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Performativitas dan Hegemoni Maskulinitas: Studi terhadap Minimnya Keterlibatan Laki-laki dalam Pelayanan Sekolah Minggu

Performative Masculinity and Hegemonic Masculinity: A Study of the Low Involvement of Men in Sunday School Ministry

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Abstrak: *Minimnya keterlibatan laki-laki sebagai guru Sekolah Minggu di Gereja Toraja (SMGT) Jemaat Palawa mencerminkan konstruksi sosial tentang peran gender dalam konteks gerejawi, di mana perempuan mendominasi pelayanan pengajaran sementara laki-laki sebagian besar absen. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan minimnya partisipasi laki-laki dalam pelayanan Sekolah Minggu dan menganalisis bagaimana performativitas gender dan maskulinitas hegemonik beroperasi dalam konteks ini. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi lapangan, mengumpulkan data melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan studi dokumentasi yang melibatkan 53 responden, termasuk pendeta, penatua, diaken, guru Sekolah Minggu, dan jemaat. Data dianalisis secara tematik menggunakan teori performativitas Judith Butler, maskulinitas hegemonik R. W. Connell, dan teologi feminis Rosemary Radford Ruether. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa keterlibatan guru laki-laki diakui penting sebagai figur teladan, pengimbang peran gender, dan sumber kepemimpinan rohani anak. Namun, keterlibatan ini terkendala oleh hambatan budaya dan stereotip gender, kesibukan pekerjaan, kurangnya keterampilan pedagogis, serta strategi rekrutmen yang pasif. Kurangnya keterlibatan laki-laki dalam pelayanan Sekolah Minggu disebabkan oleh performativitas gender dan maskulinitas hegemonik, namun kehadiran laki-laki dan perempuan secara seimbang adalah panggilan bersama dari Allah Tritunggal.*

Kontribusi: *Studi ini berkontribusi pada teologi praktis dengan mengusulkan bahwa gereja harus secara sengaja mengatasi hambatan-hambatan ini melalui pendidikan teologis, pelatihan pedagogis, dan reformasi struktural yang mewujudkan kesetaraan radikal Galatia 3:28.*

Kata Kunci: *partisipasi guru Sekolah Minggu; teori maskulinitas performatif; analisis maskulinitas hegemonik; perkembangan iman anak; keadilan gender dalam pelayanan.*

Abstract: The low involvement of men as Sunday School teachers in Gereja Toraja (SMGT) at Jemaat Palawa reflects social constructions of gender roles within the ecclesial context, where women dominate the teaching ministry while men are largely absent. This study aims to identify the factors contributing to the minimal participation of men in Sunday School ministry and to analyze how gender performativity and hegemonic masculinity operate within this context. The research employs a qualitative method with a field study approach, collecting data through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies involving 53 respondents, including pastors, elders, deacons, Sunday School teachers, and congregants. Data were analyzed thematically using Judith Butler's theory of performativity, R. W. Connell's hegemonic masculinity, and Rosemary Radford Ruether's feminist theology. The findings indicate

that the involvement of male teachers is recognized as important for serving as role models, balancing gender roles, and providing spiritual leadership for children. However, this involvement is constrained by cultural barriers and gender stereotypes, occupational busyness, lack of pedagogical skills, and passive recruitment strategies. The lack of male involvement in Sunday School ministry is caused by gender performativity and hegemonic masculinity, yet the balanced presence of men and women is a shared calling from the Triune God.

Contribution: This study contributes to practical theology by proposing that the church must intentionally address these barriers through theological education, pedagogical training, and structural reforms that embody the radical equality of Galatians 3:28.

Keywords: Sunday School teacher participation; performative masculinity theory; hegemonic masculinity analysis; children's faith development; gender justice in ministry.

INTRODUCTION

If we fail to understand gender in ministry and all aspects of our lives, then the entire building of our theology collapses, because our entire theology is gender-perspectived.[1] Rosemary Radford Ruether raises this issue when speaking of gender inequality, where women's humanity throughout history has been seen as incomplete. In this regard, she deconstructs androcentric interpretations of God that legitimize social domination. Ruether argues that if this perspective is not changed, the structure of our understanding of divinity will also be difficult to change. Men and women are the image of God who always stand side by side as God created them.

While women are positioned in a second-class social construction, which results in an inferiority complex,[2] on the other hand, men are positioned in a first-class position, yet male involvement is so minimal in the didactic responsibility of the mission in the midst of ministry, specifically Sunday School. The author's observation at Gereja Toraja Jemaat Palawa reveals the reality that male involvement is still very minimal as Sunday School teachers. The latest data records that out of 40 active Sunday School teachers, only 2 are men. Yet men as teachers are needed for character development, as shown by Kurniati Massarang's research in a journal.[3] This condition does not only occur in the context of Jemaat Palawa but is also a broader phenomenon in the world of education.

[1] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 47.

[2] Johana Ruadjanna Tangirerung, "Studi Teologi Feminis Atas Peran Dan Kedudukan Perempuan Pendeta Dalam Menyikapi Fenomena Glass Ceiling Untuk Merevitalisasi Panggilan Misioner Gereja Toraja" (Disertasi, STT Cipanas, 2018), 45.

[3] Kurniati Masarrang and Susanti Embong Bulan, "Eksistensi Guru Sekolah Minggu Dalam Gereja: Peran Guru Sekolah Minggu dalam Pembentukan Karakter dan Pertumbuhan Iman Anak." *KINAA: Jurnal Teologi* 10, no. 1 (2025): 68–85.

Several studies indicate that male involvement in early childhood and elementary education remains very low, so the teaching profession for children tends to be dominated by women. The Center for Educational Data and Statistics (PDSP) shows the largest percentage of female teachers at the kindergarten level (96.81%) and the smallest percentage of male teachers (3.19%).[4] At a broader level, a study in Australia found the same tendency: a shortage of male teachers. Based on that research, it is affirmed that the presence of men in the educational process is considered important and needs to be pursued because it can provide different dynamics and serve as a role model for children, especially in character formation and gender identity.[5] The information above shows that the role of men in children's ministry has not yet received a balanced place.

According to Vera Novita Sari, the presence of male teachers adds gender balance dynamics in forming gender character.[6] Irawan, in his research, explains that male teachers play a role in teaching independence, leadership values, helping children understand their gender identity, and helping both boys and girls understand social roles based on gender.[7] In line with this, findings in other research affirm that teachers not only act as instructors but also as role models who influence children's faith growth.[8] Male teachers can serve as role models to affirm masculinity in child development, according to research by Wayne John Martino at the University of Western Ontario, London, Canada. Thus, male involvement in Early Childhood Education (PAUD), such as in Sunday School, becomes important to present a balance of male and female figures in the process of children's faith formation from a gender perspective.[9]

The minimal participation of men in children's ministry as described above, and seeing the importance of male presence in PAUD, in this case SMGT, is certainly not

[4] Redi Awal Maulana, Euis Kurniati, and Hani Yulindrasari, "Apa Yang Menyebabkan Rendahnya Keberadaan Guru Laki-Laki di PAUD?," *Jurnal Ilmiah Visi* 15, no. 1 (2020): 24.

