
Dunamis: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristiani

Volume 6, Nomor 2 (April 2022)

ISSN 2541-3937 (print), 2541-3945 (online)

<https://www.sttintheos.ac.id/e-journal/index.php/dunamis>

DOI: 10.30648/dun.v6i2.584

Submitted: 7 Mei 2021	Accepted: 23 Juli 2021	Published: 11 April 2022
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Exploring Dimensions of Spiritual Faithfulness in Church Ministry: A Narrative Study of Senior Pastor's Ministry

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Abstract

Faithfulness is often a virtue that sustains a mission of service. This study aimed to tell the experience one of the important actors (participants), a pastor. What are the dimensions that can build a faithful construction, especially in church services based on the experiences of participants. In a religious context, faithfulness has a different dimension, namely a transcendental dimension that does not stand alone, but is also influenced by a horizontal perspective which can be explained by the theory of stewardship. When stewardship is understood horizontally, the highest measurement of a relationship tends to be welfare and harmony. It gets reinforced by the vertical dimension where God becomes the authority of truth and becomes the reason to keep serving, especially serving faithfully. This study tries to frame the story about the phenomenon of faithfulness dimension in church ministry with a narrative approach. This study seeks to show how life of a pastor who uses faithfulness as the main pillar of his ministry.

Keywords: religious faithfulness; church ministry; stewardship theory; narrative study; senior pastor

INTRODUCTION

Faithfulness is frequently a virtue that sustains a mission of ministry. The existence and consistency of ministry is synonymous with efforts to be loyal to what is done. As well, faithfulness becomes important dimension to learn how strong, high, and deep forming construction. Faithfulness is not easy to manifest in attitudes and behavior of a person, even for individuals who work in the service sector. Pranoto¹ settled that Church Ministry is based on the call of allegiance as God is faithful, as in Acts 20:24 and Revelation 2:10b. The faithful servant who has reached the ending line where he experienced various dilemmas, challenges, intersections, and struggles. It is generally argued that the object of Christian faith and faithfulness is God who is understood to be omniscient, omnipotent, kind and the loving creator of the universe.²

Faithfulness informed of obedience, endurance, and determination by Krall³ is

likened to the ball bouncing back from a hard kit, bending but not breaking during a variability, a dynamic tension. The sweet side of tension, one hand requires the ability to overcome fatigue, cynicism and lack.⁴ Theological leaders such as pastors experienced neurosis. Visker⁵ argued that around 65% of pastors in their study were exhausted and on the verge of neurosis. Other research on fatigue in the professional world and susceptibility to personal complications was carried out by several previous studies such as Dunbar et al in a study on "Calling, Caring, and Connecting: Burnout in Christian Ministry"⁶ thus Barnard and Curry in research theme "Self-Compassion: Conceptualizations, Correlates, & Interventions"⁷ and Benjamin R "The Impact of Behaviors upon Burnout among Parish-Based Clergy."⁸ Fatigue can take in the form of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment.

¹ David Susilo Pranoto, "Prinsip Kesetiaan Melayani Rasul Paulus: Sebuah Studi Eksegetis Kisah Para Rasul 20:24," *Manna Rafflesia* 1, no. 2 (January 1, 1970): 141.

² Robert Audi and The Society of Christian Philosophers, "Faith, Faithfulness, and Virtue:," *Faith and Philosophy* 28, no. 3 (2011): 295.

³ Christopher Krall, S.J, "'Resilient Faithfulness': A Dynamic Dialectic Between the Transcendent and Physical Dimensions of the Human Person," *Journal of Moral Theology* 09, no. 1 (2020): 168.

⁴ Christina Maslach, Wilmar B. Schaufeli, and Michael P. Leiter, "Job Burnout," *Annual Review of Psychology* 52, no. 1 (February 2001): 400.

⁵ Joseph D. Visker, Taylor Rider, and Anastasia Humphers-Ginther, "Ministry-Related Burnout and

Stress Coping Mechanisms Among Assemblies of God-Ordained Clergy in Minnesota," *Journal of Religion and Health* 56, no. 3 (June 2017): 951.

⁶ Scott Dunbar et al., "Calling, Caring, and Connecting: Burnout in Christian Ministry," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 23, no. 2 (February 7, 2020): 88.

