



Educational and Character Counseling for the GMIT Elim Oetefu Kecil Congregation, NTT in Facing Human Trafficking

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ABSTRACT

This article underscores the importance of education and character counselling in preventing human trafficking cases. The rise of the economy often leads to individuals falling into the trap of human trafficking. However, by promoting awareness and actively implementing preventive measures, we can equip individuals with the necessary tools to recognize and avoid potential exploitation. Ultimately, this article emphasizes that education and character are mutually reinforcing elements in the fight against human trafficking, and that awareness and preventive measures are not only essential but also a responsibility we all share in this battle.

INTRODUCTION

Human trafficking is a complex and worrying social phenomenon, particularly in regions experiencing economic and educational pressures, such as East Nusa Tenggara (Rosdiani et al., 2021). This region is known for its high poverty rate and limited access to education, which directly contribute to the community's vulnerability to human exploitation practices (Barrick & Pfeffer, 2024). In the context of the GMIT Elim Oetefu Kecil Congregation, the threat of human trafficking is a highly relevant issue, considering that many congregation members come from marginal economic backgrounds and have limited information about the dangers and modus operandi of human trafficking perpetrators. This situation demands educational and preventative interventions, one of which is through character education counseling that can build the community's moral and social resilience against various forms of crimes against humanity (Peck et al., 2024).

Character education is a strategic approach that aims to shape individuals with integrity, responsibility, empathy, and courage in facing life's challenges (Salinding & Santoso, 2020). In the context of counseling for the GMIT Elim Oetefu Kecil Congregation, character education can be an effective means of increasing community awareness and resilience against the threat of human trafficking. The character values instilled through counseling not only function as a preventive tool but also serve as spiritual strengthening that aligns with Christian teachings (Patty et al., 2020). By building strong character, individuals will be better equipped to recognize and reject suspicious offers and have the courage to report actions that could potentially harm themselves and their community. Therefore, it is crucial that character education is designed contextually and relevant to the socio-cultural conditions of the congregation, ensuring its effectiveness and acceptance (Boiliu & Pasaribu, 2020).

The social and educational conditions in Oetefu Kecil present significant challenges in preventing human trafficking (Wijkman & Kleemans, 2019). Many families live in extreme poverty, making children and adolescents easy targets for traffickers who offer jobs or education outside the area with the promise of prosperity (Rosdiani et al., 2021). Low legal and digital literacy exacerbates the situation, as people lack the knowledge to recognize fraud and exploitation. In this context, character education counseling must encompass crucial aspects of legal literacy and an understanding of human rights, making the audience feel informed and aware. These are essential life skills that can increase individual competitiveness and independence (Melkias Boiliu & Polii, 2020). This approach will help congregations not only understand the dangers of human trafficking but also develop the capacity to protect themselves and those around them.

The church, as a social and spiritual institution, plays a central role in shaping collective awareness and becoming an agent of change within society (Wiryadinata et al., 2023). The GMIT Elim Oetefu Kecil congregation can utilize its organizational structure to initiate a character education outreach program involving various community elements, such as religious leaders, educators, church youth, and parents. Outreach activities can take the form of seminars, group discussions, skills training, and information campaigns that integrate

character values with an understanding of the dangers of human trafficking (Jamil et al., 2023). With a participatory and community-based approach, outreach will be more effective in reaching all levels of the congregation and creating a safe and supportive environment for individual character development. To further enhance the program's reach and impact, the church can establish strategic partnerships with educational institutions and civil society organizations (Adiprasetya, 2020).

To address the problem of human trafficking sustainably, a comprehensive and collaborative strategy is needed between churches, local governments, educational institutions, and community organizations. Character education outreach should be integrated into a broader human development program, supported by ongoing policy, resources, and evaluation (Siniy, 2020). This ongoing commitment will provide a sense of security and ensure a long-term solution. The GMIT Elim Oetefu Kecil congregation can play an active role in designing and implementing outreach programs that are appropriate to local needs and potential. In addition, it is important to establish a monitoring and reporting system that allows the community to proactively prevent and address cases of human trafficking (Hadjira et al., 2023). With a holistic and values-based approach, character education outreach will be a strong foundation in building a resilient, empowered community free from the threat of human trafficking in East Nusa Tenggara (Elwyn, 2020).

IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS

By considering the priority issues within the Partner, GMIT Elim Oetefu Kecil, regarding the importance of character education, as well as parenting strategies that can protect children from exploitation, and strengthening the character of adolescents and young people at risk, the methods agreed upon with the partner are seminars, training, group discussions, and Christian family development. This comprehensive implementation method covers several aspects and is carried out with several things as follows:

The preparation phase for this community service is divided into several parts:

1. Partner analysis through meetings with the leadership of GMIT Elim Oetefu Kecil to map out the issues and activities to be undertaken throughout the Community Service program.
2. The implementation of activities is a joint effort agreed upon by both parties. Through seminars, training, group discussions, and direct guidance, we will work together to support Christian families of teenagers and young adults, parents, church congregations, surrounding communities, clergy, church activists, Sunday school teachers of GMIT Elim Oetefu Kecil, as well as representatives of village governments or local social institutions.
3. Preparation of materials by presenters to support the agreed activities at the specified time and place.
4. A key part of our preparation involves establishing collaborations with our local partners. This is done through the creation of Memorandums of

Understanding (MoUs), Memoranda of Agreement (MoA), and Agreements (IA).

5. As part of our preparation, we create materials in the form of interactive media using Canva. This approach ensures that our audience remains engaged throughout the program.
6. Preparation of evaluations using Google Forms to assess and gather feedback from workshop participants to inform future Community Service activities.

The implementation of the extension activities has been agreed by both parties from October 29, 2025

Table 1. Rundown Kegiatan PKM Program Pasca Sarjana Universitas Kristen Indonesia

Hari ke	Waktu			Kegiatan	Keterangan
	Hari	Tanggal	Jam		
1	Rabu	29 Oktober 2025	07.30-09.00	Ibadah pembukaan dan doa bersama	Penguatan iman dan doa pembukaan kegiatan
			09.30-10.00	Registrasi peserta & pembagian kit seminar	Panitia lokal
			10.00-10.15	Tanda tangan MoA dan IA	Panitia
			10.15-12.00	Seminar 1: <i>"Pendidikan Karakter sebagai Upaya Pencegahan Human Trafficking"</i>	Moderator: Narasumber:
			12.00-13.00	Lunch	Konsumsi panitia
			13.00-15.00	Seminar 2: <i>"Peran Gereja dan Keluarga dalam Pembentukan Moral Generasi Muda"</i>	Moderator: Narasumber
			15.00-16.00	Diskusi dan refleksi bersama	Peserta dibagi dalam kelompok kecil
			18.00-20.00	Ibadah malam dan sharing kesaksian	Dipimpin oleh tim liturgi GMIT Elim

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Educational and character education for the GMIT Elim Oetefu Kecil congregation in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) is a strategic step in addressing the serious challenge of human trafficking, which remains rampant in the region. This activity aims to empower the congregation, highlighting their crucial role in combating human trafficking, and to equip them with a deeper understanding of

the importance of character education as a moral and spiritual bulwark against human exploitation.



Figure 1. Foreword Speech

This outreach program employs a participatory and contextual approach, tailoring the material to the local community's social and cultural context. The outreach program begins with an explanation of the definition of human trafficking, its forms, and its adverse impacts on individuals and communities. The congregation is encouraged to understand that human trafficking is not only a legal issue, but also a humanitarian issue that directly affects our local community and requires our active involvement.

The outreach program further emphasizes the importance of character education as the primary foundation for developing attitudes and behaviours of integrity. Values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and courage are the primary focus of this session. Through group discussions and case studies, the congregation is encouraged to actively apply these values in their daily lives and consider how their application can help prevent human trafficking.

Character education is also viewed as a tool for empowerment, particularly among the younger generation. In special sessions for children and adolescents, counselling provides an understanding of children's rights, the importance of self-protection, and how to recognize and report suspicious situations. Participants are given a space to share experiences, a process that plays a crucial role in building confidence and making them feel reassured and confident in facing various social challenges.

Moreover, this outreach program empowered religious and community leaders to become agents of change. They underwent specialized training to become character education facilitators in their communities, a testament to their dedication and potential. This initiative did not end with a single activity, but evolved into a sustainable, collective movement, a source of pride and inspiration for all involved.

The outcomes of this outreach program are reassuring. They show a significant increase in awareness and commitment among congregations to protect themselves and others from the threat of human trafficking. Many participants have reported feeling more prepared and confident in taking preventive action. Some congregations have even taken the initiative to design character education programs at the family and church levels, further strengthening their commitment.



Figure 2. Presentation

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this outreach program demonstrated increased awareness and commitment among congregations to protect themselves and others from the threat of human trafficking. Many participants reported feeling more prepared and confident in taking preventive action. Some congregations even began designing character education programs at the family and church levels.

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