[5] Loan Dao et al., "Tackling Australia's Male Teacher Shortage: Insights from Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Completion Data," *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* 50, no. 3 (2025): 5.

[6] Vera Novita Sari, "Studi Literatur Keterlibatan Guru Laki-Laki Dalam Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini (PAUD): Penelitian," *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Dan Riset Pendidikan* 3, no. 4 (2025): 2571.

[7] Rahma Shifa Sephiana and Hani Yulindrasari, "Peran Dan Kontribusi Guru Laki-Laki Dalam Pengembangan Keterampilan Sosial Anak Usia Dini," *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini* 8, no. 6 (2024): 1398.

[8] Verra Ria Christia, Iswahyudi Iswahyudi, Jimmy Setiawan, and Wahyu Bintoro. "Pengaruh Keteladanan Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen Dalam Pembentukan Karakter Anak Yang Berkebutuhan Khusus Di Sekolah Minggu Gereja Kristen Setia Indonesia Menining". *Indonesian Journal of Religious* 4, no. 2 (2021): 1–12.

[9] Wayne John Martino, "Male Teachers as Role Models: Addressing Issues of Masculinity, Pedagogy and the Re-Masculinization of Schooling," *Curriculum Inquiry* 38, no. 2 (2008): 195.

without cause. It is necessary to investigate the factors causing it and how this is constructed in ministry. The low involvement of men as Sunday School teachers reflects certain social constructions about gender roles in the ecclesial context and society in general. These studies put forward the reality of the minimal role of men in ministry and children's education both formally and informally. The importance of this research lies in the effort to find the causal factors and how this process occurs in the Sunday School of Jemaat Pallawa'.

Through Judith Butler's theory of performativity, which affirms the construction of the minimal presence of men in certain roles,[10] and R. W. Connell's hegemonic masculinity, which positions men as tending to avoid roles considered "feminine,"[11] in this case childcare/teaching children. In this regard, the author argues that it is important to examine more deeply the root of the problem and the factors causing why men are less involved in Sunday School ministry at Jemaat Pallawa, based on the two theories above. The goal is to break the hegemonic circle of masculinity in the church, which should be a unified whole. Based on what has been described, it appears that the low involvement of men as Sunday School teachers at Gereja Toraja Jemaat Palawa is not only influenced by practical factors but is also related to perceptions, social constructions, and understandings of gender in church life.

Departing from this, the research question is: what are the inhibiting factors and how does this construction influence men's roles in becoming Sunday School teachers at Jemaat Pallawa'? This study aims to identify the factors causing the minimal involvement of men in Sunday School ministry and to analyze how gender performativity and hegemonic masculinity operate within this context. This study contributes to the discourse on gender justice, masculinity studies, and practical theology in the Indonesian context by demonstrating how performativity and hegemonic masculinity operate within church ministry. It also contributes to practical theology by engaging with the work of Fatu et al. regarding the role of Sunday School teachers as agents of change and mentors in children's faith development.[12] The study calls for intentional efforts to break the hegemonic circle of masculinity, including early coaching through youth organizations,

[10] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), 33.
[11] R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 45.
[12] Sergi Fatu et al., "Pendampingan Guru Sekolah Minggu terhadap Perkembangan Iman Anak sebagai Pengikut Kristus di Gereja Presbyterian Evangelical Indonesia, Terindak, Kalimantan Barat," *SERVIRE: Jurnal Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat* 3, no. 2 (2023): 61.

personal approaches to build motivation, and theological education that challenges patriarchal assumptions. Furthermore, this study integrates sociological analysis of church leadership,[13] Christological foundations of servant leadership,[14] the role of Christian religious education in combating discrimination,[15] and the resilience of women in minority Christian communities[16] to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing gender inequality in Sunday School ministry.

METHOD

The research method used in this study is qualitative with a field study approach. This approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the subjective meanings and social constructions that shape gender roles within the church context, which cannot be adequately captured through quantitative methods. Interview techniques were used to collect data about why men are so minimally involved and become Sunday School teachers. The research location is Jemaat Pallawa, Sa'dan District, North Toraja. The study involved 53 respondents, consisting of Church Elders (20 people), male Sunday School teachers, parents, activists, and ordinary congregants. Respondents were selected through purposive sampling to ensure representation from various roles and perspectives within the congregation. Observation had been conducted long before, during the author's time as a member of the congregation and involvement in Sunday School teacher ministry at that church. After data were collected through interviews and observation, the findings were classified based on themes that emerged from the interviews. The interview instrument was the result of elaboration from the research questions.

After all interviews were classified based on themes, the data were displayed in matrix form and then analyzed using Judith Butler's performativity and R. W. Connell's

[13] Bobby Kurnia Putrawan, "The Contribution of Sociology to Church Leadership: Promoting Social Justice and Unity in the Christian Community," *MODERATE: Journal of Religious, Education, and Social* 2, no. 1 (2024): 45.

[14] Ritha Lepong, Pratiwi Eunike, and Iswahyudi, "Implementasi Pemimpin Sejati Yang Berintegritas Di Era Globalisasi Melalui Keteladanan Kepemimpinan Yesus," *Journal of Religious and Socio-Cultural* 4, no. 2 (2023): 135.

[15] Rona Ganta Barus et al., "Peran Pendidikan Agama Kristen Melawan Diskriminasi Di Masyarakat Majemuk Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Religious* 5, no. 2 (2023): 95.

[16] Oey Natanael and Ester Agustini Tandana, "Strengthening Resilience among Women from Christian Minority Groups in Indonesia: Strengthening Development Approach," *CHEVRA: Indonesian Journal of Economic, Science, and Humanities* 1, no. 1 (2026): 20.

hegemonic masculinity. The entire construction building resulting from performativity and hegemonic masculinity is then viewed from a theological perspective using Rosemary Radford Ruether. Additionally, the study engages with practical theological reflections on Sunday School ministry, drawing on the work of Fatu et al. regarding the role of Sunday School teachers as agents of change and mentors in children's faith development.[17] This methodological framework allows for a comprehensive analysis that integrates gender theory, feminist theology, and practical theological reflection, ensuring that the findings are both theoretically grounded and pastorally relevant. Triangulation was achieved through the combination of interviews, observation, and documentation, which strengthened the validity of the findings. Furthermore, the study incorporates sociological analysis of church leadership[18] to understand how social structures and interactions within the church influence gender dynamics in ministry. The Christological foundation of servant leadership[19] is also employed to reflect on the theological significance of male involvement in children's ministry. Additionally, the role of Christian religious education in combating discrimination[20] and the resilience of women in minority Christian communities[21] are integrated to provide a holistic framework for addressing gender inequality in Sunday School ministry.

