

Transforming Sunday school education: A study on goal setting, program planning, implementation and evaluation in Bebelan's Pentecostal church

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the implementation of Sunday School education at the Pentecostal Church of Indonesia in Babelan, a rapidly developing district in Bekasi Regency, West Java, Indonesia. Babelan is a suburban area that reflects both urban growth and traditional community values, making it an essential context for studying the role of religious education in shaping children's spiritual development. The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the aspects of goal setting, program planning, implementation, and evaluation of goal achievement in Sunday School education. A qualitative approach was employed, using observation, interviews, and document analysis for data collection. The findings reveal that the process of determining Sunday School goals lacks clarity, program planning does not sufficiently align with the developmental needs of children, and program implementation is influenced by the qualifications and commitment of the teachers. Furthermore, the evaluation of goal achievement is not optimally performed. The study concludes that improvements are needed in all areas of Sunday School education, particularly in setting clear objectives, aligning programs with children's needs, enhancing teaching quality, and implementing structured evaluations to improve the effectiveness of children's religious education in Babelan's dynamic community context.

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Introduction

Religious education plays a fundamental role in shaping the moral and spiritual development of individuals, particularly in contexts where religious institutions have strong community influence. In many countries, religious education forms a cornerstone of early childhood development, with churches, mosques, and temples taking active roles in providing religious instruction (Franken, 2017). In Indonesia, where religious plurality coexists with a predominantly Muslim population, Christian religious education, particularly through Sunday School programs, is a vital tool for nurturing Christian values and spiritual growth in young children (Horowski, 2020; Sianipar et al., 2021). The rapid societal changes and urbanization in certain regions have, however, created new challenges in delivering effective religious education (Prasetiawati, 2022), particularly in

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areas like Babelan, where rapid development intersects with traditional community values.

Sunday School education, specifically in the context of Indonesian churches, serves as a structured religious program typically conducted on Sundays. It is designed to educate children about biblical teachings, Christian values, and moral conduct (Joseph, 2024; Siregar, 2023). In Pentecostal churches, Sunday School not only helps reinforce religious tenets but also serves as a platform for children to socialize, build relationships with their peers, and practice their faith in interactive and meaningful ways. In Babelan, a district in Bekasi Regency, West Java, the Pentecostal Church of Indonesia runs Sunday School programs that cater to the children in the local Christian community. Babelan, known for its rapid urbanization and growing population, presents unique challenges and opportunities for religious education, making it an important case study for examining how Sunday School programs are implemented and their overall effectiveness.

Babelan, as a suburban district near Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, reflects both the challenges of rapid urban development and the retention of traditional community practices. The district is part of the Greater Jakarta metropolitan area, a region experiencing significant migration, population growth, and socio-economic transformation. This dynamic environment makes Babelan a critical site for studying the implementation of Sunday School programs, as the intersection of urban and rural values creates a complex backdrop for educational initiatives. As Pentecostal churches in Babelan work to sustain religious education in this evolving setting, the question arises as to whether the traditional structures and approaches to Sunday School education remain effective in engaging children and supporting their spiritual growth.

Conducting research in Babelan is crucial because it allows for the examination of how religious education adapts to social changes and urban pressures. Based on the preliminary observation conducted by the researchers, with a growing population and increasing demands on educational and social systems, Sunday School programs in Babelan face the dual challenge of maintaining doctrinal integrity while meeting the contemporary needs of children. The effectiveness of these programs in setting clear goals, planning suitable curricula, implementing teachings, and evaluating outcomes becomes increasingly important in ensuring that children receive both religious instruction and practical life skills.

The urgency of this research stems from the need to address the gaps in how Sunday School programs are planned and executed. In religious education, effective goal setting is critical to aligning teaching methods with the spiritual and moral objectives that churches aim to instill in children. Without clear, well-defined goals, Sunday School programs risk losing focus and becoming ineffective in their core mission (Romika & Sianturi, 2024; Sidenvall, 2024). Similarly, program planning must take into account the developmental needs of children, as well as the socio-cultural factors that influence how children engage with religious content (Chung et al., 2023). The lack of tailored program planning can lead to disengagement or misunderstanding of the teachings.

Moreover, program implementation heavily relies on the qualifications, commitment, and pedagogical skills of Sunday School teachers. Teachers must be adequately equipped to manage diverse classrooms (Bergling et al., 2022), especially in settings like Babelan, where children come from varying socio-economic backgrounds. Inadequate training or support for teachers can hinder the program's success (Gruppen et al., 2016). Furthermore, without a robust evaluation process, it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of the Sunday School program in achieving its intended goals (Kopinina, 2020). Evaluating the program's impact on children's spiritual growth, moral development, and social engagement is essential for making informed improvements.

