

Fourth, this study develops an understanding of the church choir as a laboratory of congregational character and spirituality, namely a learning space that enables the internalization of values through collective musical experiences, ministry practices, faith reflection, and communal life. This concept offers a new perspective in church music studies by demonstrating that music ministry does not merely produce aesthetic experiences but also contributes to character transformation and the spiritual growth of congregation members. Accordingly, this study provides a theoretical contribution through the development of an interdisciplinary inquiry connecting character education, church music, and practical theology, while also offering an empirical contribution by revealing practices of character formation within the local context of the GPM Bethel Congregation in Maluku.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to analyze the strengthening of character values through church choir activities at the GPM Bethel Congregation and to identify the character values that develop through rehearsal processes, liturgical ministry, and social interaction within these activities. To examine these dynamics, the study employs a qualitative approach through direct observation of rehearsal processes and worship services, as well as in-depth interviews with choir administrators and members of the GPM Bethel Congregation. This approach is intended to capture the meanings underlying the musical activities that participants engage in on a daily basis.

This study is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the fields of church music studies and character education, while also offering practical implications for the development of church music ministry as a means of fostering character among congregation members.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Type and Approach

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Batubara and Maniam (2019) stated that a qualitative approach was selected because the study sought to gain an in-depth understanding of

the processes, experiences, meanings, and dynamics involved in strengthening character values through church choir activities within the natural context of congregational life (Batubara *et al.*, 2026). This approach enabled the researcher to obtain a holistic understanding of the social interactions, spiritual formation, and church music ministry practices taking place within the congregation.

A case study design was employed because the research focused on a specific case, namely the church choir activities at the GPM Bethel Congregation. A case study enables researchers to explore a phenomenon contextually and in depth through multiple sources of data, thereby providing a comprehensive representation of social reality (Yin, 2018). In addition, qualitative research provides an opportunity to interpretively understand the relationship between musical activities, character formation, and the spiritual life of the congregation (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In this study, character-value strengthening was understood as a process through which attitudes of discipline, responsibility, cooperation, social concern, spirituality, and service are developed through the active involvement of choir members in rehearsals and church choir ministry.

Research Location and Participants

The study was conducted at the Protestant Church of Maluku (GPM) Bethel Congregation, one of the active congregations engaged in church music ministry in Ambon City, Maluku. The research site was selected because choir activities in this congregation are conducted regularly and involve active participation in worship services and other church-related activities. The choir selected as the object of the study was the Lilin Kecil Choir. The research informants consisted of choir members, administrators of the music ministry organization, the conductor, and members of the congregational council who were directly involved in the development of church music ministry.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, namely the selection of participants based on particular considerations and criteria relevant to the needs of the study (Sugiyono, 2022).

The criteria for selecting informants were as follows:

1. Choir members who had been actively involved in the choir for at least one year;

2. Administrators involved in managing choir activities;
3. Conductors or vocal coaches who led rehearsal and ministry processes; and
4. Members of the congregational council who understood the development of church music ministry at the GPM Bethel Congregation.

The selection of these informants was intended to obtain rich, in-depth, and relevant data concerning the process of character formation through musical activities and church ministry.

Table 1: Profile of Research Informants

Informant Category	Role in the Study	Number	Code
Choir Members	Provided information concerning rehearsal and ministry experiences	7	INF1–INF7
Conductors/Vocal Coaches	Provided perspectives on musical and character development	2	DIR1–DIR2
Choir Organization Administrators	Explained the management of choir activities	2	PGR1–PGR2
Congregational Council	Provided a broader perspective on congregational development	1	MJL1

Source: Research Data

The informant composition above consisted of 12 participants, comprising seven choir members, two conductors/vocal coaches, two choir organization administrators, and one member of the congregational council. This composition enabled the study to incorporate perspectives from both the performers and those responsible for directing, managing, and supervising the church's music ministry.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection in this study was conducted using several methods, as follows.

Participatory Observation

Participatory observation was conducted by directly engaging in choir rehearsals, preparations for ministry, and worship services involving the choir. Through this observation, the researcher examined patterns of social interaction, members' discipline, teamwork, responsibility in ministry, and expressions of spirituality that emerged during the activities. The observations were conducted systematically by recording various phenomena related to the implementation of character values within church music activities. This technique is important in qualitative research because it enables researchers to understand participants' behavior within its natural context (Moleong, 2021).

