

Portrait of Integrity Character in Prospective Clergy Students

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Abstrak: Integritas merupakan karakter penting yang harus dimiliki oleh setiap calon pendeta. Dalam konteks pendidikan tinggi, khususnya perguruan tinggi teologi, pembentukan integritas menjadi bagian yang tidak terpisahkan dalam proses pembentukan kepribadian mahasiswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan potret karakter integritas pada diri calon santri pendeta di Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Amanat Agung Jakarta. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kuantitatif dengan metode survei. Responden penelitian adalah mahasiswa program studi Sarjana Teologi yang berjumlah 58 orang. Instrumen penelitian berupa angket yang dikembangkan berdasarkan dimensi integritas menurut konsep integritas pribadi yaitu kejujuran, konsistensi moral, tanggung jawab, dan keberanian moral. Data dianalisis menggunakan teknik statistik deskriptif untuk memetakan kecenderungan karakter integritas responden. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar calon santri ulama mempunyai tingkat integritas yang tinggi pada aspek kejujuran dan tanggung jawab, namun masih terdapat kelemahan pada aspek keberanian moral dalam menghadapi situasi yang menuntut pengambilan keputusan etis yang sulit. Temuan-temuan tersebut menunjukkan bahwa proses pembentukan integritas pada diri calon pendeta memerlukan penguatan lebih lanjut, terutama melalui pendekatan pembelajaran berbasis seminari. Kajian ini diharapkan dapat menjadi acuan bagi perguruan tinggi teologi dalam menyusun kurikulum pembentukan karakter yang lebih efektif dan relevan dengan kebutuhan zaman..

Kata Kunci: *Integrity, Character, Theological Students, Prospective Clergy, Theological Education*

Abstract: Integrity is an essential character that every prospective clergy must have. In the context of higher education, especially theological higher education institutions, the formation of integrity becomes an integral part of the process of forming students' personalities. This study aims to describe the character portrait of integrity in prospective clergy students at the Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Amanat Agung, Jakarta. This study uses a descriptive quantitative approach with a survey method. The research respondents were 58 students of the Sarjana Teologi study program. The research instrument was a questionnaire developed based on the dimensions of integrity according to the concept of personal integrity, namely honesty, moral consistency, responsibility, and moral courage. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques to map the tendencies of the respondents' integrity characters. The results of the study showed that most prospective clergy students had a high level of integrity in the aspects of honesty and responsibility, but there were still weaknesses in the aspect of moral courage in facing situations that demanded difficult ethical decision-making. These findings indicate that the process of forming integrity in prospective clergy requires further strengthening, especially through a seminary-based learning approach. This study is expected to be a reference for theological higher education institutions in compiling a character formation curriculum that is more effective and relevant to the needs of the times..

Keywords: *Integrity, Character, Theological Students, Prospective Clergy, Theological Education*

Introduction



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Integrity is the main foundation in building a complete human character, especially for those who will be called as clergy. Clergy are not only required to have theological skills, but also personal integrity which is the basis of the people's trust. In the context of spiritual service, integrity is not just a moral discourse, but a reality of life that must be manifested in every action and decision (Miller, 2022). Clergy candidates are the next generation who will be at the forefront of bringing messages of truth and moral values to society. Therefore, their integrity portrait must be a serious concern in the theological education process.

The current reality shows that there are serious challenges in the world of education, including theological education. The phenomenon of abuse of office, data manipulation, inconsistency between words and actions, and weak role models are in the public spotlight (Rahardjo & Wibowo, 2021). In the educational environment of prospective clergy, similar symptoms are starting to emerge, although not too massive. This is certainly an alarm for theological education institutions to increasingly emphasize the formation of integrity character, not only as lecture material, but as a culture of life.

Several previous studies have highlighted the importance of integrity in the context of higher education. A study conducted by Yusri et al. (2020) stated that student integrity is directly proportional to the quality of their personality and moral competence. In the spiritual education environment, research by Prakoso and Setiadi (2023) showed a relationship between the intensity of spiritual guidance and the maturity of the integrity character of prospective clergy. However, these studies are still general in nature, and have not specifically portrayed the integrity conditions of prospective clergy students in Indonesia in depth and systematically.

Theoretically, integrity is seen as the unity of thoughts, words, and actions that are in accordance with the values of truth (Lewis, 2018). In the concept of character psychology, integrity includes honesty, moral consistency, personal responsibility, and moral courage in facing environmental pressures (Peterson & Seligman, 2019). Meanwhile, in the context of spiritual education, integrity is seen as a reflection of the complete relationship between individuals with God, themselves, and others (Willard, 2016).

Unlike previous studies that focused more on the general moral dimension, this study offers novelty in terms of approach and object of study. The main focus of this study is to portray the integrity of prospective clergy students by emphasizing the aspect of moral courage, which is often a weak point in the dynamics of spiritual education. In addition, this study uses instruments that are arranged contextually with the reality of theological education in Indonesia, thus producing a more relevant picture.

