



Analysis of Male Congregants' Absenteeism in Sunday Worship at BKN Faomasi Church - Resort IX Sibolga

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the factors contributing to male congregants' absenteeism in Sunday worship at BKN Faomasi Church, Resort IX Sibolga, as well as its impacts on families, church members, and church life. The background of this research is grounded in the phenomenon of low male participation, which poses challenges to spiritual development, family harmony, and faith modeling. This study employs a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach according to Creswell, utilizing observations, interviews, and documentation involving 12 informants: 5 male congregants, 1 pastor, 1 church teacher, 3 female congregants, and 2 youth members. The results indicate that the causes of absenteeism are divided into internal and external factors. Internal factors include fatigue from work, economic limitations, laziness, family problems, and negative habits such as consuming palm wine, gambling, karaoke, and cockfighting on Saturday nights. External factors include pastoral leadership and church officers perceived as misaligned with sermons, monotonous worship routines, inadequate church facilities, and an unsupportive social environment. These conditions result in spiritual imbalance, the loss of spiritual role models within the family, and reduced household harmony. This study is beneficial for providing recommendations to the church on conducting spiritual guidance, implementing more personalized pastoral care, renewing worship procedures, improving facilities, and involving male congregants in church activities to enhance their motivation and participation in worship.

Keywords: Absenteeism, Male Congregants, BKN Faomasi, Church, Sunday Worship

INTRODUCTION

Fathers hold a significant role within the household as they serve both as heads of the family and as spiritual leaders (Imams). The term "male congregants" refers to a group of men who have recognized their responsibilities as family heads. Within the family, fathers possess a distinct role. They are considered important because they serve as role models for their families, leaders within both the family and the church, and bear the responsibility of providing examples of daily life conduct for their families and the congregation. The church functions as a fellowship for believers to worship, praise, and

glorify God. Through Sunday worship, congregants are encouraged to deepen their faith, strengthen fellowship, and reinforce their responsibilities as followers of Christ in daily life. Attendance at Sunday worship is not merely a spiritual obligation; it also represents a form of commitment and loyalty to God, as well as support for the collective spiritual growth of the congregation. Sunday worship is understood as an act of service, signifying devotion to God. Participation in Sunday worship, as practiced in church life, reflects behaviors or attitudes that demonstrate the distinctive characteristics of Christianity. White, a Christian author and leader in America, argued that Sunday worship involves congregants gathering together to encounter God and engage with one another. Malcolm Brown's concept of worship generally relates to ceremonies or rituals performed by a congregation or religious community as expressions of reverence, devotion, and adoration toward God as recognized by that faith. Followers of Christ are expected to honor God through Sunday worship, as stated in Exodus 20:8–11: "*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy...*" Therefore, worship, including for fathers, should prioritize and focus on participation in Sunday services. Sunday worship, as a commandment given by God through the Mosaic Law, is thus observed as a holy day. Abineno, in his writing, emphasizes that worship encompasses the entirety of one's life; it is not confined to specific times or places. Every aspect of a person's life should reflect spiritual awareness and recognition of God's presence. Abineno asserts that worship should cover all dimensions of human life, not merely formal rituals in the church. A correct understanding of worship assists individuals in living according to God's purpose and in reflecting His love and glory in daily life. A notable issue in many contemporary churches is the absenteeism of congregants, particularly fathers, from Sunday worship. This study specifically investigates male congregants who do not participate in Sunday services to identify the factors causing their absence. The spiritual growth of fathers significantly impacts the development of the church. Fathers who have been taught, nurtured, and disciplined can positively influence the church and their community. Without fathers, the church cannot effectively improve both the quality and quantity of its growth. Church ministries also advance through the active involvement of fathers. Additionally, when the church cares for and monitors the spiritual development of its members, it helps fathers find the path to true salvation. According to information from a church teacher at BKPN Faomasi, the average attendance of fathers in Sunday worship between March and May was approximately 12.5%.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research method. According to Sugiyono, qualitative research is a naturalistic approach, conducted in a natural setting and emphasizing original, descriptive data. Creswell defines qualitative research as a method used to explore a number of individuals or groups regarding social or human problems. This study applied the phenomenological method, in which the research process involved essential procedures such as in-depth interviews. The research was conducted at BKPN Faomasi, Sibolga Resort. The study took place from August to September 2025. The rationale for selecting this location is twofold: 1) The location meets the criteria relevant to the research problem. 2) No prior research with the same title has been conducted at this site. The subjects of this study included the pastor, congregation teachers, male

