



## Peer Group Mentoring Approach as an Effort to Shape the Spirituality of Christian Adolescents

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### ABSTRACT

This instability encourages adolescents to be more intense in exploring their identity, including in terms of spirituality and religious beliefs. This makes peer groups the most influential factor in adolescent decisions and beliefs, including in terms of spirituality and religious identity. Therefore, peer guidance is a relevant and effective strategy. This study uses a literature review method by collecting information from various sources and compiling it in an organized conceptual structure. The aim is to explore the concept and steps of peer group mentoring to shape adolescent spirituality. The results of the study indicate that Peer Group Mentoring is very effective in shaping the spirituality of Christian adolescents if carried out through appropriate and relevant steps, and can be adopted by educators and leaders of adolescent communities in the church.

## INTRODUCTION

The formation of adolescent spirituality is an important aspect in the personal development of adolescents. In this critical period, adolescents experience significant psychological and emotional instability because adolescents begin to search for self-identity and the meaning of life, including in terms of spirituality and religious beliefs. Scott Peck stated that in this phase, teenagers experience the skeptic-individual stage where they begin to question and regulate their beliefs skeptic-individual stage. Especially in the context of an increasingly complex and challenging world, teenagers seem to be faced with two sides of a coin. The upper side illustrates the influence of technological developments that often make them grow into self-centered individuals who are skeptical of religion, while the lower side reflects the ease of access to technology that makes them vulnerable to false teachings spread through social media. Coupled with the fact that peer influence is a significant factor in the formation of adolescent identity and spirituality.

During this period, adolescents tend to seek support, recognition, and approval from their peer group compared to childhood which was greatly influenced by the values instilled by parents. James W. Fowler stated that adolescents enter the Synthetic-Conventional faith stage in their spiritual development, marked by operational thinking where they develop faith through the influence of others and tend to adopt beliefs from social groups, personal thoughts about faith also appear which are influenced by friendships. Hal ini berarti bahwa interaksi dengan teman sebaya dapat memberikan dorongan positif atau negatif terhadap perkembangan spiritual mereka, karena itu bimbingan sebaya (*peer-group mentoring*) menjadi strategi yang relevan dan efektif untuk mengarahkan pengaruh teman sebaya ke arah yang konstruktif dalam pembentukan spiritualitas remaja masa kini. *Peer group* dimaknai sebagai sekelompok individu dengan usia dan status yang serupa, yang berada pada tingkat perkembangan dan pemikiran yang hampir sama, saling mempengaruhi dan berinteraksi satu sama lain guna mencapai tujuan bersama. This means that interaction with peers can

provide positive or negative encouragement to their spiritual development, therefore peer-group mentoring becomes a relevant and effective strategy to direct peer influence in a constructive direction in the formation of today's adolescent spirituality. Peer group is defined as a group of individuals with similar age and status, who are at almost the same level of development and thinking, influencing and interacting with each other to achieve common goals.

This Peer-group mentoring method is often used in learning because it allows teenagers to learn from each other, share experiences, and gain new perspectives, which makes learning less rigid, more dynamic and easier to accept. Because of this, the author believes that the approach using this method can be an effective step in answering the challenges of forming adolescent spirituality today. The view of David G. Myers, a social psychologist, also strengthens the author's opinion because he states that peer support can improve mental and spiritual health, because positive social interactions help teenagers feel accepted and supported. Through this approach, teens can share experiences, provide emotional support, and build relationships based on trust and mutual understanding. Peer-group mentoring allows teens to feel accepted and supported in their spiritual journey, which is often marked by deep questions and self-discovery.