RESULT

Perceptions of Male Involvement in Sunday School Ministry

All respondents agreed that the presence of male teachers is very important as a role model. Male teachers are considered to provide a "father figure" influence that gives authority and symbolic authority in the process of faith and character formation of children. Data show that female teachers are more numerous, namely 38 out of 40 teachers. 60% of respondents considered this phenomenon "normal" because it has been going on for a long time. The minimal number of male teachers is not only a matter of quantity but is also influenced by their priority on other ministries or work commitments outside the church.

[17] Fatu et al., "Pendampingan Guru Sekolah Minggu," 62.
[18] Putrawan, "The Contribution of Sociology," 46.
[19] Lepong, Eunike, and Iswahyudi, "Implementasi Pemimpin Sejati," 136.
[20] Barus et al., "Peran Pendidikan Agama Kristen," 96.
[21] Natanael and Tandana, "Strengthening Resilience," 21.

The matrix below is a description of the research results based on themes from all questions asked. There are themes such as gender inequality, reasons for minimal male involvement, perceptions of the importance of male teachers, and teaching style and gender balance.

Table 1. Respondents' perceptions of the presence of men teaching Sunday School

Research Theme	Causal Factors	Respondents' Perceptions	Church Efforts	Recommended Strategies	Main Findings
Inequality in the Number of Male Teachers	Priority on other ministries and work activities outside the church	The phenomenon of minimal male teachers is considered "normal" because it has been going on for a long time in the congregation	Delivery of information and invitations through general announcements in church	Conducting early coaching through youth organizations (PPGT)	Of the total 40 active Sunday School teachers, there are only 2 men (only 5% male involvement rate)
Reasons for Minimal Male Involvement	Gender stereotypes, work/traditional obligations, lack of pedagogical skills, and shame	Teaching children is considered to require extra patience, which is identical to female nature; men feel unsuitable for singing/movement activities	Providing direct appeals through elders or church activists	Adjusting roles and tasks according to interest, such as teaching older age groups	Cultural and psychological barriers (feeling unmasculine) are the main obstacles for men to give themselves in ministry
Perception of the Importance of Male Teachers	Need for positive masculinity role models and father figures in character formation	All respondents consider the presence of male teachers very important to provide authority and symbolic authority for children	Announcements from the pulpit, invitations at congregation meetings, and informal appeals through church elders	Using a personal approach to build motivation and confidence for men to get involved	Male teachers are recognized as very important as gender role balancers, but their current presence is still very minimal
Teaching Style and Gender Balance	Natural character differences considered to exist between men (firm/ leader) and	The combination of both genders is believed to create a more varied and effective learning	Conducting regular theological coaching to eliminate gender bias in	Creating active male role models and providing schedule flexibility for	Male teachers provide more firmness, while female teachers provide emotional

Research Theme	Causal Factors	Respondents' Perceptions	Church Efforts	Recommended Strategies	Main Findings
	women (patient/diligent)	environment for children's faith growth	ministry division	those who are busy	closeness; both complement each other

Source: author's field data.

Based on the interview results, some of which have been illustrated above, there are four main factors causing the low participation of men: (1) Gender Stereotypes: There is a view that teaching children is the domain of women, reinforced by a local proverb: *"iatu mantaranak to baine ya, iatu to muane maleya undaka kande"* (women take care of children, men seek food); (2) Time Constraints: Busyness with work and responsibilities in Toraja traditional activities; (3) Lack of Pedagogical Skills: Feeling of lack of confidence or impatience in dealing with children's dynamics; (4) Psychological Barriers: Shame or awkwardness in performing "unmasculine" activities such as singing with movements.

The data that will be the focus of this writing are limited to the factors causing the minimal involvement of men to become Sunday School teachers. Regarding church efforts and recommended strategies, these will be addressed in subsequent publications. Below is a map of the gender role structure in the Sunday School of Jemaat Pallawa:

Table 2. Mechanisms of performativity in the roles of male and female teachers.

Role Dimension	Male Role	Female Role	Performativity Mechanism
Sunday School Teacher	Very minimal (2 out of 40 teachers, now only 1)	Dominant (38 out of 40 teachers)	Repetitive Stylization: The repetition of the fact that wome teach creates the illusion of "nature" from society
Role Model	Considered important as a "father figure" with authority	Considered as patience and gentleness	Regulatory Frameworks: The norm that "father = authority/authority"
Teaching Style	Firm, directive, strong leader	Patient, diligent, emotionally close	Gender as Performance: Men "perform" gender as leadership not closeness
Other Ministries in Church	Choose PPGT, PKBGT, PWGT, Choir	Dominant in children's and family ministry	Hegemonic Masculinity: A system that forces certain performances

Role Dimension	Male Role	Female Role	Performativity Mechanism
Involvement in Tradition	Migrating, traditional activities, work (men's tasks)	More available at home/congregation	Cultural Norm: Toraja proverb "mantaranak to baine" (childcar is women's work)
Decision Making	Majority in Church Elders (20 people, male majority)	Minority in decision-making structures	Patriarchal Structure: Ruether's critique of male dominance

Source: author's field data.

It appears there are differences in roles formed by the mechanism of performativity, which is then reinforced by the patriarchal structure of hegemonic masculinity.

Gender Performativity in Sunday School Ministry

Based on research at Jemaat Palawa, congregants believe that men's task is to lead and earn a living, while women's task is to care for children. Indeed, this statement does not only occur at Jemaat Pallawa but has become a general phenomenon everywhere, in all social, cultural, and community contexts, even in the religious field. There are several classifications or divisions seen in the context of society in general, as in the studies where this classification appears.[22] Traditional Role Division, where men's task is to lead and earn a living (*breadwinner*), while women's task is to care for children (domestic). Social Inheritance (Intergenerational), namely the view that this division of labor does not appear suddenly but is passed down from one generation to the next. Naturalization of Roles: The long process of inheritance makes men internalize this role and consider it a natural identity (nature), not as a result of social and cultural construction.