⁷ Laura K. Barnard and John F. Curry, "Self-Compassion: Conceptualizations, Correlates, & Interventions," *Review of General Psychology* 15, no. 4 (2011): 289.

⁸ Benjamin R. Doolittle, "The Impact of Behaviors Upon Burnout Among Parish-Based Clergy," *Journal of Religion and Health* 49, no. 1 (March 2010): 88.

This study pursues to tell the experience of one of the important actors which is a pastor and what are the dimensions that can build a faithful construction, especially in church services based on the experiences of participant.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study tries to frame the story about the phenomenon of faithfulness dimension in church ministry with a narrative approach. Narrative approach is one of the tools in a study to describe the advancement of person's thoughts and the existing social context through the life experiences they have lived currently. Everyone is an actor of life who always in dialogue with society, whether it is adoption, adaptation, and negotiation to find their identity.⁹

This study is using qualitative approach. Qualitative research is more about meaning, reasoning to investigate daily life, phenomena about what subject's experience such as behavior, perceptions, motivation, and behavior.¹⁰ Writers use this technique with some considerations, which are: describing something as it is, interpreted the data collected in form of words, pictures without numbers. Presentation of the data is

carried out directly regarding the relationship between the nature of the writers and the respondent, so they become sensitive and adapt to reality¹¹ and the narrative approach aims to present a person's life in a narrative and chronological. In design narrative research, writers describe life and individuals, collect, and tell stories about people's lives and writes into narratives from individual experiences. As an obvious form of qualitative research, narratives typically focus on one person study and derive data from collecting stories, reporting on individual experiences, and discussing those experiences mean to the individual.

This study seeks to show how life of a pastor who uses faithfulness as the main pillar of his ministry, Pastor Em. Kumala Setiabrata M.Th. The unit of analysis in person with observation unit as participant was selected with the following criteria: first, participant were senior pastors who have been involved in church ministry for more than 50 years. Second, participant has proven whose lives adequately describe the values and dimensions of faithfulness in service. Third, participant has a wide network of interactions, both in the spiritual and lay professions.

⁹ S Adi, "Perempuan Kristen Jawa Dan Kewirausahaan Pendeta: Negosiasi Antara Identitas Dan Institusi Keagamaan," *Jurnal Studi Pembangunan Interdisiplin* XXVIII, no. 1 (2019): 30.

¹⁰ Matthew B. Miles and A. M. Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded*

Sourcebook, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994), 20.

¹¹ John W Creswell, *Research Design Pendekatan Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, Dan Mixed* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2009), 50.

The date of participant with a purposive procedure is to determine the participant according to the criteria selected and relevant to a particular study problem. Meanwhile, the speakers are selected based on certain criteria, they have interacted with the participant and have an intensity of interaction. Data obtained from two sources, primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from participant sources through interviews conducted by writers. These primary data include the results of field observations, interview notes and participant's personal information. Secondary data is found through document study or other written sources. In this study, one of the secondary data comes from books "Learn to be Faith in Ministry"¹² memories book of 70 years Pastor Em. Kumala Setiabrata M.Th. The main research questions posed are: 1) What are the dimensions of spiritual faithfulness in church ministry? 2) How do these dimensions become manifest in the main participant ministry narratively?

Data analysis pursues to answer research questions related to the dimensions of spiritual faithfulness. This analysis was carried out in several stages, which are: first, to read the transcript and get an overview of the participants' answers and label it as a specific coding. From these labels, a

general category scheme of participants' answers was developed. Second, identify the themes into categories and sub-categories. This categorization reflects the similarity of the answers related to spiritual allegiance and the frequency of the answers. Third, examining themes to determine how they fit into the theory of approaching spiritual allegiance (stewardship theory) to help understand the topic under discussion. Does this information justify the current understanding of religious devotion? Does that information offer new knowledge about spiritual adoration? Thus, combine and name these themes into dimensions of religious allegiance. In analyzing the data obtained, this study used qualitative data analysis tools with NVivo 12.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Spiritual Faithfulness

Audi¹³ called faithfulness as a character trait not intensely, centered on being loyal to one person in some way. Faithfulness is an essential motivational basis for many types of bravery. Faithfulness is like bravery does not necessary mean that the holder should adhere to any moral standard. One might think that faithfulness as a virtue about moral guidance, despite the opposite is decadent, aesthetic, and sinful.