In recent years, scholars have explored various dimensions of religious education in different contexts. For instance, Smith and Denton (2019) investigated how religious education shapes the spiritual identity of young individuals in urban settings. Their study highlighted the importance of interactive and participatory teaching methods, which

resonate well with Sunday School practices, as a means of making religious education more engaging and impactful. They argued that Sunday School programs that adapt to the developmental stages of children tend to have better success in fostering long-term spiritual commitment. Similarly, in an Indonesian context, [Nofrianti and Arifmiboy \(2021\)](#) examined the challenges faced by religious educators in bridging traditional religious instruction with modern pedagogical techniques. Their findings indicated that in areas undergoing rapid socio-economic change, such as suburban Jakarta, there is a pressing need for religious programs to adapt both their content and methods to remain relevant and effective.

Additionally, a study by [Lao et al. \(2022\)](#) focused on the role of goal setting and curriculum planning in religious education programs. Their research suggested that the lack of clear and measurable goals can lead to fragmentation in religious teaching, where educators are unable to track the spiritual and moral progress of their students. This study is particularly relevant to the context of Pentecostal Sunday Schools in Babelan, where program goals may need clearer articulation to align with both spiritual and educational objectives. Furthermore, a recent study by [Syafaruddin et al. \(2022\)](#) on the role of evaluation in religious education programs emphasized the need for continuous assessment to gauge the effectiveness of religious teachings. The study found that programs without structured evaluation systems often fail to adapt to the evolving needs of their participants, leading to stagnation in learning outcomes.

Despite the wealth of research on religious education, gaps remain in understanding how Sunday School programs specifically address the unique challenges faced by suburban and semi-urban areas like Babelan. Most existing studies focus on either rural or urban settings, with little attention given to areas that straddle both, such as Babelan. Additionally, while much of the literature examines the academic and cognitive outcomes of religious education, there is a lack of research on how these programs influence social and emotional development in children, particularly in the context of Sunday School. This study seeks to fill these gaps by focusing on how Sunday School programs in Babelan not only impart religious knowledge but also foster holistic development in children. Moreover, previous studies have highlighted the importance of program evaluation, but few have examined the specific mechanisms through which Sunday Schools assess their effectiveness. There is a clear need for research that addresses how Pentecostal churches evaluate the spiritual and social outcomes of their Sunday School programs, and whether these evaluations are used to improve future programming.

This study introduces a novel concept by integrating the four critical aspects of Sunday School education—goal setting, program planning, implementation, and evaluation—into a comprehensive analysis of its effectiveness in the Pentecostal Church of Indonesia in Babelan. Unlike previous research that tends to isolate one aspect of educational programs, this study adopts a holistic approach to examine how these elements interact and contribute to the overall success of Sunday School education. By focusing on a rapidly developing suburban area like Babelan, the research offers insights into how religious education programs can adapt to the complexities of urbanization, while still maintaining their core spiritual objectives.

The primary purpose of this research is to evaluate the implementation of Sunday School education at the Pentecostal Church of Indonesia in Babelan, focusing on how goal determination, program planning, implementation, and evaluation influence the overall effectiveness of the program. The study aims to contribute to the broader field of religious education by providing a detailed analysis of how Sunday School programs can adapt to meet the needs of children in a rapidly changing socio-cultural environment. By identifying areas for improvement, this research has the potential to offer practical recommendations for churches seeking to enhance their religious education programs. Moreover, the findings of this study can contribute to the development of more structured and effective Sunday School curricula, not only in Babelan but in other areas facing similar challenges. By addressing the gaps in goal setting, program planning, teacher

qualifications, and evaluation, this research aims to help religious educators create more engaging and impactful Sunday School programs that support the spiritual and social development of children.

Method

Research design and rationale

This study employs a qualitative case study design, which is suitable for exploring the in-depth processes of Sunday School education in the Pentecostal Church of Indonesia in Babelan. The case study approach allows for a focused examination of a specific program within its real-world context, providing insights into the intricacies of how religious education is implemented (Hancock et al., 2021). The rationale for selecting this design stems from the need to understand the nuanced aspects of goal setting, program planning, implementation, and evaluation within the church. Qualitative methods are appropriate for capturing the subjective experiences of participants, uncovering the complexities of the educational processes, and offering rich, descriptive data. This design enables the researcher to explore the unique setting of Babelan, a district experiencing significant socio-economic changes, and how these shifts influence the delivery and effectiveness of Sunday School education.