For Butler, identity is not natural but is formed because of the repetition of social norms, cultural practices, and societal expectations continuously, which is called performativity.[23] This performativity makes childcare, in this case Sunday School ministry, identified with women. This reality occurs at Jemaat Palawa. The majority of Sunday School teachers are women. Men consider women more competent in teaching children. In Yuliana Rombe's research, men consider that they do not have pedagogical abilities and they feel overwhelmed facing children's behavior. Based on the research conducted by the author, men also expressed that women are more suitable for teaching children because women have emotional closeness with children.

[22] G. Smitha, "Gender Dynamics Across Cultures: A Comprehensive Exploration," *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research* 6, no. 5 (2024): 28240.

[23] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 25.

This is in line with a study conducted by Ayu Rissa Atika and Yayu Mega, which shows that social and cultural patriarchal constructions influence societal perceptions of gender roles. Their research reveals that most parents tend to trust female teachers more in educating children because they are considered gentler, more attentive, and emotionally closer.[24] Ridgeway calls this a form of *status beliefs*, namely collective beliefs that establish the capacity and value of one gender above another in certain roles.[25] Specifically, in the context of Gereja Toraja, men have long been identified with the realm of structural ministry and church leadership. This condition cannot be separated from the influence of patriarchal theology that has taken strong root in church tradition.

Gereja Toraja itself was born through the process of evangelism carried out by the *Gereformeerd Zendingsbond* (GZB), an independent mission body in the Netherlands that was directly under the Dutch colonial government. In its ministry practice, GZB was influenced by certain pietism traditions that developed in the Netherlands, one of whose teachings did not give space for women to occupy church offices.[26] This theological influence seems to have contributed to shaping the pattern of ministry and gender role division in the life of Gereja Toraja, where men are more placed in leadership positions and public ministry, while women tend to be in domestic ministry and caregiving. In the context of Gereja Toraja Jemaat Palawa, the repetition of practices placing women in children's ministry and men in structural ministry ultimately forms a collective belief that Sunday School ministry is "women's territory."

As a result, many men feel awkward, unsuitable, or even unworthy of being in the realm of childcare because this ministry does not align with the construction of masculinity formed in the social and church environment. Research by Irawan, Firdausi, & Hikmah in the context of early childhood education also found that the biggest barrier to male involvement is not merely lack of time but social stigma and fear of environmental judgment.[27] Studies on the development of Sunday School show that the teaching

[24] Ayu Rissa Atika and Yayu Mega Purnamasari, "Persepsi Orang Tua terhadap Layanan Guru laki-laki dan Perempuan di Taman Kanak-Kanak," *Jurnal Tunas Siliwangi* (2019): 5.

[25] Ridgeway, *Framed by Gender: How Gender Inequality Persists in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 85.

[26] Johana Ruadjanna Tangirerung, Judith D. L. Wangania, and Meike Roselyna Tapparan, "Meneroka Kesetaraan Dan Keadilan Gender Dalam Gereja Dan Masyarakat Toraja," *KURIOS* 10, no. 2 (2024): 325.

[27] Putri Harianti, Nurhasanah Bakhtiar, and Ilham Kurnia, "Persepsi Mahasiswa Terhadap Peran Guru Laki-Laki Dalam Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini," *Journal Ashil: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini* 5, no. 1 (April 2025): 142.

ministry for children has from the beginning been largely dominated by women,[28] while male involvement tends to be limited and experiences continuous shortage. This shows that the problem of lack of male involvement is not only contextual but also has historical roots in church life.

Hegemonic Masculinity and Ministry Hierarchy

Hegemonic masculinity is a gender practice that legitimizes the dominant position of men (patriarchy), while women are in a subordinate position.[29] Based on the author's observation at Jemaat Palawa, men are often involved in structural ministry and technical matters rather than teaching Sunday School. The Church Elders have tried to invite through announcements on Sundays, but men do not respond; even male church elders are not interested in becoming Sunday School teachers. This proves that men do not have an interest in teaching Sunday School. This shows a hierarchy of ministry where teaching children is considered "less prestigious" or not in accordance with dominant (hegemonic) masculinity standards. Men tend to choose public roles that affirm their authority.

According to research conducted by Natar, men tend to maintain positions and status that have been accepted through tricks, strategies, and collusion practices. Although there has been a belief that women also have the right to be in leadership positions, reality proves that women's leadership in the Church is only as a backup, not because women are considered to have potential in that field but because there are no men to fill the position.[30] For Anne Homes, male domination over women is influenced by Christian tradition, especially the theology of Thomas Aquinas, which strongly emphasizes male leadership. Thomas Aquinas considered that only men can reflect the image of God, while women are in an inferior position physically, morally, and mentally. A woman is not worthy to be a leader or even a priest.[31] This theological understanding became the basis of Christian teachings that influence men's understanding to always dominate women.

[28] Lucille Marr, "Sunday School Teaching: A Women's Enterprise," *Historical Studies in Education* 4, no. 1 (1992): 92.

[29] Connell, *Masculinities*, 77.

[30] Asnath N. Natar, "Perempuan Dalam Kepemimpinan Agama: Pengalaman Kristen," *Musãwa Jurnal Studi Gender Dan Islam* 18, no. 2 (2019): 138.

[31] Anne Homes, *Perubahan Pria dan Wanita dalam Gereja dan Masyarakat*, 1st ed. (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, Kanisius, 1992), 55.

Through Butler, it can be seen that the process of gender materialization is within the hegemonic heterosexual system.[32] In the Toraja context, hegemonic masculinity appears in several expressions: the traditional proverb "mantaranak to baine" (the one who cares for and raises children is the woman, the man seeks food); "Teaching children is like weaving" (a domestic activity of women); and men prefer traditional activities and work considered more masculine. Connell and Ruether add that the Asian church tends to perpetuate and strengthen male dominance through teachings and practices, so that men occupy a "superior" position in church organization but neglect the role of teaching children because it does not align with the expected "gender performance."

The Theological Significance of Male Involvement

The absence of men in Sunday School ministry must also be understood theologically. Fatu et al. emphasize that Sunday School teachers are not merely instructors but mentors who guide children in their spiritual growth, helping them become followers of Christ.[33] The teacher's role is to be a bridge between children and the world around them, encouraging them to gain knowledge, understanding, and contribute to their environment. This role requires personal development, a good understanding of the learning process, and clear goals relevant to children's futures. The reference article further highlights that Sunday School teachers must understand child psychology to build good relationships and guide children with love and understanding rather than demands and coercion.

Teachers are called to be mentors who provide special guidance, communicate outside the church to acknowledge children's presence and importance, and base their guidance on the Bible rather than personal feelings. This mentoring role is a divine calling, as stated in John 15:16: "You did not choose me, but I chose you." When men are absent from this ministry, children are deprived of the unique contributions that male teachers can offer. Fatu et al. note that teachers must be role models whose lives embody the values they teach. The presence of male teachers provides children with diverse models of faith, demonstrating that spiritual formation and caregiving are not exclusively feminine

[32] Hilaria Fortuna, "Performativitas Gender: Kajian Kritis Pemikiran Judith Butler Dalam Konteks Pluralisme Gender Dan Relevansinya Bagi Gereja Di Indonesia" (Thesis Pascasarjana Teologi, Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana, 2013), 78.

