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Holistic Community Service at Lembaga Kesejahteraan Sosial Anak Widya Asih Blimbingsari: Spiritual Empowerment and Social Support by STT Bethel Indonesia Doctoral Program

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Abstract. This community service program aimed to provide holistic support—encompassing spiritual enrichment, educational assistance, and essential daily necessities—to children at Lembaga Kesejahteraan Sosial Anak (LKSA) Widya Asih Blimbingsari, Kecamatan Melaya, Kabupaten Jembrana, Bali. The program was jointly implemented by doctoral students and lecturers from Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Bethel Indonesia (STT Bethel Indonesia), Petamburan Jakarta, coinciding with the institution's commemoration of its 50th Golden Anniversary. A participatory approach was employed, integrating direct service delivery with academic inquiry through interviews with LKSA management and community figures. Core activities included a joint worship service, a devotional sermon, and the distribution of educational materials (notebooks, pens), personal hygiene items (bathing soap, shampoo), and institutional-branded t-shirts to all children. The results demonstrate that the program successfully strengthened the spiritual well-being and academic motivation of the children, provided meaningful material support, and fostered enduring relational bonds between STT Bethel Indonesia and the Christian social welfare institution. The participatory and holistic model employed in this program highlights the pivotal role that theological higher education institutions can play as partners in community-based social welfare, contributing meaningfully to the comprehensive development of children in institutional care.

Keywords: Community service, Holistic ministry, Child welfare, Participatory approach.

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Introduction

Community service constitutes one of the three fundamental pillars of Indonesian higher education—the Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi—alongside education and research (Undang-Undang Nomor 12 Tahun 2012). This mandate requires academic institutions not only to generate knowledge but also to actively contribute to social welfare and community development. In recent years, Indonesian universities and higher theological institutions have increasingly recognized community service as an integral mechanism for translating academic knowledge into practical social impact (Hakim et al., 2019; Situmorang, 2021; Trisnamansyah et al., 2020). Among the various forms of community engagement, programs directed at vulnerable child populations—particularly those residing in child welfare institutions (Lembaga Kesejahteraan Sosial Anak, LKSA)—have attracted growing scholarly and policy attention.

LKSA, commonly understood as orphanages or children's homes in the Indonesian context, serve as primary social protection systems for children who have been separated from their families through poverty, parental loss, or other social crises (Kementerian Sosial Republik Indonesia, 2011; Styne & Schwartz, 2014; Zeng et al., 2016). Research consistently highlights that children in institutional care face unique developmental challenges, including limited access to individualized attention, reduced academic resources, and vulnerability to socio-emotional difficulties (Groark & McCall, 2011; Johnson et al., 2010; Smyke et al., 2007; Zeanah et al., 2003). Addressing these challenges requires a holistic and multi-dimensional approach that simultaneously attends

to the children's spiritual, psychological, educational, and material needs (Lau & Siu, 2021; Myers, 2011; Purvis et al., 2007).

Theological educational institutions are uniquely positioned to deliver such holistic interventions, given their dual mandate to pursue academic excellence and to embody the values of compassionate service (Adeney, 1995; Conn & Ortiz, 2001; Padilla, 2004). The integration of spiritual formation, academic rigor, and social action is foundational to the mission of theological higher education (Escobar, 2003; Stott & Coote, 1980). In Indonesia, the growing network of Protestant and Catholic theological institutions has increasingly engaged in community service activities that extend beyond religious programming to address practical social needs (Hoekema, 2021; Lumintang, 2018; Nainggolan, 2020).

LKSA Widya Asih Blimbingsari is a Christian-based child welfare institution located in Blimbingsari Village, Kecamatan Melaya, Kabupaten Jembrana, Bali. Blimbingsari itself holds deep historical significance as one of the oldest Christian villages in Bali, established in the 1930s following the pioneering missionary work of Walter Post and Tsang To Hang (Bakker, 1993; Swellengrebel, 1960). Against this rich spiritual heritage, LKSA Widya Asih has served as a sanctuary for vulnerable children across West Bali for half a century. The institution's 50th Golden Anniversary in 2026 marks a milestone of sustained service and institutional resilience, warranting both celebration and renewed commitment from the broader Christian community.