In-Depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with the principal informants to obtain an understanding of their experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of choir activities as a medium for character formation. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, allowing the researcher to

maintain a set of guiding questions while also providing participants with sufficient opportunity to explain their experiences freely and in depth. Several aspects explored through the interviews included:

- a) experiences of serving through the choir;
- b) processes of character development during rehearsals and ministry;
- c) spiritual and social values that developed through participation;
- d) challenges in maintaining discipline and cooperation; and
- e) The influence of choir activities on participants' personal lives and the life of the congregation.

Documentation Study

The documentation study examined various documents related to choir activities, including rehearsal schedules, ministry archives, photographs of activities, and other organizational documents. Documentation was used to strengthen the data obtained through observation and interviews, thereby producing data that were more valid and systematically organized.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis in this study employed the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman (2014). Data analysis was conducted simultaneously throughout the process of data collection until the final conclusions were formulated.

The stages of data analysis consisted of the following:

Data Condensation

The researcher selected, simplified, categorized, and focused the data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation according to the focus of the study.

Data Display

The condensed data were subsequently presented in the form of descriptive narratives, matrices, and thematic categorizations to facilitate interpretation and the extraction of meaning.

Conclusion Drawing and Verification

The final stage involved interpreting the data to identify patterns, relationships, and meanings associated with the strengthening of character values through church choir activities.

The conclusions were continuously verified throughout the research process to ensure a high level of validity.

Data Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the data was examined through source triangulation and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing and matching information obtained from choir members, conductors, administrators, and members of the congregational council. Meanwhile, methodological triangulation was conducted by comparing findings obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation.

In addition, the researcher employed member checking, namely reconfirming interview findings and data interpretations with the informants to ensure that the resulting data accurately represented the experiences and intended meanings of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This procedure was undertaken to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

Research Ethics

This study adhered to the ethical principles of qualitative research. Before data collection began, all participants were provided with an explanation of the purpose of the study and were asked to provide informed consent. The researcher maintained the confidentiality of informants' identities by not disclosing their real names in the research report. All data obtained were used solely for academic purposes and the development of scholarly knowledge, particularly in the fields of church music, character education, and church ministry.

The researcher also maintained respect for the cultural values and spirituality of the congregation throughout the research process.

RESULTS

The study was conducted within the context of church choir activities at the GPM Bethel Congregation through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The research focused on the process of strengthening character values developed through rehearsal activities, liturgical ministry, and social interactions among choir members. The findings indicate that church choir activities function not only as musical activities within worship but also as a space for the character and spiritual formation of congregation members.

The study involved eight participatory observation sessions, in-depth interviews with 12 informants, and documentation conducted at the GPM Bethel Congregation. Based on the data analysis, five dominant character-value themes emerged through the church choir activities:

- Discipline
- Responsibility in ministry
- Cooperation and solidarity
- Humility
- Spirituality and awareness of diakonia

Strengthening the Value of Discipline through the Rehearsal Process

The observation findings showed that choir rehearsals at the GPM Bethel Congregation were conducted regularly every week. Each member was expected to arrive on time, prepare the musical scores, and consistently follow the conductor's directions. During the rehearsal process, the development of disciplined habits could be observed through musical repetition, time management, and collective evaluation of rehearsal outcomes.

One choir member (INF3) stated:

"If we arrive late or do not attend rehearsal, the voices usually become unbalanced. So, we learn to be responsible for the group, not only for ourselves."

This statement demonstrates that discipline within the choir is not limited to adherence to rehearsal schedules but also involves a collective awareness of maintaining the quality of the group's ministry. Another informant (INF6) added:

“Even one person being absent from rehearsal can change the overall sound. We have come to understand the importance of faithfulness.”

Based on the rehearsal schedules and observation findings, discipline was developed through repeated vocal practice, repertoire memorization, and preparation before ministry began. The conductor (DIR1) consistently provided direct feedback concerning members' discipline, both in terms of musical mastery and rehearsal attendance.

Responsibility in Ministry

The findings indicate that choir members perceived church music ministry not merely as an artistic activity but as a form of service to God and the congregation. This awareness cultivated a strong sense of responsibility in preparing themselves for ministry.

The conductor (DIR2) stated:

“We always remind them that the choir is not about performing impressively, but about serving. Therefore, we also have to guard the attitude of our hearts.”

Responsibility in ministry was demonstrated through members' willingness to allocate time for rehearsals despite work commitments and family activities. Members were responsible not only for vocal quality but also for their attitudes, speaking etiquette, and appearance during ministry.