Research setting and participants

The research was conducted at the Pentecostal Church of Indonesia in Babelan, located in the Bekasi Regency of West Java. This setting was chosen because of its active Sunday School program and its location in a rapidly developing suburban area, making it an ideal context to explore the challenges and opportunities of religious education. The participants in this study were selected through purposive sampling, aiming to include individuals who are directly involved in the Sunday School program. The participants include three main groups: Sunday School teachers (T1, T2, T3), parents of the students attending Sunday School (P1, P2), and church leaders overseeing the program (L1, L2). Additionally, children attending the program (C1, C2) were observed to gather data on their engagement and interactions. This sample ensures a diverse range of perspectives, capturing the viewpoints of educators, administrators, parents, and students, which is critical for understanding the program holistically.

Instrumentation and data collection procedure

Data were collected using two primary instruments: semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with Sunday School teachers, parents, and church leaders, allowing for flexibility in exploring key themes while ensuring that all relevant topics were covered. The interview guide focused on topics such as the process of goal setting, planning, teaching methods, and the evaluation of the Sunday School program's effectiveness. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes to one hour, and all were audio-recorded with the participants' consent. Observations were conducted during Sunday School sessions, with the researcher taking on a non-participant role to observe the interactions between teachers and students, the delivery of the program, and how the curriculum was implemented. Field notes were taken during these observations, focusing on classroom dynamics, the engagement of children, and the teaching strategies used by the instructors.

Data analysis

The data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman's approach (Houghton et al., 2015), which involves three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. In the first stage, data reduction, the interviews were transcribed,

and observational notes were reviewed and condensed to focus on the most relevant information related to the research questions. Key themes, such as goal setting, program planning, and evaluation, were identified during this phase. In the second stage, data display, the reduced data were organized into matrices and charts to facilitate the identification of patterns and relationships across the interviews and observations. Finally, in the conclusion drawing and verification stage, the researcher interpreted the data, drawing conclusions about the effectiveness and challenges of the Sunday School program in Babelan. Throughout the process, findings were continuously compared with the data to ensure the validity of the conclusions and interpretations, providing a robust analysis of the program's implementation.

Results

The findings of this study highlight critical insights into the effectiveness of Sunday School education at the Pentecostal Church of Indonesia in Babelan. The research focused on four key aspects of the program: goal setting, program planning, implementation, and evaluation. Through interviews with pastors, teachers, and parents, as well as observations of Sunday School sessions, it became clear that while the church has established a strong foundation for spiritual education, there are areas that require further development to ensure the program's long-term success. [Table 1](#) provides a concise summary of the findings for each of the four aspects, offering a comprehensive view of the current state of Sunday School education and areas for improvement. These insights not only serve as a benchmark for future evaluations but also guide the church in strategic planning to enhance the effectiveness of its educational initiatives. Addressing the identified areas will be essential in fostering a more impactful Sunday School experience for the community.

Table 1. Summary of the findings

Aspect	Findings
Goal setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Goals are collaborative but lack specificity. ○ Main goals include introducing children to Jesus, fostering spiritual growth, and teaching them to live according to Christian principles. ○ SMART criteria are suggested for clearer, measurable goals.
Program planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Detailed planning precedes each Sunday School program. ○ Annual curriculum is based on children's age groups and the church's vision. ○ Teacher recruitment is targeted, but lesson preparation lacks standardization, and progress reporting is informal.
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Programs are well-structured but face space limitations due to increasing attendance. ○ Lessons include biblical stories, practical applications, and creative activities. ○ There is no formal evaluation of children's learning or teacher progress.
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Evaluation is limited to operational aspects (logistics, activities), lacking focus on children's cognitive, emotional, and spiritual outcomes. ○ Informal parental feedback is collected, but not systematically used. ○ Infrastructure improvements are needed.

Goal determination

The goal determination process in the Sunday School (SM) education at the Pentecostal Church of Indonesia in Babelan is a crucial element that sets the foundation for the program's success. Through interviews with pastors, Sunday School trustees, teachers, and parents, this study found that the main objective of SM education is to introduce Jesus Christ as the Savior to children and to foster their spiritual growth. This goal aligns with traditional understandings of Sunday School as a place where children are introduced to Christian teachings and biblical stories from both the Old and New Testaments. One of the participants, a church leader (L1), explained: *"Sunday School is about planting the seed of faith in children's hearts, introducing them to Jesus Christ, and teaching them about salvation from an early age."* This reflects the commonly held belief among participants that SM is more than just a place for teaching—it is a service to shape children into followers of Christ.