¹² Daniel Stefanus (ed), *Belajar Setia Dalam Pelayanan* (Cipanas: STT Cipanas, 2018).

¹³ Audi and The Society of Christian Philosophers, "Faith, Faithfulness, and Virtue," 295.

Downs¹⁴ cases Christian faith as a human faith that dwelled in Christ as the object of that faith. Differently, proponents of the subjective genitive argued that the construction of spiritual allegiance refers to Christ's own faithfulness. 2 Timothy 3:15 reflects a different perspective on the faithfulness of Christ that often overlooked by those who simply equate Christ's faith with the passion of His spirit. The interpretation of faith in Jesus Christ refers to faithfulness of the resurrection of Christ. In this case, the aspect of faithfulness to save Christ himself, places the faith that is in Christ not only in narrative about the life and death of Jesus but also continuing faithfulness of the risen Christ.

Gould¹⁵ conveys faithfulness to Christ operates itself in the context of social, political, economic, and cultural forces prevailing at appropriate time and place. God called mankind to participate with Him in accomplishment of mission. Consequently, people will be guided by the mission impulse in developing models of faithfulness.

Stewardship Theory vs Agency Theory

Stewardship theory constructs between psychology and sociology, explaining

human behavior based on individual motivation which offers a contrasting perspective to agency theory. Agency theory by Michael C Jensen and William H. Meckling assumes that individuals are rational, who seek to maximize their own satisfaction. Agency theory has lacks that are criticized because of its human model as self-serving utility and ignores the complexity of human action in organizational life. Against to agency theory, stewardship assumes that individual behavior is not selfish but driven by other interests. Although there may be a striving between personal needs and organizational goals, individuals are considered to prefer other's interest than their own satisfaction. Agency theory assumes both principals and agents are assumed to be economic and rational parties, motivated by self-interest. Rights and obligations are described in a mutually beneficial. There are theoretical limitations in psychological and sociological terms from agency theory according to Hirsch, Michaels, & Friedman¹⁶ and Perrow.¹⁷ Reliance on agency theory is undesirable because the complexities of organizational life are ignored. Additional theory is needed to consider non-economic assumptions.

¹⁴ Downs, "Faith(Fulness) in Christ Jesus in 2 Timothy 3:15," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131, no. 1 (2012): 144.

¹⁵ Paul Gould, "An Essay on Academic Disciplines, Faithfulness, and the Christian Scholar," *Christian Higher Education* 13, no. 3 (May 27, 2014): 169.

¹⁶ Paul Hirsch, Stuart Michaels, and Ray Friedman, "Is Sociology in Danger of Being Seduced by Economics?," *Theory and Society* 16, no. 3 (May 1987): 320.

¹⁷ Charles Perrow, "Economic Theories of Organization," *Theory and Society* 15, no. 1-2 (1986): 12.

By Lex Donaldson,¹⁸ stewardship theory is defined as a situation where individuals do not have personal interests but concerned with the wishes of the principal. This theory is relatively new, so the theoretical contribution is less stable. There still a conflict between agency theory and stewardship.¹⁹ Previous study has tended to argue that stewardship theory is proven, and the agency theory still has lacks. Those who support agency theory are those who see the maximum individual's satisfaction where everyone is motivated by his own interests rather than the interests of others. In stewardship theory, leaders will behave according to mutual interests. When the interests of the steward and the principal are not same, the steward will cooperate compared to oppose it, because the steward feels that common interest and behaving in accordance with the owner's behavior is rational consideration these goals.

Participant Biographical Overview

Pastor Em. Kumala Setiabrata, M.Th., referred as Pastor Kumala is a pastor at Ketapang Christ Church Jalan KH. Zainul Arifin No.9, Central Jakarta. His choice of life as a pastor consists of several stages of ministry, from Sunday School teachers,

choir members, spiritual workers, to being ordained as a pastor in 1978. It has practically been more than 50 years this pastor has worked in the church environment. His initial goal was to become a doctor, with the sole aim of getting a lot of money and helping his younger siblings for school. It turned out his desire to become a doctor changed at the end of high school ended at Theology School path. The journey continued after a bachelor's degree, worked as a marketing in chemical company with sizable income, but his calling as a servant of God continued to strengthen, so he left his job as marketing.