Informant INF5 explained:

“When we stand in front of the congregation, we carry the name of the church and the name of God. That makes me take my preparation more seriously.”

These findings demonstrate that musical preparation within the church choir is closely connected to an ethical understanding of service. Musical competence is therefore accompanied by an awareness of personal conduct and responsibility toward the congregation.

Cooperation and Solidarity in Group Dynamics

The observation findings demonstrated that the success of a choir depends substantially on the ability of its members to work collaboratively. Each voice part: soprano, alto, tenor, and bass; has a complementary function in constructing musical harmony. Interactions during rehearsals revealed a culture of mutual assistance among members, particularly when some members experienced difficulties reading musical notation or memorizing songs.

One informant (INF2) stated:

“In the choir, we learn to listen to other people. If we only want our own voice to stand out, the song will not sound good. We have to become one voice.”

The value of solidarity was also reflected in members' habits of sharing meals after rehearsals, visiting members who were ill, and helping members experiencing personal difficulties. Several members described the choir as a “second family” within their lives of faith.

The administrator (PGR1) confirmed:

“Many people began as friends and eventually became close friends because of the choir. Those relationships continue outside the church.”

These findings indicate that the musical interdependence inherent in choral singing extends beyond musical performance and contributes to the development of broader interpersonal relationships within the congregation.

Humility in Christian Ministry

The study found that one distinctive character value developed through church choir activities was humility. This value emerged in members' willingness to accept criticism, follow the conductor's directions, and place ministry above individual achievement.

The conductor (DIR1) stated:

“Some members have beautiful voices, but they still have to learn to give way. This is what we continually remind them—we are not solo singers; we are servants.”

Several members acknowledged that participation in choir activities had taught them to control their sense of pride, accept correction, and appreciate the abilities of others. The value of humility was reinforced through collective prayer before and after rehearsals and through spiritual reflection within the community.

Spirituality and Awareness of Diakonia

The findings indicate that choir activities are closely related to the development of congregational spirituality. Sacred songs performed during rehearsals and worship services helped members understand the meaning of service, hope, consolation, and faithfulness to God.

Informant INF4 stated:

“We are not just singing; we are learning to serve people through songs. Sometimes the songs we

sing can strengthen members of the congregation who are going through difficult times.”

This statement demonstrates that musical activity was understood as a form of spiritual service with emotional and pastoral implications for the congregation.

Music ministry was also understood as part of diakonia, namely a ministry of love and service to the congregation and wider community.

Awareness of diakonia was reflected in choir members' involvement in special services such as services of consolation, congregational visitation, and church social activities.

The congregational council member (MJL1) observed:

“Choir members who are active tend to become more involved in other ministry activities. It is as if they have already been trained to serve.”



Figure 1: Documentation of Church Choir and Congregational Activities at GPM Bethel

JADWAL PADUAN SUARA & VOCAL GROUP								
JEMAAT GPM BETHEL								
BULAN MEI 2026								
NO	TANGGAL	GEREJA						KETERANGAN
		JOSEF RAM		ELEN		BUDGET KEMULIAAN		
		06.00	09.00	12.00	03.00	07.00	09.00	
1	03 Mei 2026	10	3	7	5	6		IBADAH MINGGU
2	10 Mei 2026	13	9	11	8	14		IBADAH MINGGU
3	14 Mei 2026		15		10		12	KENAIKAN TUHAN YESUS
4	17 Mei 2026	1	10	20	18	17		IBADAH MINGGU
5	24 Mei 2026	5	2	3	5	8		IBADAH KETURUNAN ROH KUDUS
6	25 Mei 2026		10		9		13	SYUKUR KETURUNAN ROH KUDUS
7	31 Mei 2026	14	7	11	12	15		IBADAH MINGGU

Catatan:

1. Mohon Hadir 30 Menit sebelum Kebaktian dimulai
2. Jika berhalangan mohon diinformasikan 1 minggu sebelumnya kepada Komisi Peribadatan dan Musik Gereja j.a.n. Ibu. Yona Matutera (08124710-0549)


Bpk. B. Tomaluweng
Wakil Ketua

Ket:

1. RS. Sektor 1
2. RS. Doornak
3. RS. Pemuda Sektor 4
4. RS. Militeria Christy Bethel (MCB)
5. RS. Dewasa Campuran
6. RS. Ora El Labors
7. RS. Sektor 6
8. RS. Solovide
9. RS. Irene
10. RS. Ibu-Ibu Bethel
11. Mannen Koor Bethel
12. RS. Lili Kecil
13. RS. Charisma
14. VG. Toro
15. VG. Laki-laki Sektor 6
16. VG. Belabeth
17. RS. Pria Bethel
18. RS. Wanita Bethel
19. RS. Anak Bethel
20. RS. Remaja Pemuda Bethel

Figure 2: Choir and Vocal Group Ministry Schedule at GPM Bethel Congregation

DISCUSSION

The Choir as a Medium for Character Education

The findings of this study show that church choir activities at the GPM Bethel Congregation function as a medium for character education that develops naturally through collective experience and social habituation. This finding is consistent with Lickona (2021), who emphasizes that character is formed through repeated social practices within a community. In the context of a choir, character values are not merely taught theoretically but are directly experienced through members' involvement in rehearsals and ministry. Discipline is developed through consistent attendance at rehearsals, responsibility emerges through commitment to ministry, and cooperation develops from the need to create musical harmony. These findings support the research of Habib and Shanie (2024), who reported that choir activities make a significant contribution to the development of discipline, responsibility, and social cooperation. Collective musical processes require individuals to adjust themselves to the rhythm of the group, thereby fostering social awareness and self-control. In addition, Aprilia and Nugroho (2022) explain that collective musical experiences enable the internalization of values through continuous social interaction. This is clearly reflected in the dynamics of the GPM Bethel Congregation choir, where character values are formed through practices of togetherness, collective evaluation, and intensive interpersonal relationships. The findings of this study can be further analyzed using Thomas Lickona's

character education framework. The values of discipline and responsibility identified in choir activities indicate the development of moral knowing, namely members' understanding of the importance of commitment in ministry. Solidarity, empathy, and concern that develop through social interaction reflect moral feeling, namely the emergence of moral emotions that encourage individuals to value fellow members. Meanwhile, active involvement in rehearsals, worship services, and diaconal activities demonstrates moral action as the concrete implementation of moral values. Thus, character formation within the church choir takes place holistically, as explained in Lickona's theory.

Discipline as the Foundation of Musical and Spiritual Harmony

One of the principal findings of this study is the strong development of discipline through choir rehearsal activities. Discipline is not merely understood as adherence to rehearsal schedules but also as a form of spiritual responsibility in ministry. From a musical perspective, choral harmony can only be achieved when each member is able to follow the tempo, dynamics, and musical structure consistently. Therefore, regular rehearsals become a means of developing self-control and behavioral order. This finding is consistent with Limbu and Purnomo (2025), who state that consistency in collective music practice can cultivate moral virtues such as discipline, commitment, and perseverance. In the ecclesiastical context, musical discipline is also related to spiritual discipline because ministry is

understood as an offering to God. Siahaan (2020) emphasizes that regular church music practice is closely related to the development of the personal spirituality of congregation members. Thus, discipline within the choir not only produces good artistic quality but also contributes to the spiritual development of its members.

Cooperation and Solidarity from the Perspective of Collective Music

A choir is a musical activity that depends heavily on cooperation. No single voice part can dominate the entire harmony. Therefore, each member is required to listen to other voices, control individual vocal volume, and adjust to the group. The findings show that cooperation within the choir fosters strong social solidarity. This is evident in members' habits of helping one another during rehearsals, providing emotional support, and maintaining close relationships beyond musical activities. This finding supports the study by Darmesti and Setyawan (2023), which found that group singing can build social cohesion through emotional synchronization among group members. When individuals sing together in the same rhythm and harmony, a sense of emotional connectedness emerges and strengthens social solidarity. Psychologically, collective musical activities also enhance empathy and interpersonal skills. Park and Kim (2021) found that participation in choirs helps individuals develop emotional regulation, empathy, and social communication skills. In the context of the GPM Bethel Congregation, this solidarity is further strengthened by the congregation's familial culture and the Pela Gandong value that is deeply rooted in Malukan society.

MUSICAL ANALYSIS AS A MEANS OF CHARACTER FORMATION

The findings show that character strengthening in the church choir occurs not only through social interaction among members but also through the musical processes experienced collectively. From the perspective of contemporary music education, musical experiences involving vocal coordination, rhythmic synchronization, and the construction of harmony contribute to character development, self-regulation, and participants' social skills (Biasutti, 2021; Welch *et al.*, 2023).