When asked why SM education is considered important, participants unanimously agreed that it serves as a platform to teach children about God and instill Christian values. The spiritual and moral development of children is seen as a key responsibility of the church. As one parent (P1) stated: *"Sunday School is essential because it is where children learn who they are in Christ, that they are made in God's image, and that they have a purpose to live according to His Word."* This emphasis on early religious education is seen as foundational for shaping the future generation of Christians. The pastor (L2) highlighted the importance of this process by saying, *"Teaching children about God at a young age sets them on the right path, equipping them with the knowledge and faith they need to navigate life."*

The specific objectives of SM education at GPI Babelan are outlined in their curriculum document. These objectives include: fostering a correct understanding of God and self, helping children develop a love for God and others, teaching them about God's forgiveness, and enabling them to realize their responsibilities as witnesses of Christ. As described by one SM teacher (T1): *"Our goal is to ensure that each child knows who God is and what He has done for them, and that they have the tools to live out their faith in their everyday lives."* The curriculum is designed to instill biblical truths and help children grow in their faith by understanding their identity in Christ and their calling to be His followers.

The goals of SM education are not determined unilaterally but are the result of collaborative discussions between church leaders, SM trustees, and teachers. According to the interviewees, regular meetings are held to discuss the objectives and curriculum for Sunday School. The curriculum development team ensures that the program's goals are aligned with the vision and mission of the church, with the Bible as the foundation. One church leader (L1) shared: *"We always come together as a team to decide on the goals for Sunday School. It's not just about teaching; it's about guiding the children spiritually in line with the church's mission."* This collaborative approach ensures that the goals are agreed upon by all stakeholders and reflect the shared vision of the church community.

However, while the goal-setting process is clear and collaborative, the study found that the formulation of these goals could benefit from a more structured approach. The pastor and church leadership acknowledge that while their current goals align with the church's vision, they are not always formulated in a manner that allows for specific measurement and evaluation. As one of the church leaders (L2) expressed: *"We know where we want the children to be spiritually, but sometimes it's hard to measure whether they've reached that point or not."* This highlights a gap in the goal-setting process, where goals are spiritually sound but lack the clarity and measurability necessary for systematic evaluation.

The study suggests that adopting the SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Tangible) for goal-setting could enhance the effectiveness of Sunday School education. By making goals more specific and measurable, the church would be able to track the spiritual development of the children more effectively. For instance, rather than stating a general goal of teaching children to love God and others, a SMART goal might specify the expected behavioral outcomes, such as children demonstrating acts

of kindness or participating in prayer during Sunday School sessions. One SM trustee (T2) mentioned, *"If we could make the goals more specific, like focusing on certain milestones in the children's spiritual growth, it would help us know if we're truly making an impact."*

In terms of socialization of the goals, the study found that the objectives of SM education are communicated to the teachers during meetings and through training programs. The pastor ensures that all SM teachers understand the purpose and goals of the Sunday School program. As described by one teacher (T3): *"We are regularly reminded of what our goals are, and every teacher knows the importance of guiding these children spiritually."* However, the researcher suggests that a more formal method, such as using questionnaires to gauge teachers' understanding of the goals, could be employed to ensure that all teachers are fully aligned with the program's objectives.

In short, while the goal determination process in SM education at GPI Babelan is collaborative and rooted in biblical principles, there is room for improvement in making these goals more structured and measurable. By adopting a more formalized approach to goal-setting and ensuring that all teachers are fully aligned with these objectives, the church can further enhance the effectiveness of its Sunday School program and better track the spiritual growth of the children it serves.

Program planning

The planning of Sunday School (SM) education at the Pentecostal Church of Indonesia in Babelan is a key element that ensures the program's successful implementation and alignment with the church's spiritual goals. Based on interviews with pastors, Sunday School trustees, and teachers, the research found that careful and structured planning precedes every SM program. Planning is regarded as crucial by all stakeholders, and each program begins with a thorough discussion during joint meetings where the curriculum and objectives are defined. As one of the church leaders (L1) emphasized, *"We never start any Sunday School activities without detailed planning. Everything from the curriculum design to program schedules is discussed and agreed upon beforehand."* This approach to planning underscores the importance of organization in ensuring the successful delivery of religious education.

The church follows a well-structured planning process that includes defining objectives, outlining the curriculum, and preparing for the necessary resources and activities. The curriculum, developed annually by a curriculum development team, serves as the foundation for all educational activities in Sunday School. As one teacher (T1) noted, *"We always prepare the lesson plans for an entire year. The curriculum is designed based on the children's age group, and it includes all the Bible stories and teachings we need to cover throughout the year."* This systematic approach ensures that teachers are well-prepared to deliver consistent and cohesive lessons. Additionally, the program's planning incorporates the church's vision and mission, making Christ the center of the curriculum and ensuring that Sunday School children are the focus of every lesson.

An essential component of program planning is the establishment of a structural body to manage the Sunday School education. The structural body comprises the pastor (as the church leader), trustees (who supervise and direct the SM program), and Sunday School teachers (who implement the lessons). This hierarchical structure ensures accountability and effective delegation of tasks. According to one of the trustees (T2), *"We have a strong team structure, with each member knowing their role and responsibilities. The pastor leads us, the trustees ensure we are aligned with the church's goals, and the teachers carry out the day-to-day teaching."* The clear distribution of authority and tasks allows the program to function efficiently, with all members working towards a common goal.