congregants, female congregants, and youth. The researcher needed to identify sources capable of providing relevant data for the study. In qualitative research, humans serve both as instruments and informants. In this study, the informants consisted of five male congregants, one pastor, two youths, three female congregants, and one congregation teacher. In total, twelve informants provided relevant and accurate information related to the research problem.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Several factors influence male congregants' attendance at Sunday worship, which can be categorized as internal and external. Internal factors arise from within the individual, including personal motivation, faith, and spiritual needs. Motivation, defined as the internal drive to act toward a goal, encourages fathers to participate in worship and strengthens their spiritual life. As supported by various scholars, including Vroom, Sardiman, and Purwanto, motivation encompasses intrinsic desires, expectations, and interests that propel individuals to engage in activities aligned with personal goals. In the context of Christian faith, motivation and faith are closely intertwined, as hearing God's Word nurtures spiritual growth and encourages regular worship attendance (Rom. 10:17; John 1:12; Eph. 4:13–16). External factors originate from the surrounding environment and include pastoral leadership, the quality of service provided by church officers, the structure and conduct of worship, and church facilities. Pastoral leadership plays a crucial role in motivating fathers to attend worship by providing guidance, fostering engagement, and embodying Christ-like love. Effective church service requires active communication and dialogue between church leaders and congregants, addressing their needs and spiritual struggles, rather than relying on routine or superficial practices. The structure of worship should maintain the essence of worship-centered on God's Word-while adapting creatively to contemporary contexts, ensuring it fosters genuine spiritual growth rather than mere entertainment. Church facilities, including the worship hall, sound system, and musical instruments, significantly influence congregants' engagement. Music serves as a vital tool in worship, enhancing spiritual experience, fostering communal unity, and supporting personal devotion. Properly designed church spaces with appropriate acoustics and seating arrangements further facilitate focus on worship and participation. Overall, both internal and external factors-ranging from personal motivation and faith to leadership, worship practices, and facilities-interact to determine male congregants' regularity in attending Sunday services. Enhancing these factors is essential for fostering spiritual growth, family modeling, and the long-term vitality of the church.

Efforts to Encourage Male Congregants' Attendance at Sunday Worship

Several measures can be taken by church leaders to encourage congregants, including male members, to attend Sunday worship:

- a. Avoid punishing or isolating infrequent or reluctant attendees. Punitive or exclusionary actions toward fathers who rarely or unwillingly attend church will only exacerbate the problem rather than resolve it. These congregants should first be identified, and pastoral approaches should be implemented to understand why they are infrequent or reluctant in attending worship. They should then be gently encouraged to participate regularly. Fathers who rarely attend must not be ignored,

blamed, or punished; if they have withdrawn from fellowship, efforts should be made to reintegrate them into both worship and church service through various supportive means.

- b. Ensure that church services are relevant and impactful. Some fathers may be reluctant to attend Sunday worship because they perceive the services as unhelpful, irrelevant, or disconnected from their daily lives and struggles. To motivate their attendance, church programs should be practical, accessible, and meaningful. Services should address congregants' needs and utilize existing strengths and potentials, making worship contextual and engaging, so that attendees experience tangible benefits from participation.
- c. Evaluate church programs honestly. This involves acknowledging both positive and negative aspects, including successes and failures, to improve the effectiveness of ongoing services.
- d. Pay attention to marginalized or overlooked members. Some congregants may feel neglected due to daily responsibilities or personal struggles; recognizing and addressing their needs is essential to fostering inclusion and participation.
- e. Implement short-term programs with concrete goals. Fathers who are reluctant or irregular in attending worship often respond better to short-term, practical initiatives rather than long-term programs that may seem abstract or disconnected. Short-term programs can create immediate engagement and demonstrate the tangible value of church fellowship.
- f. Be responsive to suggestions and feedback. Church leaders should actively consider the recommendations of congregants, including fathers, regarding the development and implementation of church services. When members feel heard and valued, they are more likely to participate actively in worship. Conversely, if they feel ignored or undervalued, they may become increasingly reluctant to attend church.