SATB Voice Distribution and the Development of Cooperation

In choral practice, members are divided into the Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass (SATB) voice groups. Each group has a different musical

function, yet *all* groups complement one another in creating harmony. No voice part can stand independently without the support of the others. Therefore, each member is required to understand their role while actively listening to the other voice groups. This process develops cooperation, mutual respect, and collective awareness. Members learn that musical success is not determined solely by individual vocal quality but by the ability of the entire group to produce a unified and harmonious sound. This finding is consistent with Welch *et al.* (2023), who show that choral activities enhance collaborative competence and social cohesion through musical interdependence among members. Within Thomas Lickona's character education framework (2021), this experience reflects the development of moral feeling through empathy and appreciation of others, as well as moral action manifested through concrete cooperation in musical ministry.

Rhythmic and Dynamic Synchronization as an Exercise in Solidarity

The success of a choir depends greatly on the ability of its members to perform rhythm, tempo, and dynamics simultaneously. Each singer must be able to adjust vocal volume, tempo, and musical expression to the group. When a member sings too loudly, too quickly, or fails to follow the prescribed dynamics, the musical balance is disrupted. This synchronization process trains self-control, solidarity, and collective awareness. Members learn to reduce the tendency to emphasize themselves in order to achieve collective harmony. Recent research by Dingle *et al.* (2022) shows that synchronized singing activities can increase a sense of belonging, interpersonal trust, and social connectedness among participants. In the context of church ministry, rhythmic and dynamic synchronization also has theological significance. Musical harmony becomes a symbol of the unity of the body of Christ, in which each individual has a different function but works together toward a common purpose. Therefore, the solidarity formed through musical practice is not merely social but also spiritual. Overall, this musical analysis shows that character formation in the church choir takes place through concrete musical mechanisms. SATB voice distribution develops cooperation, vocal training cultivates discipline and responsibility, while rhythmic and dynamic synchronization develops solidarity and self-control. Thus, music is not merely a supporting medium for character formation but constitutes the core of the character

education process itself within church choir ministry.

Harmony, Rhythm, Dynamics, and Vocal Technique as Means of Character Formation

From the perspective of music education, musical elements do not merely function to produce artistic quality but also serve as a medium for character formation through participatory and reflective learning experiences. In church choir activities at the GPM Bethel Congregation, the process of character formation takes place through members' involvement in developing harmony, rhythm, dynamics, and vocal technique collectively. Harmony is a fundamental element of choral singing that requires each member to adjust their individual voice to the group. Harmony does not emerge when one voice dominates but when each voice part performs its function in balance. In this context, members learn the values of humility, mutual respect, and cooperation. Each singer is required to listen to others, control their musical ego, and prioritize the unity of the sound over personal interests. This process is consistent with Thomas Lickona's concept of character (2021), which emphasizes the importance of moral feeling, particularly empathy and appreciation of others, as the basis for moral action.

In addition to harmony, rhythm develops discipline and order. The ability to maintain a consistent tempo requires concentration, self-control, and adherence to the musical structure that has been collectively established. When all members perform the same rhythmic pattern, synchronization is created that reflects social order within the community. Recent research shows that musical activities involving rhythmic synchronization can enhance self-regulation, social bonding, and cooperative behavior among participants (Welch *et al.*, 2023; Dingle *et al.*, 2022). Thus, rhythm not only develops musical skills but also instills the values of discipline and responsibility. Musical dynamics, which involve the regulation of vocal loudness and softness as well as musical expression, also contribute to character formation. In choral practice, members must be able to control vocal volume according to the conductor's directions and musical requirements. Controlling dynamics develops sensitivity, self-mastery, and a willingness to adjust to the group. When members learn not always to emphasize their own voices, they are developing humility and collective awareness. Dynamics also help develop emotional intelligence because singers learn to express various emotional

nuances through music appropriately and responsibly.

Meanwhile, vocal techniques such as diaphragmatic breathing, articulation, intonation, resonance, and phrasing require repeated and consistent practice. Mastery of vocal technique cannot be achieved instantly; rather, it requires a process demanding perseverance, discipline, and long-term commitment. According to Biasutti (2021), group music learning contributes to the development of self-discipline, perseverance, and personal responsibility through sustained practice. In the context of church ministry, the process of mastering vocal techniques also develops an awareness that good ministry is a form of responsibility toward God and the congregation. Thus, harmony develops cooperation and humility, rhythm cultivates discipline, dynamics train self-control and empathy, while vocal technique develops perseverance and responsibility. These four musical elements demonstrate that character formation in the church choir does not occur outside musical activity but instead grows through the musical experience itself.