After graduating from STT Jakarta bachelor's degree in 1972, he was assigned to the Ketapang Christ Church and Christ Church congregations in several areas both in Jakarta and outside. Pastor Kumala was the General Secretary of the Synod and was the General Chair of the Synod of the Church of Christ. During his activities at this synod, he was assigned to represent the Church of Christ to become the Complete Workers' Council-the Fellowship of Churches in Indonesia (MPL-PGI), until he was elected as treasurer of PGI where he oversaw PGI's finances and assets which at that time experienced a serious financial deficit. Although initially reluctant and lacking ex-

¹⁸ Lex Donaldson and James H. Davis, "Stewardship Theory or Agency Theory: CEO Governance and Shareholder Returns," *Australian Journal of Management* 16, no. 1 (June 1991): 50.

¹⁹ Mark A. Fox and Robert T. Hamilton, "Ownership and Diversification: Agency Theory or Stewardship Theory," *Journal of Management Studies* 31, no. 1 (January 1994): 242.

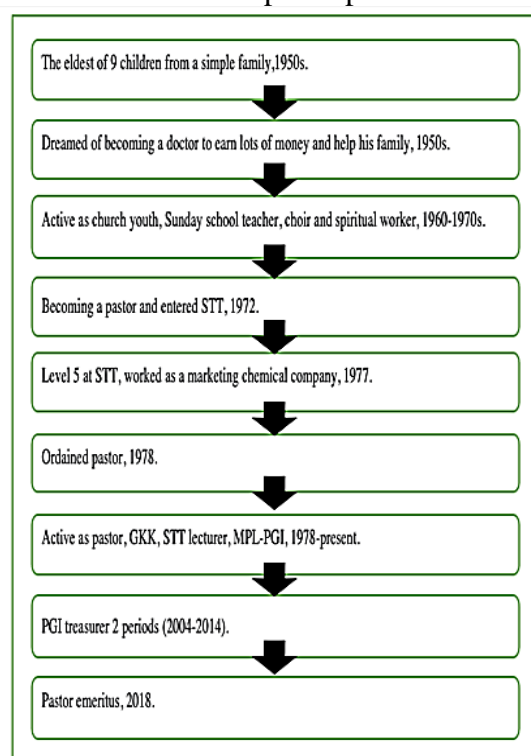
expertise in finance, Pastor Kumala accepted the post. Some of the worrisome conditions include deficit for routine expenditures of 125 million rupiah per month, unable to pay salaries or honorariums for full-time MPH leaders and PGI not being able to “sell,” even not getting the trust of donor partners. Pdt. Kumala's willingness as PGI treasurer remained on one condition, to remain as church pastor because that was his main calling. The implication is that the job of the PGI treasurer as a part time job is not receiving equal facilities in the form of a salary, official housing, and car. Only a bit of honorarium is entitled to him to receive each month. In helping PGI, Pastor Kumala walked with the support of the faith that God had chosen him with little hope that God would work through some businessmen or officials and good Christians who could help PGI's struggles. He was reminded to hold that in service to God, one should not hope in humans, but must be completely in God through praying, praying what is mandated.

Time sign, the first period (2004-2009) has passed with the theme “overcoming financial difficulties” with the achievement of restoring the trust of PGI partners, orderly administration and financial supervision and paying off debts so they have sufficient sources of funds to finance PGI's routine funding needs. The second period

(2009-2014) was marked by the construction of a new PGI building where institutions under the auspices of PGI were gathered in one building for easy coordination. As a representation of churches in Indonesia, it is expected that the new PGI building or building will be quite good, then a 5-storey building was built and the new PGI building was inaugurated on October 15, 2014. Finally, God's blessing will mark the establishment of this new PGI building.

If God didn't build house, the efforts of those who built it are in vain will mark the establishment of this new PGI will mark the establishment of this new PGI building; Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain; Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain (Ps. 127:1).