[33] Fatu et al., "Pendampingan Guru Sekolah Minggu," 63.

domains. This aligns with the biblical foundation of children's spiritual formation, which has been emphasized since the time of the patriarchs.

Abraham educated his son Isaac about the fear of God and the importance of living for God (Genesis 18:19), and this pattern of parental instruction in faith continues throughout Scripture (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Proverbs 22:6; 2 Timothy 3:15). Moreover, Fatu et al. describe the church as a mother who cares for her children, drawing on John Calvin's metaphor. As a mother nurtures her children, so the church is responsible for the spiritual formation of its youngest members. This responsibility cannot be delegated exclusively to women; it is a shared calling of the entire community of faith. When men abdicate this responsibility, the church fails to provide the holistic nurturing that children need. The reference article also emphasizes the importance of effective teaching, which requires preparation, diligence, responsibility, cooperation, and creativity.

DISCUSSION

Conceptual Framework: Performativity, Hegemonic Masculinity, and Feminist Theology

Before mapping the gender role structure, it is necessary to first understand how gender performativity theory works in the church context. Judith Butler states that gender is not something we "have" as a nature, but something we "do" through actions that are repeated consistently within the boundaries of established social norms.[34] In the church context, these norms do not only come from general societal culture but are also formed by church teachings that are delivered, ministry practices that are carried out routinely, and sermons from the pulpit that reinforce gender roles. This mechanism produces a situation where the church continuously reinforces certain gender performances (for example: women teach children, men lead structures) while punishing or considering "deviant" gender performances that fall outside these norms.

Thus, gender roles in the church are not natural or fixed, but are formed and perpetuated through the repetition of actions carried out by all members of the congregation within the framework of established church norms.[35] Connell adds that

[34] Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," in *Feminist Theory Reader*, 5th ed., ed. Carole McCann, Seung-kyung Kim, and Emek Ergun (New York: Routledge, 2020), 355.

[35] Mary L. Kategile, "The Bible and Gender Equality in Church Leadership in Tanzania," *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 6, no. 1 (2020): 46; Widjaja Sugiri, "There Is Neither Male nor Female: Theological

church ministry is often structured based on patriarchal assumptions that consider men as structural leaders and women as servants of children and families. This objection arises from Connell's dissatisfaction with the concept of "patriarchy," which he considers too abstract. He then looks directly at how the structure works in reality on the ground.[36] He conducted research with interviews of all elements in the school, namely teachers, students, and parents, and found social inequality due to hierarchy, exclusivity, and hegemony.

In line with this, cross-context church research shows that ministry structures placing men as structural leaders and women as servants of children and families are not a single phenomenon but a recurring patriarchal pattern. This pattern is maintained through theology, culture, language, and organizational practices, and has a direct impact on leadership opportunities and the formation of women's identity in the church, while also becoming the target of criticism and transformation efforts toward more equal relations.[37] This is where Butler's performativity becomes real, also in Gereja Toraja Jemaat Palawa, where men are very minimal in becoming teachers. This happens continuously. Men consider it has happened repetitively.

Rosemary Radford Ruether more radically criticizes that the church has perpetuated male dominance through teachings and practices, so that women are marginalized from leadership positions, although the opposite occurs in children's ministry.[38] These three perspectives will be used to map and analyze the gender role structure found in the field data at Gereja Toraja Jemaat Palawa. Putrawan adds that sociology provides tools for analyzing social inequality and finding solutions to address disparities within society, which is essential for understanding how church leaders can manage and facilitate harmonious social relationships.[39] This sociological perspective enriches the analysis by demonstrating that the gender gap in Sunday School ministry is not merely an individual issue but a structural one that requires systemic solutions.

Reflections on Galatians 3:28 As a Faith-Based Response to Gender-Based Persecution". *CHEVRA: Indonesian Journal of Economic, Science, and Humanities* 1, no. 1 (2026): 1–16.

[36] Marcos Nascimento and Raewyn Connell, "Reflecting on Twenty Years of Masculinities: An Interview with Raewyn Connell," *Ciência & Saúde Coletiva* 22, no. 12 (2017): 3977.

[37] Sinenhlanhla S. Chisale, "'Deliver Us from Patriarchy': A Gendered Perspective of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa and Implications for Pastoral Care," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 41, no. 1 (2020): 4.

[38] Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 52.

[39] Putrawan, "The Contribution of Sociology," 47.

The Influence of Performativity on the Minimal Involvement of Men

Based on research at Jemaat Palawa, congregants believe that men's task is to lead and earn a living, while women's task is to care for children. Indeed, this statement does not only occur at Jemaat Pallawa but has become a general phenomenon everywhere, in all social, cultural, and community contexts, even in the religious field. There are several classifications or divisions seen in the context of society in general, as in the studies where this classification appears.[40] Traditional Role Division, where men's task is to lead and earn a living (*breadwinner*), while women's task is to care for children (domestic). Social Inheritance (Intergenerational), namely the view that this division of labor does not appear suddenly but is passed down from one generation to the next. Naturalization of Roles: The long process of inheritance makes men internalize this role and consider it a natural identity (nature), not as a result of social and cultural construction.

Figure 1. Interview with Member of the Congregation on May 27, 2025 (Left) and Elder on May 28, 2025 (right).



Source by authors.

For Butler, identity is not natural but is formed because of the repetition of social norms, cultural practices, and societal expectations continuously, which is called performativity.[41] This performativity makes childcare, in this case Sunday School ministry, identified with women. This reality occurs at Jemaat Palawa. The majority of Sunday School teachers are women. Men consider women more competent in teaching children. In Yuliana Rombe's research, men consider that they do not have pedagogical abilities and they feel overwhelmed facing children's behavior. Based on the research conducted by the author, men also expressed that women are more suitable for teaching children because women have emotional closeness with children.

This is in line with a study conducted by Ayu Rissa Atika and Yayu Mega, which shows that social and cultural patriarchal constructions influence societal perceptions of

[40] Smitha, "Gender Dynamics Across Cultures," 28240.
[41] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 25.

gender roles. Their research reveals that most parents tend to trust female teachers more in educating children because they are considered gentler, more attentive, and emotionally closer.[42] Ridgeway calls this a form of *status beliefs*, namely collective beliefs that establish the capacity and value of one gender above another in certain roles.[43] Specifically, in the context of Gereja Toraja, men have long been identified with the realm of structural ministry and church leadership. This condition cannot be separated from the influence of patriarchal theology that has taken strong root in church tradition.

