



## Implementation Spirituality of Saint Therese Lisieux for Character Education at Elementary School Pangaribuan – Barus

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**Abstrak.** This research departs from researchers' concerns about the reality of Catholic educational institutions. Catholic schools have the name of a patron but the spirituality of the school's patron has not become its specialty. The main problem is that many Catholic schools have not implemented their protective spiritual values as a basis for implementing character education. In general, character education in Catholic schools is still general in its implementation. The aim of this research is to explore the educational work at St. Theresia Barus in implementing character education, exploring education actors' understanding of these values, and formulating the meaning of implementing character education. The research method is qualitative research. This research was conducted at St. Theresia Barus. The main subjects were fifteen people as representatives of educational actors at St. Theresia Barus. Data collection methods are observation, document study, and interviews. The selection of locations and research subjects was carried out purposively. Data analysis uses Miles and Huberman model analysis, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data analysis is carried out interactively and continuously until completion. Analysis was carried out through three processes, namely: data verification, data source triangulation, and technical triangulation. The theoretical framework built is the implementation of integrated character education, helping education actors to understand, believe in, the values of each character. The results of the research illustrate that the education actors at St. Theresia Barus still hasn't implemented character education to the fullest. So that education practitioners at St. Theresia Barus, implementing character education for students, suggested that schools develop an interdisciplinary integration curriculum in all subjects.

**Keywords:** Character, Education, Spirituality, St. Theresia Lisieux.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Character education is a very important aspect in the formation of learners' personalities as a whole that can have a positive impact on society. Besides focusing on academic achievement, character education aims to develop morals, ethics and positive values in learners. In the context of increasingly complex moral and social challenges, the implementation of character education is an important foundation in the effort to create quality learners. Despite being part of the national curriculum, the implementation of character education in schools still faces various challenges. It is also difficult to integrate character values into the daily learning process (Sukadarii, 2018).

Therefore, the approach of integrating spirituality values can strengthen character education becomes increasingly relevant. The values of spirituality, which are often found in religious teachings and spiritual figures, become guidelines in shaping the character of learners. In this context, St. Theresia Elementary School, as part of the ministry of the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of Sibolga (OSF), is committed to integrating character education based on the spirituality of St. Theresia Lisieux. St. Therese Lisieux as the patroness of the school

inspires the sisters to shape the character of students with an attitude of love, simplicity, and fidelity to Christian values (Walburga, 1992).

In order to improve the understanding and implementation of spirituality-based character education at St. Theresia Primary School, this study aims to investigate the strategies and challenges in integrating the spirituality values of St. Theresia Lisieux into the learning process. Through a deeper understanding of the implementation of character education, schools can optimize efforts to build strong character in learners. This research not only contributes to the understanding of character education, but also provides valuable insights for education practitioners, policy makers, and the wider community. Thus, we can be more effective in preparing students with quality, faith, integrity, and resilience in facing the challenges of an ever-evolving era (Suparno, 2019).

## **2. METHOD**

This research uses qualitative methods. Qualitative research, intends to examine natural objects (natural settings). Qualitative approach research is a process of research and understanding based on methodologies that investigate social phenomena and human problems. Natural objects are objects that develop as they are, not manipulated by researchers and the presence of researchers does not affect the dynamics of these objects. This research is an emic perspective, which means obtaining data based on what happens in the field, what is experienced, felt, by participants / data sources. Through this method, researchers want to see the overall phenomena that occur at the research location in terms of the implementation of character education (Sugyono, 2014).

In qualitative research using the term sampling, namely sampling techniques. The sample sampling technique is an important step that affects the validity and reliability of the research results. Qualitative research uses the term social situation with three elements, namely: place, actors and activities that interact synergistically or in a balanced manner. Thus the objects in this study are principals, teachers and staff, students and parents of St. Theresia Elementary School who are active (Sugyono, 2014).

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research results and discussion in this article can be found in the following sections:

#### 3.1. Research Results

St Therese of Lisieux was a simple and humble girl. From childhood she loved the Lord Jesus very much and at the age of 15 she entered the Carmelite monastery to dedicate her life to the glory of God. In the Carmelite monastery, she lived a contemplative life, practising simplicity and humility. She was known as the Theresia of the Child Jesus because of her daily devotion to the Holy Face of Jesus. The writings of St John of the Cross which were her daily spiritual reading influenced her spirituality, especially the idea of charity. St Theresia's life journey was coloured with challenges and difficulties until she suffered from tuberculosis for 18 months. Despite suffering from tuberculosis, she continued to pray and comfort her fellow sisters with great love (Lisieux, 1984).