Figure 1. Historically the service life of the main participant



Historically the service life of the main participant (Pastor Em. Kumala Setiabrata, M.Th.) illustrated in figure 1.

Spiritual Faithfulness Dimension

What are the dimensions of spiritual fidelity and how pastors manifest that devotion in church ministry are major questions in this narrative research study? Driven from primary data (direct interviews with Pastor Kumala) and secondary data from the opinions of other sources who know him four narrations were obtained as follows: The first theme is relying on God. Everything that happens is God's timing. Pastor Kumala believes that human life is settled by God. There is a time called God for humans to play a role in life. Faith and trust for always rely on God for every work done is the main of Pastor Kumala's work. Pastor Kumala said that he does not lean his life on people but fully believes in God's provision through pray, as he said:

I shouldn't hope in people, but fully trust in God. There is no other way, except pray, pray and pray for God's help. During the ten years, two periods as treasurer of PGI, there was not a single day I did not pray for this ministry. I lend completely on Him because I realize I do not have the capacity for these responsibilities.²⁰

One of his congregation members, Limanto, emphasized his expression that we can only pray, as he said: "we tried, now we count on God, because only His authority in our lives, now we just pray."²¹ He conveyed his dependence to God in form of light expressions: we lean on God's sovereign power between his relaxed words."²²

The second theme, ministry to God and the congregation starts from the family. Pastor Kumala is also very caring with family. Family gathering is done almost every Sunday. His responsibility to work and his congregation can be drawn back from his life history as the eldest of nine siblings who wanted to help his family's burdens. Initially, the dream of becoming a doctor was the deepest desire to improve family welfare. Even though at the end, the process of life led him to become a pastor, his soul, enthusiasm, and responsibility to serve the congregation were implied from his past. Pastor Kumala said God works also through support from his family. His dream as a doctor was replaced by God by giving him partner which is doctor and there were always blessings for his family, as he said:

I am not a doctor, but God took it. I have a wife, a doctor by profession who works at Sumber Waras hospital, a lecturer at the Faculty of Medicine at Tarumanegara University and a civil servant until I retire. As

²⁰ Daniel Stefanus (ed), *Belajar Setia Dalam Pelayanan*, 387.

²¹ Ibid., 355.

²² Ibid., 337.

an STT Jakarta student who does not live in a dormitory, every day I go to school by bicycle. Besides, I also help my father's business.²³

On several occasions, Mr. Kumala and I went on an official trip out of town (region) to attend invitations from churches, PGI pension fund founding partners or to attend invitations from the Indonesian Pension Fund Association, he always took the time to invite me to find souvenirs for people, parents, wives, children, siblings, even friends and congregations in Ketapang Christ Church. Joyfully and carefully he chooses one by one while remembering each person who will buy a gift by occasionally asking for my opinion in terms of color or model and matching it on my shoulder to get the right size.²⁴

Another congregation testified that Pastor Kumala always gave priority to being present among his family every week between the business of his ministry: thus, I saw how Pastor Kumala during his busy ministry, gave priority regularly gathering with his family and extended family every week, with his mother, siblings, and their families. This is something that is valuable, although not always completely they can come together but the habit continues and inspires me about the value of a family.²⁵

The third theme, attention to current social conditions. In the principle of serving God, Pastor Kumala always says “the Bible in the right hand, the newspaper in the left hand” means always serving God without forgetting the place where we are, serving God and the congregation by paying attention to the conditions and developments of the times. Pastor Kumala is a person who easily gets involved in all current social situations and enjoys the social complexities in his environment. With a lot of experience and extensive associations, there are many interesting things that can be discussed and discussed with him. Not only discussing ministry in the field of service, but he is also a servant of God, politics, general knowledge, even to the business world, he is quite fluent in telling stories. He was seen hanging out in that environment, it seemed like he could easily enter it, and felt that he was not awkward, he even looked like he was quite able to enjoy it.²⁶ His involvement does not stop, even until now he is already in emeritus phase. He wanted to learn to know briefly about what was being discussed. Maybe this also made him trusted to continue to be involved in the activities he has been participating in until now.²⁷

The fourth theme, wanting to learn, blends with the congregation's problems.

²³ Ibid., 381.

²⁴ Ibid., 314.