This research contains an element of novelty because previous research did have discussions related to peer groups but tended towards cognitive and affective, for example efforts to increase the capacity of adolescents to become mental health leaders in spiritual and cultural-based peer groups in orphanages by Retno Lestari et al., Increasing adolescent mental resilience through peer group counseling in the forum of healthy adolescent ambassadors by Betie Febriana and Dwi Heppy Rochmawati, Peer Group Understanding as Health Cadres in Anticipating Teenagers' Smoking Behavior in Bijiruyung Village, Sempor, Kebumen by Fajar Agung Nugroho et al, Peer Group Acceptance with Self-Confidence in Adolescents by R Soraja et al. There is also previous research related to spirituality but it does not discuss the steps of the

peer-group mentoring approach and only covers the influence of non-specific relationships on the formation of Christian adolescent spirituality, for example parent and peer relationships and relational spirituality in adolescents and young adults by Alethea Desrosiers et al, spiritual group training for teenagers: investigating the effect of group training on spiritual well-being by Hillman Wirawan et al, Peer groups, family relationships, spirituality and entertainment influences on drug consumption of students at one university in Manabi, Ecuador by Magaly Scott et al, Mentors, friends, and teachers: peer and nonparent influences on spiritual development by Kelly Dean Schwartz et al. Meanwhile, this study highlights the relationship between the use of peer-group mentoring approaches, which are not only effective in improving cognitive and affective aspects of learning, but can also be adapted to support adolescent spiritual development.

The study aims to explore the concepts and steps of the peer-group mentoring approach as an effort to shape adolescent spirituality, by exploring various theories. This study also seeks to provide practical recommendations that can be implemented by educators, youth community leaders in the church, and other parties who care about the development of adolescent spirituality.

## **METHODS**

Literature review is a research method used, this method is carried out by collecting information from various sources and compiling it in the form of an organized conceptual structure. A descriptive approach is used to reveal facts with accurate interpretation. The data collection method is carried out by conducting a literature review, which involves reading books, scientific articles, and other published writings that are relevant to the research topic on the peer-group mentoring approach in developing Christian adolescent spirituality.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Definition of Teenager***

The crucial transition period that connects childhood to adulthood is called adolescence. Derived from the Latin *adolescere*, the word adolescence means growing or developing into adulthood. Kusmiran stated that adolescence is a period that usually starts from the age of 11-12 years and lasts until the age of 20-21 years. In relation to the definition according to Hurlock, the development stage when an individual experiences physical changes and psychosocial growth is called adolescence. Meanwhile, Sarwono defines adolescence as a period in which individuals begin to show secondary sexual characteristics and reach a stage of sexual maturity. In adolescence, individuals move from significant economic and social dependence to greater levels of independence. Adolescence is known as a challenging transition period, where changes in the environment and changes in the individual can cause emotional and psychological stress. Santrock emphasizes that the adolescent period is a transitional phase that involves changes in cognitive, social, physical, and emotional aspects. According to WHO, there are three criteria through which adolescence can be defined, namely: psychological, biological, and finally socio-economic. This includes sexual development, psychological changes that occur in children turning into adults, as well as the transition to social and economic independence.

In the context of psycho-social development, adolescents are strongly influenced by their peers compared to their parents. The influence of peers becomes dominant because adolescents begin to enter the stage of searching for self-identity and feel more comfortable in groups that have similar experiences and interests. Peers are often a primary source of emotional support, behavioral influence, and reference to social values, which in turn can influence adolescents' decisions, lifestyles, and views on issues, sometimes more strongly than parental influence. These tendencies can reinforce group identity and guide adolescents' behavior in the broader social context.

Based on the views of experts, it is concluded that adolescence is a period of development that bridges the period between childhood and adulthood, during this period a person experiences various transformations and developments in terms of physical, cognitive, psychological, and spiritual. The strong influence of peers during this period makes them a major factor in the formation of adolescent identity and behavior, often surpassing the influence given by parents.