Church Music as "Sung Prayer" and the Formation of Christian Character

Within the Christian tradition, music is understood not merely as a work of art but also as a form of spiritual communication between human beings and God. Westermeyer (1998) states that church music is "prayer that is sung." This understanding emphasizes that every song performed in worship contains theological, spiritual, and ethical dimensions that influence the life of the congregation. As sung prayer, church music functions as a means of internalizing Christian values. Through song lyrics, congregation members learn about love, forgiveness, faithfulness, hope, humility, and sacrifice. When these values are repeatedly sung during rehearsals and worship services, a continuous process of spiritual formation takes place. This process is consistent with Dallas Willard's (2002) view of spiritual transformation, namely a change in character that occurs when individuals continually direct their hearts and minds toward God through spiritual practices.

Within church choir activities, members do not merely learn the technical aspects of a song but also internalize the theological message contained in the repertoire they perform. Engagement with the meaning of the songs encourages the development of Christian character reflected in the

values of the fruit of the Spirit, namely love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23). Therefore, singing in church ministry produces not only an aesthetic experience but also a spiritual experience that shapes the identity and character of congregation members.

This perspective is also consistent with Richard Foster's (2018) concept of spiritual formation, which emphasizes that practices of worship, prayer, and praise function as means of character formation that lead individuals toward greater conformity to Christ. In the choir activities of the GPM Bethel Congregation, regular rehearsals, collective prayer, reflection on Scripture, and musical ministry become spiritual disciplines that strengthen members' character. Thus, church music functions not only as a medium for expressing faith but also as an instrument for transforming the character and spirituality of the congregation.

Based on the findings of this study, the concept of church music as "sung prayer" demonstrates that choir ministry constitutes an integrative space that brings together musical, spiritual, and moral dimensions. Through this experience, congregation members learn not only to sing well but also to live in love, humility, responsibility, and a spirit of service, which constitute the core of Christian character.

Spirituality and Diakonia in Church Music Ministry

The findings show that choir activities at the GPM Bethel Congregation contribute to strengthening congregational spirituality. The spiritual songs performed are understood not merely as musical material but as a medium for reflecting on faith and engaging with theological meaning. Rehearsals that begin and end with prayer, reflection on Scripture, and participation in worship services create a close relationship between musical activity and the spiritual lives of members. In this context, music becomes a means of cultivating a living spirituality. This finding supports Sihotang (2022), who argues that involvement in church choirs strengthens congregational faith identity and liturgical participation. Through music ministry, congregation members experience active involvement in the life of the church. In addition, music ministry also possesses a diaconal dimension. The songs performed are understood as a form of ministry that strengthens the faith of

congregation members. Choir members recognize that their ministry can provide comfort, hope, and spiritual encouragement to others. This demonstrates that church choir activities produce not only aesthetic experiences but also pastoral and spiritual experiences.

Research Implications

The findings of this study demonstrate that church choir activities possess substantial potential as a medium for community- and spirituality-based character education. Therefore, church music ministry should be regarded not merely as a complement to liturgy but as an integral part of congregational formation. This study also provides practical implications for churches, particularly in developing more structured music ministry programs oriented toward character formation. The development of choir members should not focus exclusively on vocal technique but should also address spiritual formation, ministry ethics, and social relationships. Thus, the church choir can be understood as a character laboratory that brings together musical, spiritual, and social dimensions within church life.

CONCLUSION

This study convincingly demonstrates that church choir activities at the GPM Bethel Congregation constitute a multidimensional and integrative ecosystem of character formation, operating simultaneously within musical, social, spiritual, and moral domains. Unlike conventional models of character education that tend to be instructional and one-directional, the character formation process within the choir takes place organically through repeated and meaningful participatory experiences rooted in the community's faith tradition.

From the perspective of Thomas Lickona's character education theory, this study demonstrates that the three components of character—moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action—do not develop separately but mutually reinforce one another within a continuous learning cycle. Vocal training develops moral knowing through an understanding of the importance of commitment; social interaction among members develops moral feeling through empathy and solidarity; while active involvement in liturgical and diaconal ministry manifests moral action concretely within church life.