²⁵ Ibid., 302.

²⁶ Ibid., 329.

²⁷ Ibid., 352.

Pastor Kumala is trying to be close to the problems of the congregation and to be among them as much as possible. Not always to solve problems, but to strengthen the congregation to keep lean on God. His involvement in social situation of his congregation cannot be separated from his encouragement so they don't forget God's power and always involves God in all situations. Apart from involving God in ministry, it also emphasizes that we are basically working for God. Congregations who are suffering from any sick also concerned and try to give their best, including the prayers that are offered. In his limited condition to do something, he does not hesitate to involve and leave it to other colleagues who feels more capable.

... If he feels he doesn't know or control with certainty because the thing that is decided is not his capacity, he will hand it over to someone who is considered an expert, but he still supports the decisions made in accordance with the field or profession of the decision maker.²⁸

The fifth theme involves the congregation in ministry. Pastor Kumala likes to be involved with the real problems of the congregation, as well as to involve the congregation in church ministry. Maintaining the relationship between the pastor and his congregation is important so that they

are mutually supportive and supported. Pastor Kumala likes to have good relations, does not like to think of others as enemies, all can be discussed. A good negotiator.

... Mr. Kumala is a person who attaches importance to maintaining relationships. Formally, he doesn't seem to want to clash with others. Mr. Kumala never had enemies, because he was known as a good negotiator, maintaining contact with everyone.²⁹

He gave a personal character and approach to get his congregation involved in church ministry.

Our church is big, however, in his words 'it is not a big church'. Actually, it's easy to give a reason to treat the congregation in general, but I don't see him do that way. There is a personal touch he gives to the congregation. This could be seen from the relationship that built between Rev. Kumala and the congregation.³⁰

Our first acquaintance was waiting for our children to attend Sunday School and at that time Pastor Kumala made a personal approach to us to take part in the collection service.³¹

From Figure 2 below, the main theme of the faithfulness of spiritual life from the main participants is built on the faith that life is solely a blessing from God and a call to serve. Giving priority to God as the source of truth and rest in living life

²⁸ Ibid., 354.

²⁹ Ibid., 340.

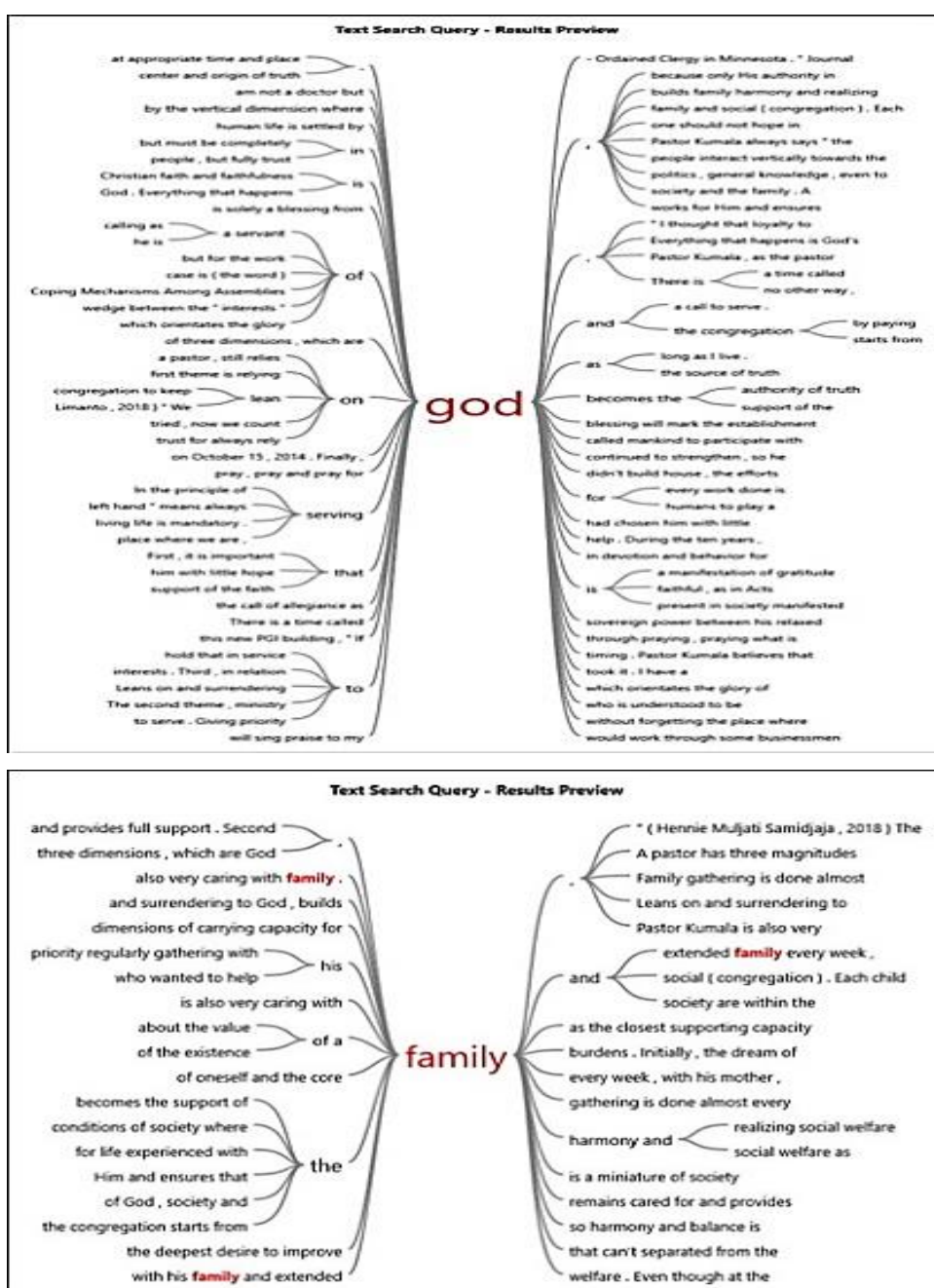
³⁰ Ibid., 302.