### ***Teenage Spirituality***

The Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) defines the word spirit as spirit, soul, or spirit, while the term spiritual refers to spiritual and psychological aspects. Furthermore, in Latin, the word spirit is rooted in the word spiritus as a noun which means breath and spirare as a verb which means to breathe. Therefore, spirituality includes elements of spirit, soul, and soul, and is closely related to the spiritual aspect, more than just the physical or material aspect. In Christianity, Christian spirituality is manifested through daily behavior that reflects deep beliefs in the community, by channeling God's love through Jesus Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In adolescence, spiritual development becomes one of the crucial aspects, where the process of personality formation that begins since birth plays an important role. This period is often marked by significant emotional and psychological instability. According to Scott Peck, adolescents are in the Skeptic-Individual stage, where they begin to question and reformulate the beliefs they hold. Robert menegaskan bahwa perkembangan spiritual remaja sangat dipengaruhi oleh komunitas dan interaksi sosial di sekitarnya. Adolescents tend to form their spiritual identity through interactions with peers and participation in religious activities. James W. Fowler identified six stages of spiritual development throughout life, one of them is in the third stage, Synthetic-Conventional Faith which occurs in adolescence, they begin to build faith based on the influence of social groups. Adolescents tend to adopt beliefs that apply in their social environment, while starting to develop personal

views about their faith. Thomas Groome also supports this view by emphasizing the importance of peer-based religious education, in order to help the spiritual development of adolescents.

The role of peers does have a big impact on the spiritual life of young people, especially in Indonesia. This is clearly seen from the findings of research on the young generation of Christians in Indonesia, they highlight the dynamics of spirituality, this research was conducted by the Bilangan Research Center (BRC). Because peer influence is very large during this period, adolescents need an environment that can provide positive support in the development of their spirituality.

In this case, the church as the body of Christ and a place for fostering faith must see and understand the needs of its congregation in terms of their spiritual development. The church is not just a place of worship, but a community that must be sensitive to the specific needs of the congregation, in this case teenagers in their spiritual development phase. The church needs to create a healthy peer environment for teenagers in the formation of their spirituality because they most likely cannot achieve this if they only rely on friendships outside the church, such as at school. Schools are dominated by children who do not yet have the right view of the truth of God's Word, which in the end can negatively affect the formation of adolescent spirituality. In addition, the absence of real mentoring is also a challenge for teenagers in developing their spirituality. Therefore, the church needs to actively provide forums and programs that can meet the needs of teenagers for positive and supportive peers.

One effective approach is through peer-group mentoring programs, where teens can receive support and guidance from peers who have good spiritual values and receive supervision from mentors who have grown in their knowledge of God. In addition, churches can also hold group activities that combine religious elements with healthy social interactions, so that teens feel connected and supported in a constructive environment. By providing relevant and supportive programs, churches can become places where teens not only

deepen their faith but also develop a strong spiritual identity in a positive environment. Such programs not only address teens' spiritual needs but also help them find a community that supports their faith and moral growth amidst the dominant influence of peers.

### ***Definition of Peer-Group Mentoring***

The word peer-group is generally interpreted as a peer group, which is further defined by Santosa as a group of individuals with similar ages and intellectual abilities who interact and have special roles in their culture. Apart from Santosan, Santrock also defines a peer group as a group of individuals who have a similar level of maturity and age, who often like similar things, thus forming solidarity. Fatonah said that peer groups consist of children who have similar interests, values, personalities and views, which form the basis of attraction in their interpersonal relationships. Through the opinions of these experts, it can be concluded that a peer group is defined as a group of individuals who have almost the same age, status, interests and feelings, and the word mentoring is interpreted as coaching.