Gereja Toraja itself was born through the process of evangelism carried out by the *Gereformeerd Zendingsbond* (GZB), an independent mission body in the Netherlands that was directly under the Dutch colonial government. In its ministry practice, GZB was influenced by certain pietism traditions that developed in the Netherlands, one of whose teachings did not give space for women to occupy church offices.[44] This theological influence seems to have contributed to shaping the pattern of ministry and gender role division in the life of Gereja Toraja, where men are more placed in leadership positions and public ministry, while women tend to be in domestic ministry and caregiving. In the context of Gereja Toraja Jemaat Palawa, the repetition of practices placing women in children's ministry and men in structural ministry ultimately forms a collective belief that Sunday School ministry is "women's territory."

As a result, many men feel awkward, unsuitable, or even unworthy of being in the realm of childcare because this ministry does not align with the construction of masculinity formed in the social and church environment. Research by Irawan, Firdausi, & Hikmah in the context of early childhood education also found that the biggest barrier to male involvement is not merely lack of time but social stigma and fear of environmental judgment.[45] Studies on the development of Sunday School show that the teaching ministry for children has from the beginning been largely dominated by women,[46] while male involvement tends to be limited and experiences continuous shortage. This shows that the problem of lack of male involvement is not only contextual but also has historical roots in church life.

[42] Atika and Purnamasari, "Persepsi Orang Tua," 5.
[43] Ridgeway, *Framed by Gender*, 85.
[44] Tangirerung, Wangania, and Tapparan, "Meneroka Kesetaraan," 325.
[45] Harianti, Bakhtiar, and Kurnia, "Persepsi Mahasiswa," 142.
[46] Marr, "Sunday School Teaching," 92.

Putrawan emphasizes that sociology helps church leaders understand social structures, norms, and relationships between individuals within a social group, which is crucial for addressing the gender gap in Sunday School ministry.[47] The sociological perspective reveals that the church's social structure, which positions men as structural leaders and women as caregivers, perpetuates gender inequality. This structural inequality is not merely a practical issue but a theological one, as it contradicts the radical equality proclaimed in Galatians 3:28.[48] Therefore, addressing the low involvement of men in Sunday School requires not only individual encouragement but also structural transformation within the church.

Ministry Hierarchy and Hegemonic Masculinity

Hegemonic masculinity is a gender practice that legitimizes the dominant position of men (patriarchy), while women are in a subordinate position.[49] Based on the author's observation at Jemaat Palawa, men are often involved in structural ministry and technical matters rather than teaching Sunday School. The Church Elders have tried to invite through announcements on Sundays, but men do not respond; even male church elders are not interested in becoming Sunday School teachers. This proves that men do not have an interest in teaching Sunday School. This shows a hierarchy of ministry where teaching children is considered "less prestigious" or not in accordance with dominant (hegemonic) masculinity standards. Men tend to choose public roles that affirm their authority.

According to research conducted by Natar, men tend to maintain positions and status that have been accepted through tricks, strategies, and collusion practices. Although there has been a belief that women also have the right to be in leadership positions, reality proves that women's leadership in the Church is only as a backup, not because women are considered to have potential in that field but because there are no men to fill the position.[50] For Anne Homes, male domination over women is influenced by Christian tradition, especially the theology of Thomas Aquinas, which strongly emphasizes male leadership. Thomas Aquinas considered that only men can reflect the image of God, while women are in an inferior position physically, morally, and mentally. A

[47] Putrawan, "The Contribution of Sociology," 47.
[48] Widjaja Sugiri, "There Is Neither Male nor Female: Theological Reflections on Galatians 3:28 As a Faith-Based Response to Gender-Based Persecution," 1–16.
[49] Connell, *Masculinities*, 77.
[50] Natar, "Perempuan Dalam Kepemimpinan Agama," 138.

woman is not worthy to be a leader or even a priest.[51] This theological understanding became the basis of Christian teachings that influence men's understanding to always dominate women.

Through Butler, it can be seen that the process of gender materialization is within the hegemonic heterosexual system.[52] In the Toraja context, hegemonic masculinity appears in several expressions: the traditional proverb "mantaranak to baine" (the one who cares for and raises children is the woman, the man seeks food); "Teaching children is like weaving" (a domestic activity of women); and men prefer traditional activities and work considered more masculine. Connell and Ruether add that the Asian church tends to perpetuate and strengthen male dominance through teachings and practices, so that men occupy a "superior" position in church organization but neglect the role of teaching children because it does not align with the expected "gender performance."

Lepong et al. provide a Christological corrective to this hierarchical understanding by emphasizing that Jesus' leadership is characterized by service, humility, and self-sacrifice.[53] Jesus came to serve, not to be served (Mark 10:45), and this model of servant leadership applies equally to men and women. When men avoid Sunday School ministry because it is considered "feminine," they fail to embody the servant leadership that Jesus modeled. The church must reclaim this model as the foundation for all ministry, including children's ministry. This Christological perspective challenges the hegemonic masculinity that positions men as superior and instead calls men to embrace the humble service that Jesus exemplified.

Becoming a Sunday School Teacher in Feminist Theology Perspective

Based on the above description, it appears that there is a patriarchal theological understanding. Feminist theology examines this theology more deeply to form the view that theology does not only contain male experience but also contains female experience.[54] From a theological perspective, Ware emphasizes that men and women are created in the equality of God's image, but with complementary roles.[55] From a feminist

[51] Anne Homes, *Perubahan Pria dan Wanita*, 55.
[52] Fortuna, "Performativitas Gender," 78.
[53] Lepong, Eunike, and Iswahyudi, "Implementasi Pemimpin Sejati," 137.
[54] Anne M. Clifford, *Memperkenalkan Teologi Feminis*, trans. Yosef M. Florisan (Maumere: Ledalero, 2002), 50.
[55] Bruce A. Ware, "Male and Female Complementarity and the Image of God," in *Biblical Foundation for Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. Wayne Grudem (Crossway Books, 2002), 92.

theology perspective, Rosemary Radford Ruether affirms that gender stereotypes are a form of structural sin that hinders the full manifestation of God's love in the church.[56] A church trapped in such stereotypes risks losing the diversity of gifts and the witness of complete faith.