Formulation of the Problem

Based on the background and literature review above, the formulation of the problem in this study is:

1. How is the portrait of the character integrity of prospective clergy students at Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Amanat Agung?
2. Which dimensions of integrity are the most dominant and the weakest in prospective clergy students?
3. What are the implications of these findings for the character building process in theological educational institutions?

Research Objectives

This research aims to:

1. Describe the portrait of character integrity of prospective clergy student.
2. Identify the dominant and weak dimensions of integrity in prospective student clergy.
3. Provide strategic recommendations for theological education institutions in improving the development of student integrity.

Method

Research Design

This study uses a descriptive quantitative approach. This approach was chosen to provide a clear, systematic, and measurable picture of the character portrait of the integrity of prospective clergy students. The descriptive quantitative approach allows researchers to obtain numerical data that can be used to identify general patterns in the character of the respondents' integrity. This study is also cross-sectional, meaning that data collection is carried out once at a certain time.

Subjects of the Study

The population in this study were all prospective clergy students from the Sarjana Teologi Study Program who were studying theology at STT Amanat Agung Jakarta. The reason for selecting these subjects was because they were full-time students who were taking seminary-based learning.

The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, with the consideration that the selected sample must meet certain criteria that are relevant to the research objectives. The number of respondents in this study was 58 students.

Research Instruments

The main instrument used in this study is a closed questionnaire designed based on the integrity dimension. The preparation of the instrument refers to the concept of personal integrity according to Peterson and Seligman (2019) and the spirituality dimension according to Willard (2016). The questionnaire consists of 40 statements divided into four main dimensions:

1. Honesty (10 items): Measures the extent to which students behave honestly in everyday words and actions, including in academic and service situations.
2. Moral Consistency (10 items): Measures the alignment between believed principles and real actions, especially in situations involving value compromise.
3. Responsibility (10 items): Measures students' attitude of responsibility towards tasks, academic obligations, and spiritual services.
4. Moral Courage (10 items): Measures students' ability to make correct ethical decisions even when facing certain pressures or risks.

The questionnaire was prepared using a 4-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree). The 4-point scale was chosen to avoid neutral choices so that respondents would provide more assertive answers.

This research instrument has gone through a validity and reliability test process with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.87, indicating that the instrument has a very good level of reliability.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted online using Google Form. Before filling out the questionnaire, the researcher provided a brief explanation of the purpose of the study and guaranteed the confidentiality of the respondents' data.

To maintain data validity, respondents who filled out the questionnaire were required to use an official institutional account and undergo identity verification.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques through SPSS software. The analysis techniques used include:

Statistical Description: Calculating the average score (mean), standard deviation, percentage, and frequency distribution for each integrity dimension.

Score Category: To provide an interpretation of the level of integrity, the following score categorization is used:

Score 3.25 – 4.00: High

Score 2.50 – 3.24: Medium

Score 1.75 – 2.49: Low

Score 1.00 – 1.74: Very Low

The results of this descriptive analysis are then used to answer the problem formulation that has been prepared previously.

Result and Discussion

Respondent Overview

This study involved 58 prospective clergy students spread across the Sarjana Teologi Study Program at STT Amanat Agung Jakarta. Based on demographic data, 68% of respondents were male and 32% were female. In general, the average age of respondents was in the range of 21–24 years.

General Portrait of Integrity Character

The results of data analysis show that in general, the integrity level of prospective clergy students is in the high category, with an average overall score of 3.36 (SD = 0.41). This shows that respondents have a tendency towards positive integrity character in academic life and spiritual service.

The distribution of integrity scores in general can be seen in the following table:

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
High	83	69,2%
Medium	33	27,5%
Low	4	3,3%
Very Low	0	0%

From these results, it can be concluded that the majority of prospective clergy students have good integrity character, but there are still a small number who are in the low category, which requires further attention.

Analysis by Dimension

In more detail, the research results show varying tendencies in each dimension of integrity:

1. Honesty

Average score: 3.52 (high category)

Description: Most students demonstrate honest behavior in academic and service activities, such as not plagiarizing academic assignments and being honest in daily communication.

2. Moral Consistency

Average score: 3.40 (high category)

Description: Students demonstrate a consistent attitude between the moral principles they believe in and their daily actions. However, several respondents admitted that they still experience moral dilemmas when faced with pressure from the social environment.

3. Responsibility

Average score: 3.45 (high category)

Description: The level of student responsibility in completing academic, service, and community involvement tasks is relatively good. Most respondents show high initiative in carrying out their responsibilities without having to be reminded.

4. Moral Courage

Average score: 3.08 (moderate category)

Description: This dimension is the weakest aspect. Students tend to hesitate in making ethical decisions that risk causing conflict, especially if the decision has the potential to cause discomfort or resistance from other parties.

Dominant and Weak Integrity Dimensions

Of the four integrity dimensions studied, honesty is the most dominant dimension, followed by responsibility and moral consistency. Meanwhile, moral courage is the dimension with the lowest score.