Peer-group mentoring can be defined as a process in which individuals in a peer group act as mentors to each other. It involves supportive interactions in which group members provide guidance, feedback, and support based on their shared experiences and knowledge. Kram, K. E states that Peer-group mentoring involves relationships in which individuals from a peer group act as mentors to each other, supporting personal and professional development through sharing experiences and knowledge. In line with this, Eby et al. define peer-group mentoring as a process in which peer groups provide guidance and support to each other to develop skills, knowledge and self-confidence. Higgins et al. stated that peer-group mentoring involves mentoring relationships that occur between peers who help each other in career and personal development through the exchange of information and emotional support. According to Anderson and Shannon, peer-group mentoring is a process in which more experienced individuals in a

group act as models, teachers, and consultants for other members, allowing for a dynamic exchange of knowledge and experience. The peer tutoring learning model involves more advanced students as tutors, while other students learn from them, with the aim of improving understanding and learning abilities at the same grade level. So, it can be concluded that Peer Group Mentoring is a mentoring method in which a small group of individuals of similar age or experience support each other, share knowledge, and learn together. In this group, each member serves as both a mentor and a mentee, depending on the expertise or experience they bring, the goal of peer group mentoring is to create a supportive environment where group members can grow together through sharing experiences, discussions, and collaborative learning.

The term peer-group mentoring is often used in the context of education and personal development and refers to a method in which individuals of the same age group provide support and guidance to one another. In a school setting, peer-group mentoring is used to improve students' academic achievement and social skills. It allows students to support each other in understanding course content, solving problems, and building skills necessary for academic success. In this case, for example, students can tutor their classmates in a topic they are good at or help them prepare for an exam Outside of school. Peer-group mentoring is also used in personal and professional development programs, this program is also often found in work environments, social organizations, or community groups, where individuals of the same age group or experience level provide support and advice to each other in achieving career and personal development goals. Peer-group mentoring is also applied in social guidance and community support programs, where peer group members provide emotional support, share experiences, and guide each other through life challenges or social issues.

### ***Benefits of Peer-Group Mentoring***

This peer group mentoring approach is widely used because it provides many benefits and is seen as an effective teaching method and is relevant to the needs of adolescents. Some of the benefits that are seen when linked to the spiritual, emotional and social aspects of adolescents are:

*First*, increasing learning and spiritual independence: increasing learning independence is a benefit shown in learning using the peer group method. In the context of spirituality, this independence also includes the ability to explore and deepen spiritual understanding independently. *Second*, Social and Emotional Support: Positive relationships between peers can offer beneficial social support to adolescents facing various developmental challenges, including emotional and spiritual support, which helps them feel more connected to their community. Because there is a deeper closeness and intimacy between the student being tutored and the student providing assistance as a tutor. Peer-group mentoring also plays an important role in providing additional support that helps teens cope with the spiritual and emotional challenges they experience. *Third*, Transfer of Knowledge and Spiritual Values: Peer mentoring is an effective way to transfer knowledge, including spiritual aspects and religious values. Therefore, peer-group mentoring can be a means to share spiritual experiences and strengthen religious values. Therefore, peer-group mentoring can be a means to share spiritual experiences and strengthen religious values.

*Fourth*, Character and Ethics Development: Peer group mentoring can also help in character and ethics development based on spiritual values. Discussion and reflection with peers can strengthen commitment to moral and ethical principles taught in religion. Activities like this are also an opportunity to motivate yourself to become an independent, loyal, and mature person.

*Fifth*, the language is clearer and easier to understand: The language used is easy to understand and does not cause feelings of awkwardness, inferiority, or shame. This is expected to make students who experience difficulties feel more courageous to express the problems they face.

### ***Peer-Group Mentoring Steps***

In the application of peer-group mentoring, effective steps are needed to make this approach work well. Sani classifies the steps for implementing the peer group mentoring approach into several stages, namely: 1) The leader organizes a mentoring group consisting of 4 individuals of comparable age. Each group must have at least one member who has a high understanding and ability in guiding and supporting spiritual development, but still in an age range that is not too far apart so that they can function as a mentor to others; 2) The mentor explains the mentoring process, which is carried out in a relaxed manner through simple programs such as quiet time together, contemplation of the word, sharing experiences, and facing challenges through conversations in a group chat. The mentor also explains the role of each group member as a supporter and friend who strengthens each other; 3) The mentor routinely conveys contemplation of God's word and explains the truth of the word and shares personal experiences in a light way to all group members, while providing opportunities for open discussion and questions and answers; 4) The mentor can give assignments, with the note that group members who experience obstacles when completing the task can ask their friends who act as mentors or directly to the mentor for help; 5) The mentor always monitors the personal activities and spiritual development of each member, and provides input and direction as needed.