In Galatians 3:28, Paul emphasizes that there is neither male nor female. This verse strongly emphasizes gender equality, so ministry should not be rigid, that is, dominated only by men. God created humans with all their uniqueness; God does not measure a person's value based on gender. Gender-based ministry needs to be eliminated because God Himself never differentiates His people.[57] Based on the interviews conducted, there are various opinions regarding the importance of men's roles in teaching Sunday School, one of which is from Irwan Buttu, who believes that the presence of men as Sunday School teachers can provide children with an understanding of gender role balance. This is in line with research conducted by Andi and Saqjuddin, that children's security is formed through their social environment. Children are in a developmental stage where they learn through the values they absorb from their surroundings; if their environment does not display gender representation, it will further reinforce unequal social roles.[58]

Furthermore, Irwan Buttu also stated that the presence of men as Sunday School teachers can create good collaboration with female Sunday School teachers. If this balance occurs, children will gain balanced knowledge, increase their motivation to learn, and change their understanding of male and female roles. Research conducted by Wiwit, Narendradewi, and Arwendi shows that the presence of male teachers makes the motivation of boys and girls more balanced and changes their perceptions of male roles. Male teachers who tell stories will change children's understanding. They will understand that storytelling is not identical to women but men can also tell stories.[59] Heather Young argues that the presence of men and women in educating children will support children in learning to relate to men and women outside their family environment and provide a

[56] Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 18.

[57] Martina Novalina et al., "Kajian Isu Toxic Masculinity di Era Digital dalam Perspektif Sosial dan Teologi," *Jurnal EFATA: Jurnal Teologi dan Pelayanan* 8, no. 1 (2022): 32.

[58] Andi Al Muhammad Ardiansyah, "Gender Equality in Early Childhood Education: A Literature Review of Global Practices and Challenges," *Jurnal E-MAS (Edukasi Dan Pembelajaran Anak Usia Dini)*, 1, no. 2 (2024): 12.

[59] Wiwit Purnama Putri, Narendradewi Kusumastuti, and Arwendis Wijayanti, "Peran Guru Laki-Laki Pada Lembaga PAUD Ditinjau Dari Perspektif Fungsi Afeksi Di Tk Aisyiah Bustanul Athfal 1 Ngawi," *Journal of Early Childhood Education and Development* 4, no. 1 (2022): 94.

positive combination.[60] This is in line with the opinion of Maryam Matasik that cooperation between men and women is needed to create balanced teaching that can complement each other. In addition, Berti Matasik also argues that the presence of male teachers will provide a balanced combination.

Barus et al. argue that Christian religious education can combat discrimination by instilling values of empathy, compassion, and acceptance.[61] In the context of Sunday School ministry, this means that both male and female teachers must model gender equality for children. When men are absent from Sunday School, children receive a hidden curriculum that teaches them that caregiving is exclusively feminine. To counteract this, Christian religious education must intentionally include male teachers as role models of inclusive and egalitarian ministry. This aligns with the biblical foundation of children's spiritual formation, which emphasizes that both parents and the community of faith are responsible for teaching children about God's ways (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Proverbs 22:6).

Fatu et al. further reinforce this by demonstrating that effective Sunday School ministry requires a holistic approach that addresses children's spiritual, psychological, and social development.[62] The teacher's role as an agent of change depends on their ability to model Christ-like character, to prepare thoroughly before teaching, and to teach with diligence. These are qualities that both men and women are called to cultivate. The absence of men from this ministry therefore represents a loss of diverse gifts and perspectives that are essential for the full spiritual formation of children. The reference article also emphasizes that Sunday School teachers must use creative teaching methods—such as greeting, praise testimonies, and storytelling—to engage children's interest. These methods are not gender-specific; men can and should employ them effectively. When men are absent, children miss the opportunity to see men engaging in creative, nurturing, and educational activities, which can challenge stereotypes and expand children's understanding of gender roles.

Supporting and Conflicting Theories

The analysis thus far has been grounded in Butler's performativity, Connell's hegemonic masculinity, and Ruether's feminist theology, which together provide a robust

[60] Heather Young, "Men in Childcare: Why We Need More Men in the Early Years Sector," Grandir UK (2024).

[61] Barus et al., "Peran Pendidikan Agama Kristen," 97.

[62] Fatu et al., "Pendampingan Guru Sekolah Minggu," 63.

framework for understanding the low involvement of men in Sunday School ministry. However, it is essential to engage with theories that both support and conflict with this framework to achieve a more comprehensive synthesis. One supporting theory is Ridgeway's concept of *status beliefs*, which explains how collective beliefs about gender capacity become institutionalized in social roles, reinforcing the division of labor in the church.[63] Similarly, Fatu et al.'s practical theology supports the argument by demonstrating that the absence of male teachers deprives children of diverse role models and holistic spiritual formation.[64] Putrawan's sociological analysis further supports this by showing that social structures and interactions within the church influence leadership practices and can perpetuate inequality if not intentionally addressed.[65] These perspectives converge to affirm that the gender gap in Sunday School ministry is not merely a practical issue but a deeply rooted social and theological problem.

On the other hand, complementarian theology, as represented by Ware, offers a conflicting perspective by arguing that men and women have distinct but complementary roles ordained by God, which may justify the division of labor in the church.[66] While this view does not necessarily exclude men from teaching children, it can be used to rationalize the status quo by emphasizing that women are naturally more suited for nurturing roles. Another conflicting perspective is rational choice theory, which suggests that men make deliberate decisions about their involvement based on cost-benefit calculations, such as time constraints and social rewards. This theory would argue that men avoid Sunday School teaching not because of hegemonic masculinity but because the perceived benefits do not outweigh the costs. However, this perspective overlooks the structural and ideological forces that shape men's preferences and choices in the first place.

A third conflicting theory is conflict theory, which posits that men maintain their dominance by avoiding roles that are considered "feminine" and thus lower in status. While this theory aligns with Connell's hegemonic masculinity, it differs in its emphasis on material and political power rather than cultural performance. Conflict theory would predict that men avoid Sunday School teaching because it does not confer the same social

[63] Ridgeway, *Framed by Gender*, 85.
[64] Fatu et al., "Pendampingan Guru Sekolah Minggu," 63.
[65] Putrawan, "The Contribution of Sociology," 47.
[66] Ware, *Male and Female Complementarity*, 92.

and institutional power as structural leadership roles. However, this perspective may underestimate the role of cultural norms and theological beliefs in shaping men's decisions. A post-feminist critique also challenges the framework by arguing that feminist theology and masculinity studies can sometimes reinforce gender binaries rather than dismantle them. This critique calls for a more fluid and intersectional approach that recognizes the diversity of men's experiences and the multiple factors that shape their involvement in ministry.

Natanael and Tandana offer a complementary perspective by demonstrating that the resilience of Christian minority women is strengthened through community support, women's leadership, and interfaith cooperation.[67] In the context of Gereja Toraja Jemaat Palawa, the resilience of female Sunday School teachers can be further strengthened when men share the responsibility of children's spiritual formation. Inclusive ministry is not about replacing women but about creating a balanced and collaborative environment where both men and women contribute their gifts. This perspective enriches the synthesis by showing that gender justice in ministry is not a zero-sum game but a collaborative endeavor that benefits the entire community of faith.