Despite the demonstrable needs of LKSA residents, documentation of systematic community service programs directed at such institutions by Indonesian theological higher education remains sparse in the academic literature. Most published PKM studies focus on environmental, health, or economic empowerment programs, with comparatively few addressing the intersection of spiritual formation, educational support, and material assistance within the framework of child institutional care (Agustang et al., 2021; Harefa et al., 2020; Nurhayati et al., 2022). This gap motivates the present study.

The purpose of this community service activity is to deliver holistic support to the children of LKSA Widya Asih Blimbingsari through an integrated program combining spiritual enrichment, educational resource distribution, and relational engagement. Specifically, this program seeks to: (1) strengthen the spiritual and emotional well-being of the children through a joint worship service and devotional sermon; (2) improve access to educational materials and personal hygiene resources through targeted distribution; and (3) deepen the collaborative relationship between STT Bethel Indonesia and the LKSA through direct engagement and academic inquiry. Through this integrated approach, it is anticipated that the program will contribute not only to the immediate welfare of the children but also to the development of a sustainable model of holistic institutional community service.

Implementation Method

This community service program was implemented on 14 October 2026 at LKSA Widya Asih Blimbingsari, Kecamatan Melaya, Kabupaten Jembrana, Bali, by the doctoral students and lecturers of STT Bethel Indonesia, Petamburan Jakarta. The implementation was structured across three systematic stages: preparation, direct service delivery, and academic inquiry. A participatory approach was adopted throughout, ensuring that the team engaged meaningfully with the LKSA community rather than functioning as passive external donors (Chambers, 2002; Freire, 1970; Reason & Bradbury, 2008).

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Preparation Stage

The preparatory stage was conducted on the evening of 13 October 2026 at Hotel Kayumas, Seminyak, Bali. All participating team members convened for a coordination meeting, during which educational materials (notebooks and pens), personal hygiene items (bathing soap and shampoo), and institutional-branded t-shirts were collectively sorted, packaged, and wrapped as gift bags for the children. This communal preparation served not only a logistical function but also fostered team cohesion and a shared sense of mission prior to the field visit. The packaging activity itself reflected the ethos of collective service, transforming material procurement into a meaningful group practice (Putnam, 2000).

Coordination with the management of LKSA Widya Asih Blimbingsari was conducted in advance to confirm the visit schedule, identify the number of children to be served, and understand the institution's specific needs. This preliminary communication aligned with best practices in community service, which emphasize the importance of contextual assessment before intervention (Chambers, 2002; Coburn, 2016). The team also prepared a structured interview protocol to facilitate academic data collection from LKSA management and local community figures during the visit.

Service Delivery Stage

On 14 October 2026, the team of doctoral students and lecturers departed from Seminyak at 08.00 WITA and arrived at LKSA Widya Asih Blimbingsari at approximately 11.00 WITA. The service delivery program was carried out in accordance with the official event schedule, which had been jointly agreed upon with the LKSA. The program opened with a welcome ceremony facilitated by an MC from the LKSA, followed by an opening prayer delivered by Lucyana Senjaya, M.Th. Thereafter, the LKSA director offered a welcome address, followed by introductory remarks from the team leader, Edwin, M.Pd., M.Pd.K., who introduced all team members to the children and LKSA staff.

The central component of the service delivery stage was a joint worship service, comprising praise and worship music led by the children of LKSA Widya Asih—an indication of the institution's active investment in the spiritual formation of its residents. The worship culminated in a devotional sermon delivered by Togap Parlindungan, M.Th., themed around hope, identity, and God's faithfulness, messages particularly resonant for children growing up in institutional care (Becker, 2015; Garland & Garland, 2014). A closing prayer was offered by Albert Djohanes, M.Th., followed by a symbolic handover of goods by Dr. Purim Marbun to the LKSA management, representing the collective gift of the team. Individual goodie bags were subsequently distributed directly to all children, accompanied by warm interpersonal interaction between the team and the children.