³¹ Ibid., 310.

is mandatory. Serving God is a manifestation of gratitude for life experienced with the family as the closest supporting capacity and the congregation or the social environment in the spectrum of ministry outside of oneself and the core family. Leans on and surrendering to God, builds family harmony

and realizing social welfare are manifestations as well as dimensions of spiritual fidelity in church ministry. The church is not only for itself but also takes the dimensions of carrying capacity for family harmony and social welfare as an impact on spiritual faithfulness.

Figure 2. Themes and Categories of the NVivo Text Search Query 12



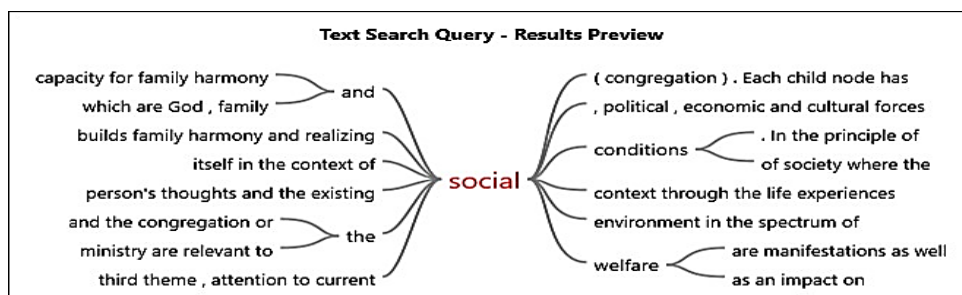
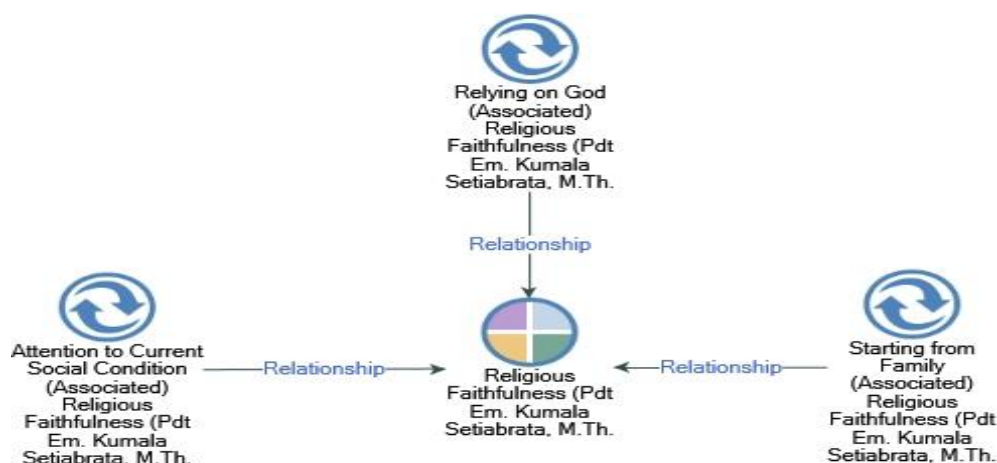