The spirituality of St Theresia Lisieux became a living legacy for the Carmelite sisters and the universal Catholic Church. The spirit of simplicity and loving humility is unique to St Therese of Lisieux. The spirituality of St Therese of Lisieux is a variety of Christian values that shape the character of the life of faith of many people, namely: Prayer is the spiritual heart, the swing of the heart and the magnet that always attracts us to God and strengthens our relationship with Jesus and others. Deep prayer is a means of giving thanks to God, and emptying oneself. Charity is the foundation of the pilgrimage to holiness. For St Therese, perfect charity is self-sacrifice for humanity. St Therese practised humility with an attitude of willingness to forgive and willingness to do small tasks with great love, as a path to holiness. Simplicity is the 'Little Way' to express love to others. In her daily life St Therese showed her concern for others by praying for others. St Therese teaches the importance of perseverance to stay true to the values of the Christian faith. Hard work is a conscious effort to achieve a desired goal. St Theresia showed her hard work in pursuing her love, Jesus, by carrying out her duties responsibly. A disciplined attitude by obeying the rules is a means to achieve holiness with a free heart. For St Theresia, small sacrifices are the satisfaction of the soul in loving God (McCaffery, 1998).

The spiritual values of St Theresia Lisieux form the basis for school activities and spiritual formation, creating an environment conducive to and supportive of diverse learning. Through these values, St Therese of Lisieux inspired many people and educational institutions, enriching the spiritual life and apostolic work of the Catholic Church until today. St Therese Lisieux was an extraordinary spiritual figure with a life of dedication and simplicity. Despite

facing various challenges, she remained steadfast in her faith and also remained enthusiastic to love and serve God. Her life story teaches that through a life of love, humility and dedication, one can achieve holiness and have a profound impact on others. Her spiritual values are foundational, inspiring and spiritually enriching for many in their spiritual journey and in the universal Catholic Church (Leda, 2020).

Education is a long conscious endeavour. This is in line with the formulation in the Law on Education System No.20 of 2003, namely education is a conscious and planned effort to develop self-potential. Thus education is a continuous process with all the effectiveness carried out to achieve the goal, namely the development of students towards maturity (Pristiwanti et al., 2022).

Character includes a person's psychiatric traits, personality, ethics, behaviour, and temperament, which focus on the value of goodness in action. The word 'character' comes from the Greek language which means to mark. Sofyan Tasauri, quoting Cronbach, said that character is formed from habits, ideas, beliefs, feelings, and actions (Tasauri, 2015). Zubaedi defines character as personal character based on Coon's understanding (Zubaedi, 2011), while Ni Putu Suwardani refers to Kesuma's opinion that character is a distinctive personality (Suwardani, 2020). Based on the opinions of experts, it can be said that character is a person's psychological trait that is closely related to personality and moral prominence.

Character education is one of the main components in the education system that aims to form students who are not only academically intelligent, but also have responsibility and morality. The value of national character education covers various aspects of life that are united so that it becomes a unified and balanced whole. These values include; Religion, Honesty, Tolerance, Discipline, Hard Work, Creative, Independent, Democratic, Curiosity, National Spirit, Love for the Country, Appreciate Achievement, Friendly or Communicative, Love Peace, Love to Read, Care for the Environment, Social, Responsibility. Thus, the value of character education is a strong foundation for building a moral nation. The implementation of character education values creates a generation that has morals and ethics and is committed to the development of the nation and state (Zubaedi, 2011).

The Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of Sibolga, takes part in realising the goals of national education. The spirituality of the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of Sibolga OSF, which is based on the Word of God, seeks to actualise Christian values in educational services. Through educational services, the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of Sibolga OSF integrates the vision of the Congregation and the vision of the Karya Darma Bakti Sibolga

Foundation to implement character education values that are distinctive to the spirituality of St Theresia Lisieux.

Character education based on the spirituality of St Therese Lisieux aims to develop ethical and moral values. The prayer life that is the heart of St Theresia Lisieux encourages teachers, staff, students and parents to nurture a deep religiosity. Love and empathy create a conducive school environment. Humility is realised by having the courage to accept shortcomings or recognising limitations, and respecting others. Simplicity reduces excessive desires and always hopes for God's mercy (Leda, 2020).

The character value of cooperation increases the efficiency of achieving common goals. By working together, it can contribute with existing skills to achieve the desired results. The values of perseverance, care and responsibility emphasise patience and strong determination in sincere service to learners. The integration of these values forms a solid foundation for strong character building and creating a generation with good morals and ethics. Thus the development of these values helps to create dedicated learners and create a harmonious life in society.

St Theresia Elementary School, which is one of the school units in the Karya Darma Bakti Sibolga Foundation, belongs to the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of Sibolga. The research was conducted for five months from February to June 2024. Based on the data and information obtained by the researcher, since the establishment of SD St Theresia in 2020 until now, this school has implemented character education values based on the spirituality of St Theresia Lisieux.

Character education at the primary school is good. Teachers try to create a conducive school environment and approach students who are less academically able. Thus, the learning process at St Theresia Primary School not only prioritises the academic development of students but also character building. Parents feel proud that their children go to SD St. Theresia even though it is located far from the main road (Lay, 2024).

The establishment of SD St Theresia in Barus village is a motivation for the community. Students who go to SD St. Theresia show the development of attitudes and behaviours as well as intellectual abilities are much different from students who go to public schools. The values of character education at SD St Theresia Lisieux are integrated into the curriculum to shape the personal maturity of students. However, as a Catholic school with its own spirituality, SD St Theresia has not implemented the character education values based on the spirituality of St Theresia Lisieux to the fullest.