Academic Inquiry Stage

Following the gift distribution, a structured interview session was conducted with LKSA management and selected community figures for a period of approximately one hour. The interview aimed to gather qualitative data on the institution's history, operational challenges, and its vision for the future in the context of its 50th anniversary. This academic inquiry component positioned the community service activity within a broader research framework, consistent with the dual mandate of research and service in higher education (Boyer, 1990; Stanton et al., 1999). The data gathered will contribute to ongoing scholarly

engagement with the social welfare function of Christian institutions in Indonesia.

The event concluded with a period of informal fellowship and a farewell exchange between the team and the LKSA community, reinforcing the relational dimension of the service program. The team subsequently departed for Denpasar, marking the close of the field visit. Qualitative documentation, including photographs and interview notes, was systematically recorded throughout the program to support reporting and academic analysis.

Results and Discussion

Context: LKSA Widya Asih Blimbingsari at Its 50th Golden Anniversary

The timing of this community service activity coincided with the commemoration of the 50th Golden Anniversary of LKSA Widya Asih Blimbingsari, a milestone that carries profound historical, spiritual, and social significance. Established within the Christian village of Blimbingsari—itself one of the oldest and most symbolically important Protestant communities in Bali—LKSA Widya Asih has for five decades provided refuge, education, and spiritual formation to children from vulnerable backgrounds across West Bali (Bakker, 1993). The longevity of the institution reflects the enduring commitment of the local Christian community to social welfare and child development, a commitment now shared and reinforced by the broader theological academic community through programs such as this.

From an institutional development perspective, the 50th anniversary of LKSA Widya Asih represents more than a temporal milestone. It signifies a tested organizational identity and a proven model of faith-based child welfare that has survived economic, social, and political changes over half a century. The presence of a doctoral team from STT Bethel Indonesia at this juncture was therefore not merely coincidental but symbolically meaningful: it represented the affirmation of a shared Christian mission that transcends institutional boundaries (Hoekema, 2021; Lau & Siu, 2021; Nainggolan, 2020). The visiting team at Blimbingsari is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. *STT Bethel Indonesia doctoral team at Blimbingsari, Bali (14 October 2026)*

Children's Worship: Agency and Spiritual Formation

One of the most significant and moving dimensions of the service activity was the worship service led by the children of LKSA Widya Asih themselves. The children demonstrated confidence, musical ability, and genuine spiritual engagement through praise songs and corporate worship, challenging any assumption that institutional care undermines children's agency or spiritual vitality. This finding is consistent with the scholarship of Hay and Nye (2006),

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who argued that children possess an inherent spiritual sensibility that, when nurtured in a supportive environment, manifests as relational consciousness and transcendent awareness. The children-led worship is shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. *Children's Worship*

The children's capacity to lead worship also reflects the effectiveness of the LKSA's ongoing spiritual formation programming. Research on child development within institutional settings suggests that structured spiritual practices—including communal worship, prayer, and biblical instruction—serve as significant protective factors against the psychological vulnerabilities associated with residential care (Becker, 2015; Roehlkepartain et al., 2006). The active involvement of LKSA children as worship leaders, rather than passive recipients of ministry, aligns with a participatory model of spiritual formation that honors children as subjects rather than objects of service (Freire, 1970; Purvis et al., 2007).

Devotional Sermon: Spiritual Enrichment and Identity Formation

The devotional sermon delivered by Togap Parlindungan, M.Th. constituted the spiritual centerpiece of the program. Grounded in biblical narrative, the sermon addressed themes of divine faithfulness, personal identity, and future hope—content that holds particular relevance for children whose life circumstances may predispose them to questions of belonging, worth, and purpose (Garland & Garland, 2014; Johnson et al., 2010; Myers, 2011). The sermon was delivered in accessible and engaging language, facilitating comprehension across a diverse age range of children. The sermon and the team's engagement with the children are shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3. *Devotional sermon and engagement with children during the joint worship service*

Research in the field of practical theology affirms the transformative potential of well-contextualized biblical preaching within community service settings (Osmer, 2008; Ward, 2008). When theological content is communicated with cultural sensitivity and relational warmth, it can contribute to lasting

changes in self-perception and resilience (Lartey, 2003; Pattison, 2000). The positive reception of the sermon by the children—evidenced by their attentiveness, responsiveness, and participatory engagement—suggests that the content and delivery successfully bridged the gap between academic theological formation and accessible pastoral communication.