Teacher recruitment is also an integral part of program planning. The recruitment process is based on the needs of the Sunday School service. For instance, if the program requires a teacher with musical skills, the church actively seeks someone who fits that requirement. Prospective teachers go through an interview process to ensure they understand the SM service and can contribute effectively. One of the church leaders (L2)

explained: *"When we need a new teacher, we look for someone with specific skills that will benefit the children, such as music or storytelling. We interview them and explain our expectations so they can serve effectively."* This targeted recruitment strategy ensures that teachers possess the necessary skills and are well-prepared to meet the needs of the children.

Despite the strengths of the planning process, the research uncovered areas where improvements could be made. For example, while the church has a well-defined curriculum, there is no formal system in place for reporting the learning progress of Sunday School children. Teachers rely on oral evaluations rather than documented assessments. One teacher (T3) admitted, *"We don't have a formal way of tracking the children's learning progress. We observe their participation and understanding during lessons, but there's no written record of how they're progressing."* This gap in formal evaluation means that teachers may lack the necessary feedback to adjust their teaching methods or identify students who may need additional support.

Moreover, while teachers are responsible for preparing weekly lesson materials, there is no standardized format for lesson plans beyond what is included in the curriculum. The preparation of learning materials depends largely on the initiative of individual teachers. One SM teacher (T2) explained: *"We follow the topics outlined in the curriculum, but the way we prepare lessons varies from teacher to teacher. Some teachers are more detailed in their preparation than others."* This lack of uniformity in lesson preparation could result in inconsistencies in how the curriculum is delivered, which may impact the children's learning experience.

Another aspect of program planning is financial management. The study found that the finances for SM programs are managed by a designated treasurer within the Sunday School team. For larger financial needs, the SM administrators submit requests to the church. As one of the SM supervisors (T3) pointed out, *"If we need extra funds for a special event or to buy materials, we request them from the church, but we manage the day-to-day finances ourselves."* This collaborative approach between the church and Sunday School staff ensures that the program has sufficient resources to operate effectively. However, financial planning could be further improved by developing a more comprehensive budget to predict and account for the program's needs more systematically.

In a nutshell, while the planning process for SM education at GPI Babelan is well-structured and supported by a strong team dynamic, there are areas where improvements can be made, particularly in formalizing the evaluation of children's learning progress and standardizing lesson preparation. By addressing these gaps, the church can ensure a more consistent and effective delivery of Sunday School education.

Implementation

The implementation of Sunday School (SM) at the Pentecostal Church of Indonesia in Babelan follows a well-structured and organized approach, with particular attention to accommodating the needs of children and ensuring a smooth flow of activities. According to the pastor, SM supervisor, and teachers, Sunday School services begin slightly later than the main adult worship service. While the general congregation service starts at 09:30, the SM children's service starts at 09:45. This staggered timing is intentional, allowing children some buffer time to arrive, greet one another, and settle before the service begins. As one SM teacher (T1) remarked, *"Starting SM worship a little later than the adults gives the children a chance to play together and catch up, especially for those who arrive late."* This adjustment demonstrates the church's commitment to creating a welcoming and engaging environment for the children, ensuring that no one feels rushed or left out.

Despite the structured nature of SM implementation, challenges do arise. One significant issue is the physical space available for the Sunday School program. The room allocated for SM services is becoming too small to accommodate the growing number of children attending. As a result, the limited space sometimes disrupts the smooth running of activities, as there is not enough room for all the children to participate comfortably.

One church leader (L2) noted, *"We've been struggling with space lately because the number of children attending has increased, and we're now planning to renovate and expand the room."* This ongoing issue highlights the need for infrastructure development to ensure that the program can continue to grow and accommodate more children in the future.

Regarding the reporting system for SM implementation, the study found that while teachers are not required to submit formal reports on the teaching and learning process, deviations or challenges are typically addressed informally. If issues arise, such as difficulties with lesson delivery or problems with students, they are reported to the SM supervisor during regular meetings. However, there is no formal, standardized reporting system for documenting progress or challenges in teaching. One SM teacher (T2) shared, *"We don't have a formal reporting system, but if any problems come up, we usually bring them up in meetings with the supervisors or church leadership."* This lack of formal reporting could lead to missed opportunities for tracking progress, identifying recurring issues, and making necessary improvements to the teaching methods and materials.