Furthermore, this study reveals that the technical elements of music—harmony, rhythm, dynamics,

and vocal technique—are not merely aesthetic tools but pedagogical media that inherently carry character values. Harmony teaches humility and appreciation of others; rhythm instills discipline and consistency; dynamics train self-control and emotional sensitivity; while vocal technique develops perseverance and long-term responsibility. This expands the understanding that music is not merely a support for character formation but constitutes the core of the process itself.

A distinctive characteristic that differentiates church choirs from choirs in general is the integration of musical activity with Christian spirituality. Westermeyer's concept of church music as "sung prayer" finds confirmation in the context of the GPM Bethel Congregation, where repeatedly internalized spiritual repertoires become a means of embodying faith values such as love, faithfulness, hope, and humility—values theologically understood as the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). Thus, a process of spiritual formation takes place that integrates aesthetic, liturgical, and moral dimensions holistically.

The study also reveals a strong contextual dimension. The value of solidarity that develops within the GPM Bethel choir cannot be separated from the local cultural value of *Pela Gandong*, which is deeply rooted in Malukan society. This demonstrates that character formation based on church music is, in fact, engaged in dialogue with the living local wisdom of the community. This opens opportunities for the development of character education models that are not generic but rather contextual, culturally grounded, and theological.

Overall, this study confirms that the church choir deserves to be understood as a laboratory of congregational character and spirituality—a transformative learning space that brings together musical, social, cultural, and theological dimensions within a comprehensive and sustainable faith experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study focused on strengthening character values through church choir activities at the GPM Bethel Congregation using a qualitative case study approach. Therefore, the findings remain limited to a particular congregational context and cannot yet be generalized to all church communities. Future research is recommended to develop broader

studies involving several congregations or different church denominations so that comparative perspectives can be obtained regarding character formation practices through church music ministry.

In addition, future studies may examine more deeply the relationship between choir activities and the dimensions of character education based on the moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action framework developed by Thomas Lickona. Such an approach would help explain the mechanisms of character formation more systematically through musical and spiritual experiences within church communities.

Future research may also explore the relationship between church choirs and the development of spirituality, social cohesion, and community identity. Various recent studies indicate that sacred music and choral activities contribute to spiritual growth, strengthened social solidarity, and the development of inclusive and transformative communities. Therefore, studies integrating perspectives from character education, church music, and practical theology remain highly open to further development.

Within the context of Maluku, future research is also recommended to investigate the integration of local cultural values such as *Pela Gandong*, *Masohi*, and other forms of Malukan cultural wisdom into church choir ministry. Such studies have the potential to produce models of character education based on church music and local culture that are relevant to the context of Indonesian society.

Furthermore, studies employing mixed-methods or quantitative approaches could be conducted to measure the extent to which participation in choir activities influences the development of character, spirituality, and congregational involvement in ministry. Such approaches are expected to generate stronger empirical evidence concerning the contribution of choirs as a medium for character education within church life. This study proposes the development of a "Church Music-Based Character Education" model that integrates Thomas Lickona's character values, Christian spirituality, collective musical practices, and local Malukan wisdom as an agenda for future research.