Social Status of Male Congregants at BKPN Faomasi

Based on interviews conducted by the author with the pastor of BKPN Faomasi, the social status of the community in the village is influenced by the local economic conditions and cultural background. In Rukun Damai Village, South Sibolga District, several differences can be observed across economic layers, which affect lifestyle patterns; however, the community maintains good social interactions without discrimination. From an economic perspective, some families in Rukun Damai Village are considered less affluent, yet mutual respect is evident, and social structures function harmoniously, supported by strong family bonds within each household.

Daily Activities of Male Congregants at BKPN Faomasi

According to the author's observations, most residents of Rukun Damai Village, South Sibolga District, are engaged in daily wage labor, pedicab driving, small-scale trading, farming, and fishing. The majority no longer experience significant economic disparity. Living costs are manageable, children attend school, and basic needs are generally met within the community. This study employed Creswell's qualitative approach to explore individuals or groups concerning social or human issues. A phenomenological method was utilized to approach the research subjects in order to obtain comprehensive answers to the questions investigated by the author.

Analysis of Male Congregants' Absenteeism in Sunday Worship at BKPN Faomasi Resort Sibolga

Based on interview findings, it can be analyzed that the reasons for male congregants' absence from Sunday worship at BKPN Faomasi Resort Sibolga are complex, involving both internal and external factors. Internally, fatigue from work emerged as the dominant factor. Edi Nduru explained that after a full week of work, he often feels exhausted, compounded by habits such as spending Saturday nights singing karaoke and drinking tuak (palm wine), leaving him physically unable to attend worship on Sunday. Similarly, Sima Bulolo highlighted that staying up late and drinking tuak leads to drowsiness, making him even more interested in watching cockfights than participating in worship. Kei Mendrofa emphasized that laziness, boredom with what is perceived as monotonous worship routines, and prioritization of work or family obligations over worship also contribute to absenteeism. Additionally, Imel Nduru noted that family problems, the surrounding environment, and peer influence further impede male congregants' attendance. Externally, a prominent factor is dissatisfaction with church leadership and service. Mesra Laia expressed feeling offended because sermons often seemed personally critical or contained teachings he considered inconsistent with the truth of God's Word. This generates emotional pain and reduces the desire to attend worship. Edi Nduru and Sima Bulolo further emphasized that the behavior of some church workers, when inconsistent with the sermons, created a negative impression, making them feel that there is no difference between regular attendees and those who are absent. Consequently, inconsistencies in leadership and service strengthen the reasons for absenteeism. The impact of male congregants' absence extends beyond the individuals themselves, affecting their families, the congregation, and the church as a whole. From the church's perspective, Pastor Yunisia Harefa, S.Th, explained that male absenteeism directly reduces overall attendance and church financial contributions, ultimately affecting the growth of ministry. Omes, a congregation teacher, stressed that irregular attendance weakens personal faith due to a lack of consistent exposure to God's Word. For families, fathers' absence diminishes their role as spiritual exemplars, depriving children of a role model in spiritual development. Within the congregation, male absenteeism reduces communal cohesion and undermines the collective effort to strengthen church life. Female congregants reinforced this analysis. Imel noted that fathers' absence disrupts family peace, progress, and spiritual balance. Kei Laia added that children often emulate their fathers' habits; if the father rarely attends church, children may perceive worship as unimportant. Riel further observed that this diminishes household harmony and weakens children's enthusiasm for worship due to the lack of a direct paternal example. Similarly, the youth reported negative consequences. Safina Nduru stated that her father's absence from worship caused familial disharmony and contributed to his frequent irritability. Arianto emphasized that male absenteeism deprives young people of spiritual role models. More broadly, this affects the worship engagement of wives and children, reducing overall congregational balance. Overall, the analysis demonstrates that absenteeism is not merely rooted in personal factors such as laziness or bad habits, but also in external factors, including worship services perceived as failing to provide appropriate role modeling. Its impact is multidimensional, encompassing personal, family, and congregational aspects, even influencing the