Welcoming Ceremony and Institutional Generosity

The formal welcoming ceremony organized by LKSA Widya Asih Blimbingsari demonstrated the institution's strong sense of hospitality and cultural identity. Several children were dressed in traditional Balinese attire—kebaya putih (white kebaya) and kain—and served as ceremonial welcomers to the visiting team, offering traditional Balinese hospitality gestures. The incorporation of Balinese cultural elements into a Christian institutional setting is a compelling illustration of the contextual theology practiced within this community, where local cultural forms are repurposed as vehicles for expressing Christian hospitality and communal identity (Bevans, 2002; Hiebert, 2008; Kraft, 1997). The welcoming ceremony is shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4. *Children of LKSA Widya Asih in traditional Balinese attire welcoming the visiting team (50th Anniversary celebration)*

This cultural performance also signals the rich intentionality embedded in the LKSA's approach to child formation: the children are not merely cared for materially but are actively initiated into a dual heritage—Christian faith and Balinese culture—that equips them with a coherent and multidimensional identity. This integration of cultural and spiritual formation within institutional care represents a model of contextual Christian education that deserves greater scholarly attention in the Indonesian theological literature (Hoekema, 2021; Lumintang, 2018).

Gift Distribution: Material Support and its Symbolic Significance

The distribution of educational materials and personal hygiene items to the children addressed concrete, practical needs while simultaneously communicating a message of care and dignity. Notebooks and pens, distributed in quantities sufficient for all children, directly supported academic engagement—particularly important given the research-documented correlation between adequate learning materials and academic motivation in children from low-resource backgrounds (UNESCO, 2020; Warschauer & Tate, 2018). Personal hygiene items (bathing soap and shampoo) addressed basic health needs that may be chronically under-resourced in institutional settings with limited operational budgets (Kementerian Sosial Republik Indonesia, 2011). The gift distribution is shown in Figure 5.

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Figure 5. *Gifts Distribution*

The symbolic handover of goods by Dr. Purim Marbun to LKSA leadership, followed by the personal distribution of goodie bags to individual children, was deliberately structured to balance institutional acknowledgment with personal relational engagement. Research on gift-giving in community service contexts suggests that the manner of distribution significantly shapes the recipients' experience: direct, personalized distribution conveys dignity and relational interest, while purely transactional or bulk distribution may inadvertently communicate a sense of othering or charity-as-pity (Chambers, 2002; Putnam, 2000). The program's dual-mode distribution—symbolic institutional and personal individual—successfully navigated this tension.

Interaction with Children and Relational Engagement

Beyond structured activities, the program included significant periods of informal interaction between the visiting team and the children of LKSA Widya Asih. These interpersonal exchanges—including games, conversations, and shared laughter—constituted what researchers have termed the relational infrastructure of community service: the human connections that give material and spiritual activities their lasting resonance (Putnam, 2000; Reason & Bradbury, 2008). For children in institutional care, meaningful contact with caring adults from outside the institution can serve as an important source of social capital and broadened horizons (Groark & McCall, 2011; Johnson et al., 2010). These interactions are shown in Figure 6.



Figure 6. *Team members engaging interactively with children during the community service program*

The engagement of doctoral students as service participants—rather than peripheral observers—merits particular attention. The doctoral program at STT Bethel Indonesia explicitly positions community service as a component of scholarly formation, reflecting Boyer's (1990) concept of the 'scholarship of

engagement,' in which academic work is understood as inherently connected to the resolution of consequential social problems. The presence of doctoral scholars in direct, personal ministry to children embodies this integration of intellectual and practical vocations, modeling for the children a vision of Christian scholarship as both academically rigorous and socially engaged (Boyer, 1990; Palmer & Zajonc, 2010; Stanton et al., 1999).