REFERENCES

1. Aprilia, D., & Nugroho, A. "Pengalaman musikal kolektif dalam pembentukan karakter

- sosial peserta didik.” *Gondang: Jurnal Seni dan Budaya*, 6.1 (2022): 55–63.
2. Batubara, J., and Maniam, S. “Enhancing Creativity through Musical Drama for Children with Special Needs (Down Syndrome) in Education of Disabled Children.” *Music Scholarship*, 2 (2019): 166–177
 3. Batubara, J., Herman, H., Sihombing, J. R., Rustiyanti, S., Tambunan, J. O., Sherly, S., & Halawa, B. “EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN MUSIC EDUCATION: FINDINGS FROM THE MBKM INTERNSHIP PROGRAM AT FLOW MUSIC GBI RUMAH PERSEMBAHAN.” *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, 7.1 (2026): 236–245.
 4. Biasutti, M. “Collaborative learning in music education: Developing self-regulation and social skills through ensemble performance.” *Research Studies in Music Education*, 43.3 (2021): 423–438.
 5. Clift, S., Gilbert, R., & Vella-Burrows, T. “Choir singing, wellbeing, and social connectedness: A review of current research.” *International Journal of Community Music*, 15.2 (2022): 201–218.
 6. Clift, S., & Hancox, G. “The perceived benefits of singing: Findings from preliminary surveys of a university college choral society.” *The Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health*, 121.4 (2010): 248–256.
 7. Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. “Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (4th ed.).” *SAGE Publications*. (2018).
 8. Darmesti, R., & Setyawan, B. “Bernyanyi bersama sebagai media pembentukan kohesi sosial dalam komunitas musik.” *Jurnal Seni Musik Indonesia*, 12.2 (2023): 88–101.
 9. Dingle, G. A., Clift, S., Finn, S., Gilbert, R., Groarke, J. M., Irons, J. Y., Bartoli, A. J., Lamont, A., Launay, J., Martin, E. S., Moss, H., Sanfilippo, K. R., Shipton, M., Stewart, L., Talbot, S., Tarrant, M., Tip, L., & Williams, E. J. “Group singing and social identity: A systematic review.” *Psychology of Music*, 50.4 (2022): 1238–1258.
 10. Foster, R. J. “Celebration of discipline: The path to spiritual growth (Special anniversary ed.).” *HarperOne*. (2018).
 11. Habib, M., & Shanie, R. “Peran kegiatan paduan suara dalam pembentukan karakter siswa.” *Gondang: Jurnal Seni dan Budaya*, 8.1 (2024): 110–118.
 12. Ingalls, M. M. “Singing the congregation: How contemporary worship music forms evangelical community.” *Oxford University Press*. (2015).
 13. Kurniawan, D., & Lestari, F. “Pembelajaran vokal dan internalisasi nilai karakter dalam kegiatan paduan suara.” *Jurnal Pendidikan Seni*, 11.2 (2022): 70–82.
 14. Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. “Naturalistic inquiry.” *SAGE Publications*. (1985).
 15. Lickona, T. “Educating for character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility.” *Bantam Books*. (1991).
 16. Lickona, T. “Character matters: How to help our children develop good judgment, integrity, and other essential virtues.” *Simon & Schuster*. (2004).
 17. Lickona, T. “Educating for character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility (Updated ed.).” *Bantam Books*. (2021).
 18. Limbu, H., & Purnomo, A. “Konsistensi latihan musik kolektif sebagai sarana pembentukan moral di era digital.” *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan*, 10.1 (2025): 33–47.
 19. Manuputty, E. (2023). “Spiritualitas pelayanan musik gerejawi dalam kehidupan jemaat GPM.” *Jurnal Musik Gereja Indonesia*, 5.2 (2025): 90–104.
 20. Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. “Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook (3rd ed.).” *SAGE Publications*. (2014).
 21. Moleong, L. J. “Metodologi penelitian kualitatif (Edisi revisi).” *PT Remaja Rosdakarya*. (2021).
 22. Park, J., & Kim, H. “Choir participation and emotional regulation among community singers.” *Psychology of Music*, 49.2 (2021): 210–225.
 23. Santika, I. W. E. “Pendidikan karakter pada pembelajaran daring.” *Indonesian Values and Character Education Journal*, 3.1 (2020): 8–19.
 24. Siahaan, R.. “Disiplin latihan musik gerejawi dan pertumbuhan spiritual jemaat.” *Jurnal Teologi dan Musik Gereja*, 4.1 (2020): 55–67.
 25. Sihotang, M. “Paduan suara gerejawi dan penguatan identitas iman jemaat.” *Jurnal Teologi Praktika*, 6.2 (2022): 120–132.
 26. Sugiyono. “Metode penelitian kualitatif.” *Alfabeta*. (2022).

27. Welch, G. F., Himonides, E., Saunders, J., Papageorgi, I., & Sarazin, M. "Choral singing and social cohesion: Contemporary perspectives on collaborative music making." *International Journal of Music Education*, 41.2 (2023): 215–230.
28. Westermeyer, P. "Te Deum: The church and music." *Fortress Press*. (1998).
29. White, J. F. "Introduction to Christian worship (3rd ed.)." *Abingdon Press*. (2010).
30. Willard, D. "Renovation of the heart: Putting on the character of Christ." *NavPress*. (2002).
31. Wulandari, S. "Musik gereja sebagai sarana formasi spiritual jemaat." *Jurnal Liturgi dan Musik Gereja*, 7.1 (2021): 34–46.
32. Yin, R. K. "Case study research and applications: Design and methods (6th ed.)." *SAGE Publications*. (2018).

Source of support: Nil; **Conflict of interest:** Nil.

Cite this article as:

Ramschie, F., Lestari, D. T. & Batubara, J. "Strengthening Character Values through Church Choir Activities at the Gpm Bethel Congregation." *Sarcouncil journal of Arts humanities and social sciences* 5.9 (2026): pp 1-15.