### **3.2. Discussion**

Character education based on the spirituality of St Therese Lisieux refers to the development of moral and spiritual values of the teachings and life examples of St Therese Lisieux. This value education inspires learners to develop into individuals who have strong moral and spiritual integrity. In the research conducted by the researcher at SD St Theresia, the informants acknowledged that SD St Theresia has implemented character values. The character values applied are as follows: Religious values are carried out in joint prayer activities, rosary prayers, the way of the cross, and recollection. The value of Charity is seen in a friendly attitude towards everyone, greeting motherly, reprimanding gently, and not discriminating. Policies to alleviate school fees for the underprivileged and special assistance to students who are academically weak. The value of humility is developed by learning from each other, asking for help if experiencing difficulties, daring to apologise, forgiving, and respecting differences. The value of Simplicity is realised by greeting friendly, dressing neatly, being on time, willing to share, expressing ideas, keeping the school environment clean, and apologising and forgiving. The value of Caring is developed through actions such as sharing food, teaching friends, being a peer teacher, assisting friends in difficulty, and providing fee waivers for the underprivileged. The value of Perseverance is applied by completing learning and picket tasks, maintaining commitments, and patiently guiding difficult learners. The value of Hard Work is developed by doing one's own homework, carrying out picket duties, maintaining class cleanliness, making teaching materials, and checking students' assignments. The value of Discipline is applied by complying with school rules. The value of Responsibility is developed by carrying out picket duty, doing homework, tidying up the classroom, watering plants, preparing teaching materials, and compiling the school curriculum (Erastianto, n.d.).

Spirituality-based character education encourages and inspires many people and the universal Catholic Church. Spirituality-based character education is an educational approach that emphasises personality development. The main objective of this approach is to form intelligent learners who have high morality and ethics, and have a strong spirituality (Widiatmaka et al., 2022).

The implementation of character education is the process of integrating moral and ethical values into the curriculum and other activities. The implementation of character education values is designed by creating a better educational environment so as to produce quality learners and have an impact on schools and society. The implementation of character education

based on St Therese Lisieux's spirituality in the school curriculum to shape learners' characters so that they have strong morals and ethics (Lay, 2023).

Based on the research, informants acknowledged that the implementation of character education has been carried out in accordance with St Therese Lisieux spirituality through daily habituation. Teachers carry out habituation by greeting and giving greetings, asking students' willingness to lead prayers together, praying together, paying attention to class tidiness. The implementation of character education is also carried out through the learning process, checking books and checking students' homework, when praying all students are silent and with good attitudes. Creating creative and innovative learning. The teacher gives learners the opportunity to ask questions. When asking or responding to questions, others listen and the class teacher makes a turn list to ask questions to anticipate passive learners. Teachers condition the class to become peer teachers for their friends. Parental involvement is also an implementation of character education through interactive communication (Anis et al., 2023).

The implementation of character education is a process to integrate moral and ethical values into the curriculum, school activities, and the daily lives of learners. The goal is to create better education and produce quality learners. Thus, the implementation principle of St Theresia Lisieux's spirituality is included in the curriculum and other activities to form learners who have a distinctive character and can have a positive impact on society.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the research on the implementation of character education at SD St Theresia based on the spirituality of St Theresia Lisieux, the researcher can draw the following conclusions:

St Theresia Elementary School is a school that is in demand by the community. Catholic education school that shows its own characteristics. Catholic education school that educates students not only prioritises the development of faith, nor is it solely oriented towards intellectual and social development, but in a balanced and simultaneous manner all these aspects are developed. SD St Theresia is one of the Catholic schools in Barus village as it should be. SD St Theresia, although still newly established, is far superior to other schools (Dasrimin, 2023).

Basically, the implementation of character education at SD St Theresia based on the spirituality of St Theresia Lisieux has been carried out since accepting students in 2020. The implementation of character education is carried out through daily habituation, learning in the

classroom. As one of the schools recognised by the government, St Theresia Lisieux Primary School is obliged to equip students with various knowledge and character education. There is no standard regulation on how to implement character education, but St Theresia Primary School optimistically incorporates it into the curriculum, regulations, and school rules. Thus, it can slowly produce students with character (Sumiati & Sofyan, 2023).

The implementation of character education is carried out by habituation. habituation efforts during the teaching and learning process make students aware of the importance of good attitudes and behaviour in life. Good behaviour has a positive impact on oneself and society. Thus, character education is not a formality to be inherent in learners. An important and effective part of implementing character education is building interactive communication between teachers and parents (Prabandari, 2020).

Therefore, to implement character education at St Theresia Primary School based on the spirituality of St Theresia Lisieux, it is necessary to create a conducive environment. Prepare interesting curriculum and teaching materials. Synergy between the school and parents, and building a joint commitment in implementing education consistently. Thus, the implementation of character education at St. Theresia Primary School based on the spirituality of St. Theresia Lisieux is well realised to produce students with character so that they can contribute to the school and society.

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