Additional Findings

In addition to the results obtained from the questionnaire, there are also qualitative findings from respondents' comments, which reveal several reasons why moral courage is still a weak aspect, including:

Fear of offending others.

Worry about negative judgment from the surrounding environment.

Lack of practical experience in dealing with value conflicts in the service field.

Discussion

This study aims to describe the portrait of character integrity of prospective clergy students and identify the dominant and weakest dimensions of integrity. Based on the results of the study, it was found that in general prospective clergy students have a high level of integrity, especially in the aspects of honesty and responsibility.

This finding is in line with the initial expectation that prospective clergy students as individuals who have been trained academically and spiritually have a positive tendency towards integrity character. However, the results of the study also showed that moral courage was the weakest dimension. This is an important finding because moral courage is a key element in the life of a clergy who will often face ethical dilemmas, both in the scope of church services and in broader social interactions.

Scientific Interpretation of Findings

Theoretically, integrity is not only about telling the truth or carrying out responsibilities, but also about upholding moral principles in difficult situations (Peterson & Seligman, 2019). Moral courage is an important indicator of true integrity because it requires individuals to stick to the truth even when faced with social pressure or the risk of losing comfort (Kidder, 2009).

This finding shows that integrity development in spiritual education environments tends to still focus on the formal aspects of ethics and moral cognition, while the practical aspect of moral courage still does not receive adequate development. This is in line with the results of research by Prakoso and Setiadi (2023) which states that the aspect of learning based on real experience is an element that is less applied in the formation of the character of theology students.

Psychological factors such as fear of social rejection and worry about offending others are also causes of weak moral courage. According to Bandura (1999), moral disengagement or lack of moral courage can occur because individuals make personal justifications for their moral decisions to avoid psychological discomfort.

The results of this study are consistent with several previous studies. Yusri et al. (2020) stated that student integrity tends to be good in terms of honesty and responsibility, but faces challenges in applying moral principles when there is social risk. A study by Nugroho and Hartati (2021) also found that students tend to experience moral dilemmas when academic values conflict with the realities of the social environment.

However, this study provides novelty because it specifically portrays prospective clergy students, who should have higher integrity standards than students in general. When the aspect of moral courage turns out to still be a weak point, this becomes material for in-depth evaluation for theological education institutions.

Implications of Findings

These findings have important implications for theological educational institutions, especially in the preparation of character building curricula. The integrity development curriculum is not enough to just consist of normative teaching materials, but needs to be supplemented with:

- An experiential learning approach (learning based on real experiences), such as involvement in social activities that require direct ethical decision-making.
- Mentoring or personal assistance by senior clergy who can provide real examples of how to be brave in difficult situations.
- Service practicums that involve students in facing the reality of value conflicts in the field.
- Simulation of ethical dilemma cases, as an exercise in critical thinking and moral decision-making.

In addition, it is also necessary to strengthen the dimension of personal spirituality, because the integrity of true clergy is born from a deep relationship with God who is the source of moral strength (Willard, 2016; Miller, 2022).

This study has several limitations that need to be considered, including:

- The scope of the study is still limited to one theological educational institution, so generalization of the results needs to be done carefully.
- Data collection using closed questionnaires allows for social bias, where respondents may provide answers according to social expectations.
- Not all dynamics of moral courage can be expressed through quantitative instruments, so further research is needed with a qualitative approach to explore deeper aspects.
- Further research is expected to expand the scope of respondents by involving various theological higher education institutions in Indonesia. In addition, research with a phenomenological qualitative approach can be conducted to explore in depth the experiences of students in facing real moral dilemmas in the service environment.

Conclusion

This study aims to describe the portrait of the character integrity of prospective clergy students, focusing on four main dimensions, namely honesty, moral consistency, responsibility, and moral courage. Based on the results of research conducted on 58 students of the Sarjana Teologi Study Program at STT Amanat Agung, it was found that their integrity character was generally in the high category, with an average overall score of 3.36. The honesty dimension is the most prominent aspect, followed by responsibility and moral consistency.

However, this study also revealed that moral courage is still the weakest aspect among the four dimensions of integrity. This shows an urgent need to strengthen character building, especially in building students' moral courage so that they are able to adhere to the right principles, even when facing social pressure or the risk of conflict.

These findings have significant implications for theological education institutions. The process of fostering integrity for prospective clergy is not enough in the form of cognitive teaching or moral theory, but also needs to be directed at learning based on real experiences, mentoring by senior clergy figures, and realistic ethical decision-making simulations. In addition, the formation of true integrity cannot be separated from the formation of personal spirituality which is the moral foundation of a clergyman.

This study also has limitations in the scope and method of data collection. Therefore, further research is needed with a wider reach and a qualitative approach to deepen the understanding of the internal dynamics of students in building moral courage. Thus, it is hoped that theological education in Indonesia will be increasingly able to produce clergy who are not only academically intelligent, but also strong in character integrity and able to become moral role models in society.

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