The importance of communication and collaboration between Sunday School teachers and church leadership is evident in the regular joint meetings that are held. These meetings, typically conducted once a year, serve as a platform for discussing the entire SM program, including the difficulties faced by teachers, such as the limited teaching materials or classroom space. One of the SM supervisors (T3) explained, *"We meet with church leaders every year to discuss how things are going with the Sunday School program. It's during these meetings that we plan improvements and adjustments for the coming year."* These meetings have resulted in the development of the church's SM curriculum, which includes objectives, teaching materials, and guidelines for the year. The collaborative nature of these meetings ensures that decisions are made collectively and that everyone is on the same page regarding the future direction of the program.

In terms of teaching the Word of God, SM teachers follow a structured process that includes three key elements: an opening, the main lesson, and a conclusion with a creative activity. Teachers begin with an opening prayer and motivational words to engage the children and prepare them for the lesson. This is followed by the core teaching, where biblical stories and principles are shared. The conclusion includes practical applications of the lesson, encouraging children to incorporate the teachings into their daily lives. After the lesson, a creative activity related to the day's story is conducted to reinforce learning. One SM teacher (T3) shared, *"We always start with prayer, then go into the Bible story, and end with something creative—like drawing or crafting—that helps the children remember what they've learned."* This structured approach ensures that the children are engaged throughout the service and that the lessons are delivered in a way that is both informative and enjoyable.

The study also found that SM children at GPI Babelan are diligent in attending services and enthusiastic about hearing stories from the Bible. Their enthusiasm is reflected in their active participation during lessons and their eagerness to listen to stories about biblical characters. According to one SM teacher (T1), *"The children are always excited to hear about Jesus and the stories from the Bible. They ask questions and are really engaged in the lessons."* However, despite this enthusiasm, there is currently no formal system in place to evaluate the children's learning outcomes, either cognitively or affectively. The lack of assessment means that the church cannot systematically track how well the children are retaining the lessons or how these lessons are influencing their attitudes and behaviors. Implementing an evaluation system could help in understanding the effectiveness of the SM program and identifying areas for improvement.

Parents of SM children are also actively supportive of the program. Many parents expressed that they encourage their children to attend Sunday School, but they do not force them. One parent (P1) explained, *"We support our child in attending Sunday School, but it's their choice. They enjoy it because it's fun, and they learn a lot."* This voluntary participation highlights the positive environment that the Sunday School program has created, where children are motivated to attend on their own accord. Furthermore, parents support the

program through prayer, time, and material contributions, ensuring that the SM services continue to run smoothly and effectively.

To sum up, the implementation of Sunday School at GPI Babelan is generally well-organized, with structured services that engage children and deliver meaningful biblical teachings. However, challenges such as limited space and the absence of a formal reporting and evaluation system suggest areas for further development. The church's efforts to collaborate and plan through regular meetings demonstrate a commitment to improving the program, but more formal systems for assessing children's learning outcomes could enhance the program's overall effectiveness.

Monitoring and evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation of the Sunday School (SM) program at the Pentecostal Church of Indonesia in Babelan is a crucial component in ensuring the effectiveness of the religious education provided to the children. According to the pastor, SM supervisor, and SM teachers, the monitoring process is primarily conducted by the SM supervisor, who oversees the program directly by attending SM worship services. Evaluation, on the other hand, is carried out in joint meetings that are held annually, where the overall program is discussed, but there is no systematic evaluation of the learning outcomes of the children. As one SM teacher (T1) noted, *"We focus on evaluating the program itself, discussing the activities and events we've done, but there isn't a specific evaluation of how well the children are learning."* This lack of focus on children's learning outcomes points to a gap in the evaluation process, which currently revolves around the program's operational aspects rather than its educational impact.

Church leaders and SM administrators monitor the implementation of Sunday School activities through informal observation, particularly by attending the services and interacting with the teachers and children. While SM teacher performance is also evaluated during the annual meetings, this evaluation is based on general feedback rather than structured assessment criteria. The meetings provide a space to discuss challenges, such as limited teaching materials or overcrowded classrooms, and they result in adjustments to the next year's program. As one SM supervisor (T2) explained, *"We have regular meetings with the church leadership to talk about how Sunday School is going, and we discuss what's working and what needs to be improved."* However, these evaluations are more about logistics and planning than measuring the direct educational outcomes for the children.

The indicators of success used in evaluating the SM program consist of three domains: cognitive (knowledge), affective (attitude), and psychomotor (skills). However, according to the pastor and SM teachers, while these domains are recognized as important, there has been no formal evaluation of the children's learning outcomes across these areas. The SM supervisor (T3) admitted, *"We haven't yet developed a way to formally assess how much the children are learning, whether it's their knowledge of the Bible or changes in their behavior."* This gap in evaluation limits the church's ability to gauge the effectiveness of its religious education program. While teachers observe children's engagement and participation during services, a structured evaluation system could provide a clearer picture of the children's cognitive, emotional, and spiritual growth.