Academic Interview: Research as Community Service

The inclusion of a structured interview session with LKSA management and community figures introduced an academic research dimension to the community service activity, reflecting the Tri Dharma integration of service and inquiry. The interviews addressed the institution's historical development, current operational challenges, and aspirations for its next half-century. Preliminary findings from these interviews suggest that LKSA Widya Asih faces ongoing challenges related to funding sustainability, staff capacity, and the increasing complexity of needs among children referred from more severe backgrounds of neglect or abandonment. The interview session is shown in Figure 7.



Figure 7. *Academic interview with LKSA management as part of the community service research component*

These findings align with broader literature on the operational challenges faced by faith-based child welfare institutions in Indonesia, which typically operate on modest budgets derived from church donations and limited government subsidies (Kementerian Sosial Republik Indonesia, 2011; Styne & Schwartz, 2014). The interviews also revealed the institution's strong theological self-understanding as a 'sign of the Kingdom'—a community that embodies the values of God's kingdom in its care for the marginalized—a framework consistent with the missiological literature on the church's social responsibility (Stott & Coote, 1980; Samuel & Sugden, 1999; Wright, 2006). These qualitative data will be analyzed more extensively in a subsequent publication.

Challenges and Limitations

Despite the program's overall success, several challenges were identified. First, the geographical distance between Jakarta and Kabupaten Jembrana—requiring approximately three hours of road travel from Denpasar—places logistical and financial demands on the organizing team, potentially limiting the frequency of repeat visits. Second, the single-visit format, while meaningful, does not permit the sustained relational engagement that longitudinal community partnerships require. Research consistently demonstrates that the impact of community service is enhanced through repeated, relationship-based interaction rather than one-off events (Chambers, 2002; Putnam, 2000). Third, the interview data collected, while valuable, was limited to one session and

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would benefit from follow-up engagement to develop richer qualitative understanding.

Additionally, the absence of formal pre- and post-activity assessment instruments precluded a rigorous quantitative evaluation of the program's immediate impact on the children's well-being or academic motivation. Future programs should consider incorporating standardized instruments, such as well-being scales or pre/post surveys, to enable more systematic impact assessment and to strengthen the evidence base for this type of holistic community service model.

Conclusion and Suggestion

The implementation of this community service program at LKSA Widya Asih Blimbingsari by the Doctoral Program of STT Bethel Indonesia, Petamburan Jakarta, demonstrates the transformative potential of holistic, participatory service delivery within Christian institutional care settings. The program successfully achieved its primary objectives: strengthening the spiritual formation and emotional well-being of the children through joint worship and devotional preaching; providing targeted educational and hygiene support through gift distribution; building meaningful relational connections between the academic and social welfare communities; and generating academic insights through structured interviews with institutional leadership.

The program's coincidence with LKSA Widya Asih's 50th Golden Anniversary amplified its symbolic and historical significance, situating the community service activity within a broader narrative of Christian social witness that has characterized Blimbingsari village for over nine decades. The children's capacity to lead worship, their engagement with the sermon, and their warm reception of the visiting team all testify to the LKSA's effectiveness as a holistic institution of care—one that attends to the spiritual, cultural, and social dimensions of child development alongside basic material needs.

Furthermore, this program illustrates the ways in which doctoral-level theological education can be meaningfully integrated with community service, embodying Boyer's (1990) vision of the scholarship of engagement. The involvement of doctoral students in direct service—not merely as supervisors but as participants—enriches their academic formation while extending the institution's social witness.

For future follow-up, it is recommended that STT Bethel Indonesia establish a formalized, long-term partnership with LKSA Widya Asih Blimbingsari, including annual visits and sustained relational engagement. Program assessment instruments should be incorporated to enable rigorous evaluation of impact on children's well-being and academic engagement. The qualitative interview data gathered in this study should be developed into a standalone academic publication on the ecclesiology and operational model of faith-based child welfare in Bali. Finally, collaboration with local church networks, government social welfare agencies, and international Christian development organizations should be explored to expand the scale and sustainability of support for LKSA Widya Asih as it enters its second half-century.

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