Synthesis: Toward an Inclusive and Gender-Just Ministry

The convergence of Butler's performativity, Connell's hegemonic masculinity, Ruether's feminist theology, Fatu et al.'s practical theology, Putrawan's sociological analysis, Lepong et al.'s Christological reflection, Barus et al.'s educational perspective, and Natanael and Tandana's resilience framework provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing the low involvement of men in Sunday School ministry. Butler's theory reveals that gender roles are not natural but performed through repeated actions within social norms, meaning that the current division of labor in Sunday School is not inevitable but can be changed through intentional practices. Connell's hegemonic masculinity explains why men avoid roles considered "feminine," as they seek to maintain their dominant position and avoid stigma. Ruether's feminist theology exposes the structural sin of gender stereotypes that hinder the full manifestation of God's love in the church.

[67] Natanael and Tandana, "Strengthening Resilience," 22.

Putrawan's sociological analysis demonstrates that the church's social structure and interactions play a crucial role in shaping gender dynamics, and that addressing inequality requires structural transformation.[68] Lepong et al.'s Christological reflection provides a theological foundation for male involvement by emphasizing that Jesus' servant leadership applies equally to men and women, and that avoiding "feminine" roles contradicts the model of leadership that Jesus exemplified.[69] Barus et al.'s educational perspective shows that Christian religious education can combat discrimination by instilling values of empathy, compassion, and acceptance, and that male teachers are essential role models for children's gender development.[70] Natanael and Tandana's resilience framework highlights the importance of community support and collaboration in strengthening women's resilience, and suggests that inclusive ministry benefits the entire community of faith.[71] Fatu et al.'s practical theology emphasizes the importance of Sunday School teachers as mentors and role models, showing that the absence of men deprives children of diverse models of faith.[72]

The synthesis of these theories suggests that addressing the low involvement of men in Sunday School ministry requires a multi-level approach. At the theological level, the church must reclaim the radical equality of Galatians 3:28, which declares that in Christ there is neither male nor female. This theological vision must be preached from the pulpit, taught in catechism, and embodied in the church's liturgical practices. At the pedagogical level, men must be equipped with the skills and confidence to teach children effectively. This includes training in child psychology, creative teaching methods, and classroom management. At the structural level, the church must create pathways for men to enter Sunday School ministry, such as early recruitment through youth organizations, flexible scheduling, and public recognition of male teachers as role models. At the cultural level, the church must challenge the proverbs and stereotypes that associate childcare exclusively with women, promoting a vision of shared responsibility for children's spiritual formation.

A practical model for an inclusive and gender-just ministry can be summarized in four pillars. First, theological education that challenges patriarchal interpretations of

[68] Putrawan, "The Contribution of Sociology," 47.
[69] Lepong, Eunike, and Iswahyudi, "Implementasi Pemimpin Sejati," 137.
[70] Barus et al., "Peran Pendidikan Agama Kristen," 97.
[71] Natanael and Tandana, "Strengthening Resilience," 22.
[72] Fatu et al., "Pendampingan Guru Sekolah Minggu," 63.

Scripture and affirms the equality of all believers in Christ. This includes reclaiming the servant leadership of Jesus as the model for all ministry, as emphasized by Lepong et al.[73] Second, pedagogical training that equips both men and women with the skills needed for effective teaching, as emphasized by Fatu et al. and Barus et al.[74][75] Third, structural reform that removes barriers to male participation, such as inflexible scheduling and lack of recognition, as emphasized by Putrawan.[76] Fourth, cultural transformation that celebrates male involvement in caregiving and teaching as a valuable expression of Christian discipleship, as emphasized by Natanael and Tandana.[77] By implementing these four pillars, the church can move toward a ministry that reflects the radical equality of the gospel and provides children with diverse models of faith and service.

CONCLUSION

This article has demonstrated that the low involvement of men in Sunday School ministry at Gereja Toraja Jemaat Palawa is not merely a practical issue but is deeply rooted in gender performativity and hegemonic masculinity. The repetition of practices that position women as caregivers and men as structural leaders has created a collective belief that Sunday School ministry is "women's territory." This construction is reinforced by cultural proverbs, theological traditions influenced by colonial pietism, and patriarchal structures within the church. The study found four main factors causing low male participation: gender stereotypes, time constraints due to work and traditional obligations, lack of pedagogical skills, and psychological barriers such as shame and awkwardness. These factors are interconnected and reinforced by hegemonic masculinity, which positions teaching children as "less prestigious" and inconsistent with dominant masculine ideals. The sociological analysis of church leadership reveals that these factors are not merely individual choices but are shaped by the church's social structure and interactions, which perpetuate gender inequality. From a feminist theological perspective, this situation represents a structural sin that hinders the full manifestation of God's love in the church. Galatians 3:28 provides a theological foundation for rejecting gender-based ministry divisions, affirming that in Christ there is

[73] Lepong, Eunike, and Iswahyudi, "Implementasi Pemimpin Sejati," 137.
[74] Fatu et al., "Pendampingan Guru Sekolah Minggu," 63.
[75] Barus et al., "Peran Pendidikan Agama Kristen," 97.
[76] Putrawan, "The Contribution of Sociology," 47.
[77] Natanael and Tandana, "Strengthening Resilience," 22.

neither male nor female. The presence of both men and women in Sunday School ministry is essential for providing balanced gender representation, positive role models, and holistic faith formation for children.

The implications of this study are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it demonstrates the value of integrating Butler's performativity, Connell's hegemonic masculinity, and Ruether's feminist theology with practical theological reflection, sociological analysis, Christological reflection, educational perspective, and resilience framework to analyze gender dynamics in church ministry. Practically, it calls for intentional efforts to break the hegemonic circle of masculinity, including early coaching through youth organizations, personal approaches to build motivation, and theological education that challenges patriarchal assumptions. The balanced presence of men and women in all areas of ministry is a shared calling from the Triune God, for the sake of realizing a complete witness of faith. The limitations of this study include its focus on a single congregation, which may limit generalizability, and its reliance on qualitative data, which may not capture the full complexity of gender dynamics in other contexts. Future research should explore comparative studies across different congregations and denominations, as well as empirical studies on the effectiveness of interventions designed to increase male participation in Sunday School ministry. Additionally, future research should investigate how the four pillars of inclusive ministry—theological education, pedagogical training, structural reform, and cultural transformation—can be implemented in different contexts and evaluate their impact on children's spiritual formation and gender equality in the church.

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