Parental involvement in the evaluation process is also limited. Currently, parents are informally asked about any changes they observe in their children's behavior at home, but there is no formal method for collecting and analyzing this feedback. One of the SM supervisors (L2) explained, *"We ask parents how their children are doing at home, especially if they notice any changes in attitude or behavior, but we don't have a structured way of incorporating this into our evaluation."* Although parents are a valuable source of information on their children's development outside of church, this feedback is not systematically recorded or used to inform the program's future planning. A more formalized approach to incorporating parental feedback could enhance the evaluation process and provide additional insights into the effectiveness of the SM program.

One significant challenge facing the Sunday School program at GPI Babelan is the limited physical space available for SM worship. As the number of children attending SM increases, the existing prayer room is becoming too small, causing discomfort during activities. This issue has been acknowledged by SM teachers and supervisors, and plans for expanding the space are currently being discussed. One SM teacher (T1) expressed hope for the future, saying, "We're working on renovating the room to make it bigger because right now, it's really cramped when all the kids are here." This issue of limited space highlights the need for better infrastructure to support the growing number of children attending Sunday School.

Despite the challenges, the children themselves are enthusiastic about attending Sunday School, and they express appreciation for the activities and the teachers. Many of the children reported enjoying the interactive elements of the program, such as playing games and participating in creative activities related to the Bible lessons. One child (C1) shared, "I love coming to Sunday School because we get to play games and the teachers are really nice." This enthusiasm is an important indicator of the program's success in engaging the children and making learning enjoyable. However, the absence of formal evaluations of learning outcomes means that the church cannot assess how much of this enthusiasm translates into long-term spiritual growth and knowledge retention.

Parents also expressed satisfaction with the quality of the SM teachers, noting that their children were comfortable attending worship and participating in activities without needing to be accompanied by their parents. As one parent (P1) mentioned, "My child has become more independent since attending Sunday School. They don't need me to be with them during worship anymore, and they've become more confident in singing and praying." This positive feedback from parents is a testament to the supportive and nurturing environment created by the SM teachers. However, it also underscores the need for a more structured approach to evaluating the impact of Sunday School on children's spiritual and behavioral development.

In conclusion, while GPI Babelan has established a basic monitoring and evaluation process for the Sunday School program, significant improvements could be made by implementing a more structured and systematic evaluation system. Currently, evaluations focus on the operational aspects of the program, with limited attention given to the actual learning outcomes of the children. By developing a formalized system for assessing cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes in children, the church could gain a deeper understanding of the program's effectiveness. Furthermore, involving parents more actively in the evaluation process and addressing the issue of space limitations would help enhance the overall quality of the Sunday School program.

Discussion

This study set out to examine the implementation of Sunday School (SM) education at the Pentecostal Church of Indonesia in Babelan, focusing on four critical areas: goal determination, program planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. The findings reveal several significant insights into how SM education is designed and delivered, and how these processes impact the spiritual growth of children. In this section, we critically analyze the findings in relation to the research questions and current theoretical frameworks, highlighting both consistencies with existing studies and potential contributions to the field of religious education.

One of the key findings of this research is the recognition of the central role that goal determination plays in shaping the Sunday School program. The goals of SM at GPI Babelan, which include fostering a correct understanding of God, encouraging children to love God and others, and teaching them about their responsibilities as followers of Christ, align with traditional Christian educational goals (Daud et al., 2021). These goals reflect the church's intention to nurture spiritual growth in children from an early age, a point highlighted in the work of Kristeno and Tarihoran (2023), who emphasizes the

importance of religious education in developing a child's faith foundation. The collaborative process through which these goals are set, involving church leaders, SM supervisors, and teachers, also aligns with current educational theories that advocate for participatory goal-setting (Clayton et al., 2018; Isom et al., 2021). However, this study points to a gap in the specificity of these goals, where the use of the SMART framework could enhance their clarity and measurability. Such a structured approach to goal-setting has been shown to improve program outcomes by providing clear benchmarks for educational success (Rodiyah et al., 2024).

Program planning in SM at GPI Babelan is generally thorough and includes the development of an annual curriculum based on the church's vision and mission. The inclusion of age-appropriate content and biblical teachings supports the literature on curriculum design for religious education, which stresses the importance of adapting materials to the developmental stages of children (Arifianto et al., 2021). However, the present study found that while lesson plans and materials are created based on the curriculum, there is variability in how individual teachers prepare and deliver lessons. This inconsistency highlights the need for more standardized training and support for teachers, a point that is echoed in the broader educational literature (Tomlinson, 2017). Furthermore, the lack of a formal system for reporting teaching progress suggests that improvements in administrative processes could lead to a more cohesive program. This issue is consistent with findings from Cronjé et al. (2017), who argues that strong administrative support is essential for the success of faith-based educational programs.