institutional continuity of the church. Therefore, this phenomenon presents a significant challenge for the church to implement more relevant approaches, build authentic leadership, and create worship experiences that motivate male congregants to actively reengage in church life. As the researcher, it can be concluded that absenteeism among male congregants at BKPN Faomasi Resort Sibolga is influenced by both internal and external factors. Internally, fatigue from a full workweek, laziness, negative habits such as drinking tuak, karaoke, gambling, and watching cockfights on Saturday nights constitute the primary barriers. Additionally, unresolved family issues, boredom with monotonous worship patterns, and the perception that worship does not bring meaningful change further reduce attendance motivation. Externally, incongruence between clergy and lay workers' behavior and sermon content, reprimands delivered only publicly without personal guidance, an unsupportive social environment, and inadequate church facilities exacerbate the situation. These barriers indicate that male congregants' presence is not solely an individual concern but also relates to the quality of church leadership and environmental support. The consequences of male absenteeism are multidimensional. Personally, congregants miss opportunities for spiritual nourishment and fellowship, weakening their faith. Within families, fathers' absence as spiritual role models causes children to lack guidance in faith formation, as highlighted by female congregants noting children emulate their fathers' habits. Congregationally, absenteeism diminishes communal cohesion and participation, reducing overall church life quality. Institutionally, churches experience financial shortfalls and decreased ministry growth, as reported by Pastor Yunisia Harefa.

From a phenomenological perspective, the subjective experiences of interviewed fathers reveal tension between faith and daily life realities. Phenomenology emphasizes understanding reality from individuals' lived experiences and interpretations. Thus, factors such as fatigue, disappointment with services, and entertainment choices are not merely negative behaviors but manifestations of meaning shaped by personal experience and perception of worship. Phenomenological analysis helps us understand that absenteeism is not simply a matter of "laziness" or "lack of faith," but the result of interactions between internal drives, spiritual experience, and external influences shaping attendance decisions. Strong internal motivation should overcome external obstacles. However, in this case, unsupportive external factors further weaken already fragile internal motivation. This aligns with Irawan et al., who argue that motivation rooted in knowledge of God can strengthen faith resilience, but without a healthy environment, such motivation easily fades. Consequently, male congregants' attendance depends not only on personal responsibility but also on the church's capacity to provide inspiring leadership, authentic service, contextual worship, and supportive facilities. The phenomenon of male absenteeism at BKPN Faomasi Resort IX Sibolga results from a combination of internal factors (fatigue, weak motivation, negative habits, boredom) and external factors (unsupportive leadership, monotonous worship, inadequate facilities). Its impact includes weakened personal faith, disrupted family alignment, reduced congregational participation, and weakened church institutional stability. From a phenomenological standpoint, this phenomenon must be understood through the subjective meanings constructed by male congregants regarding worship experience. Therefore, church interventions should address both internal aspects (reviving faith-

based motivation) and external aspects (enhancing leadership, worship, and facilities) to restore male congregants' participation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the absenteeism of male congregants from Sunday worship is influenced by two main factors: internal and external. Internal factors relate to the conditions within each individual father, such as fatigue after work, negative habits including drinking tuak (palm wine), gambling, cockfighting, laziness, karaoke on Saturday nights, taking care of chickens, and boredom with worship perceived as monotonous. Additionally, personal or family problems can undermine the fathers' peace of mind, further discouraging their participation in worship. External factors encompass aspects of church leadership and service, such as perceived inconsistencies between the sermons delivered by pastors and the daily behavior of church workers, insufficiently personal pastoral approaches, monotonous worship routines, inadequate church facilities, and a social environment that does not adequately support the spiritual life of congregants. The impact of male absenteeism is evident across several dimensions. On a personal level, fathers' spiritual lives weaken due to limited access to God's Word and communal fellowship. Within the family, the father's role as a spiritual exemplar diminishes, potentially leading children to imitate negative behaviors and causing an imbalance in family spirituality. At the congregational level, communal participation in worship becomes incomplete and overall engagement declines. Institutionally, reduced male attendance affects both the spiritual growth of the congregation and the church's financial support. Efforts by the church to increase male participation have included pastoral visits, strengthening fellowship programs specifically for men, sermons emphasizing the father's role in the family, and involving men in church service. However, these measures have not been fully effective due to limitations in delivery methods, coordination among church workers, and a lack of personal approaches that genuinely resonate with congregants. From a phenomenological perspective, absenteeism can be understood as the result of an interaction between weak spiritual motivation and unsupportive external conditions. Therefore, effective solutions must address not only the internal spiritual formation of congregants but also improvements in the quality of church leadership, worship arrangements, and facilities. Thus, this study affirms that male absenteeism from Sunday worship is not solely an individual issue but also a shared responsibility of the church and its members. Through consistent spiritual formation, compassionate pastoral care, and improvements to worship systems, it is expected that male congregants will regain motivation to participate in Sunday services and serve as spiritual exemplars for their families, the congregation, and the church as a whole.

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