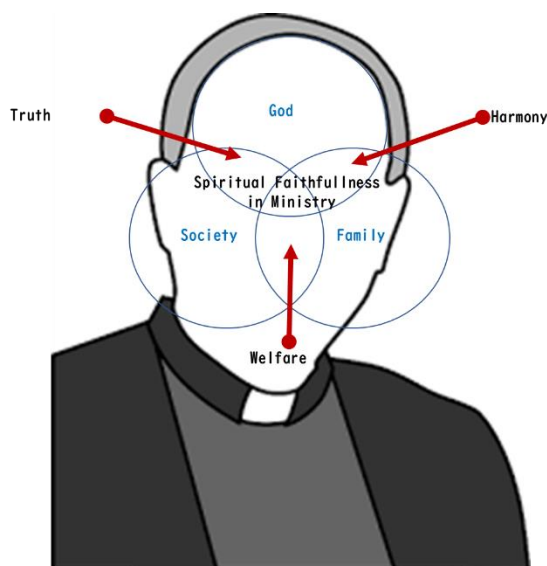
Figure 3. Data Relationship Model from NVivo 12



From Figure 3, the spiritual faithfulness experienced by the main participants is in the scope of three dimensions, which are God, family and society (congregation). Each child node has a unidirectional relationship to the parent node. The results of the interviews and the data obtained indicate these three dimensions are an area that affects the main participants as well as a ministry area. In these three dimensions the participants circulate, become their foothold, and have an impact.

The writers propose a model of spiritual faithfulness as shown in Figure 4 below:

Figure 4. Model of Spiritual Faithfulness



Spiritual devotion lies on the wedge between the “interests” of God, society, and family. A pastor has three magnitudes of importance or scope of ministry that must be

his concern. His faithfulness to three parties can be explained by maintaining the balance of the three ministry spheres above with the dimensions of truth, harmony, and welfare. First, it is important that God becomes the support of the family so harmony and balance is created for a pastor, still relies on God, works for Him, and ensures that the family remains cared for and provides full support. Second, family and society are within the scope of a pastor's ministry in the framework of the existence of a family that cannot separate from the community environment, likewise that society consists of many families who have basic needs, welfare. Welfare in the sense of being good, healthy, peaceful, and prosperous. Church ministry are relevant to the social conditions of society where the family is a miniature of society that has the same interests. Third, in relation to God, people interact vertically towards the center and origin of truth. God is present in society manifested in the form of horizontal interaction through people ministry to one another, as written in the word: "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'" (Mat. 25:40).

CONCLUSION

Referring to the theory of stewardship by Donaldson and Davis where indivi-

duals do not have personal interests but concerned with the wishes of the principal, this study enriched in terms of motivation to faithfulness ministry activities. In a spiritual context, faithfulness has a different dimension, a transcendental dimension that does not stand alone but also influenced by a horizontal perspective which can be explained by the theory of stewardship. When stewardship is understood horizontally, the highest measurement of a relationship tends to be welfare and harmony. In a spiritual context, faithfulness gets reinforced by the vertical dimension where God becomes the authority of truth and becomes the reason to keep serving especially serving faithfully.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A big thanks to Pastor Em. Kumala Setibrata M.Th. for the given interview time. Thank you to Oki Hermawati who brought together the main participants and the data needed for this writing. Wylen Djap who prepared the recording and transcript to support the writing, and Erwin Santosa and Rudy Pramono as the finalist of the writing of this article.

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