The implementation of SM at GPI Babelan shows a clear effort to engage children through interactive and varied activities. The structured format of lessons—beginning with prayer, moving to biblical storytelling, and concluding with creative activities—follows best practices in religious education, where multiple methods of engagement are recommended to cater to different learning styles (Freathy & John, 2019). This approach aligns with the Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, which suggests that children learn best when exposed to diverse teaching methods (Cavas & Cavas, 2020). Moreover, the study found that children are enthusiastic about attending Sunday School, which is a positive indicator of the program's ability to foster a welcoming and engaging environment. This supports research by Huth et al. (2021), who found that when religious education is interactive and enjoyable, children are more likely to participate and retain information.

However, the study also highlights challenges in the physical implementation of the program, particularly regarding the limited space available for Sunday School activities. As the number of children attending SM increases, the current facilities are becoming insufficient, leading to discomfort during worship and activities. This is a common issue in many faith-based educational settings, where resource constraints often limit the effectiveness of programs (Onovughe & Mordi, 2017). Addressing this challenge through infrastructure improvements, as planned by the church, will be crucial to ensuring that the SM program can continue to grow and accommodate the needs of the children.

The monitoring and evaluation of the Sunday School program at GPI Babelan is one area where significant improvements could be made. While the church conducts informal evaluations through annual meetings and occasional feedback from parents, there is no formal system in place to assess the cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes of the children attending Sunday School. This lack of structured evaluation is a critical gap, as it prevents the church from fully understanding the impact of its educational efforts. Educational theorists, (e.g., Fancourt, 2017; Ismail et al., 2022), emphasize the importance of formative and summative assessments in tracking student progress and adjusting teaching methods accordingly. The absence of such assessments in SM at GPI Babelan suggests that the church is missing an opportunity to measure the effectiveness of its program and make data-driven decisions for improvement.

Additionally, while parents report observing positive behavioral changes in their children—such as increased confidence and a greater willingness to engage in worship—

these observations are not systematically incorporated into the church's evaluation process. Including parents more formally in the evaluation process could provide valuable insights into how the Sunday School program influences children's behavior outside of the church setting (Long, 2018). This aligns with findings from the family involvement literature, which suggests that parental feedback can play a crucial role in understanding the holistic impact of educational programs (Prihatin, 2022).

The findings of this study offer both theoretical and practical insights. Theoretically, the research contributes to the growing body of literature on religious education by highlighting the importance of structured goal-setting, comprehensive planning, and consistent evaluation in faith-based educational programs. The use of the SMART framework for goal-setting, in particular, offers a novel approach that could be adapted by other churches to enhance the clarity and measurability of their educational objectives. Furthermore, this study provides empirical support for the theory of multiple intelligences in the context of religious education, demonstrating how varied teaching methods can engage children and enhance learning outcomes. Practically, the results suggest that church leaders and SM teachers should prioritize the development of a formal evaluation system to assess children's learning outcomes, involve parents more actively in the evaluation process, and improve the infrastructure to accommodate the growing number of attendees. These improvements would enhance the effectiveness and long-term success of the Sunday School program at GPI Babelan and serve as a model for other faith-based educational settings.

Conclusion

This study examined the implementation of Sunday School education at the Pentecostal Church of Indonesia in Babelan, focusing on the areas of goal determination, program planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. The findings reveal that while the church has established clear goals and a well-structured curriculum, there are areas that require further development, particularly in terms of formalizing the evaluation process and improving physical infrastructure to accommodate the growing number of children. The collaborative process of goal-setting and the use of interactive teaching methods were found to be effective in engaging children and fostering spiritual growth. However, the absence of a systematic evaluation of children's learning outcomes, as well as limited space for activities, poses challenges to the overall effectiveness of the program. The implications of these findings suggest that religious education programs, such as Sunday School, can benefit from more structured approaches to both curriculum planning and evaluation. Implementing formal assessment tools to evaluate cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes could provide deeper insights into the program's impact on children's spiritual development. Furthermore, addressing infrastructure limitations will be crucial to ensuring that the program remains accessible and comfortable for all participants.

The limitations of this study include the focus on a single church setting, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. The study also relied on interviews and observations, which may not fully capture the complexity of the children's spiritual and educational development. Future studies could expand the scope by including multiple church settings and incorporating more quantitative methods, such as surveys and standardized assessments, to provide a broader understanding of the effectiveness of Sunday School programs. In conclusion, while the Sunday School program at GPI Babelan is generally effective in engaging children and teaching biblical principles, improvements in evaluation processes and infrastructure are necessary for its continued success. Future research should explore more comprehensive evaluation methods and investigate how these programs can adapt to the needs of a growing congregation, ensuring that children's spiritual and educational development are maximized.

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