Gordon then put forward 5 stages that need to be applied in the peer group mentoring approach: 1) Choosing mentoring partners and defining program objectives; 2) Developing the mentoring curriculum; 3) Training the mentors; 4) Overseeing the program; 5) Conducting evaluations. Anas also explained several stages of implementing the peer group

mentoring method, including: 1) Designing a treatment strategy; 2) Selecting a mentor; 3) Conducting mentor training, both outside and inside class time, but the mentor remains responsible for delivering the material to all students; 4) Implementing mentoring, where group members (mentees) and mentors learn together, and the mentor provides explanations and helps improve the mentee's understanding; 5) Conducting evaluations, starting with monitoring that continues with periodic evaluations to identify difficulties faced by mentors and mentees during the mentoring process.

### ***Peer-Group Mentoring Approach as an Effort to Form Christian Youth Spirituality***

Based on the theoretical explanation above, the author formulates the steps for implementing Peer-Group Mentoring as an effort to form the spirituality of Christian teenagers which involves a series of structured and systematic steps, including:

*First*, the process begins with the selection of mentors, where the primary mentor in this case the youth leader or youth leader in the church selects individuals with high spiritual abilities and are considered suitable to act as group mentors. This step is important to ensure that the selected mentors can provide effective guidance to their peers.

*Second*, the main mentor or youth leader provides special training to the group mentors. This training aims to prepare mentors so that they are able to facilitate discussions, provide spiritual guidance, and manage the dynamics of the mentoring group effectively.

*Third*, after conducting training, the youth leader divides his youth members into small heterogeneous groups or can also be through direct member selection by the group mentor for the youth who are considered more familiar and able to be guided, this group consists of 3-4 people. Each group must have one mentor who is responsible for leading and guiding the group.

*Fourth*, the next stage in the initial mentoring meeting, the mentor needs to explain the role of each group member, both as a mentor and a mentee (mentee) and explain the mentoring concept that will

be carried out. This explanation is important to ensure that each group member understands their responsibilities and can contribute effectively to the mentoring.

*Fifth*, in each meeting, the group mentor is tasked with leading activities in the group such as delivering God's word and testimony at the beginning of the mentoring activity before the core mentoring session begins. This aims to ensure that all participants have the same foundation of understanding God's word on the topic to be discussed, so that discussions and learning in the mentoring group can run smoothly.

*Sixth*, In the implementation of the mentoring session, each group is given a task that must be completed together related to the spiritual development of each member. The mentor plays an active role in helping mentees who are experiencing difficulties, ensuring that each group member can follow and understand the material provided. During this process, the mentor actively monitors the activities of both the personal and spiritual lives of its members, provides assistance if needed, and ensures that the development process of its mentees goes according to plan. Mentoring friends can also provide input and tell stories of their experiences if there are other members who experience the same thing.

*Seventh*, the mentoring process ends with an evaluation conducted by the mentor and mentee. This evaluation aims to assess the success of the mentoring program, identify difficulties faced, and determine corrective or follow-up steps if necessary. For example, the things and challenges they face in their spiritual development, difficulties in carrying out the commands of God's Word and so on, mentors and mentees need to find the best steps to resolve difficulties so that the mentoring process produces results. This evaluation takes place repeatedly on each topic of discussion in mentoring until a change occurs.

*Eighth*, with these steps, Peer-Group Mentoring becomes an effective tool to shape the spirituality of Christian teenagers in a holistic and sustainable manner.

## CONCLUSION

The Peer-Group Mentoring approach to the spiritual formation of Christian teenagers not only offers a holistic and inclusive method to support their spiritual, intellectual, and emotional development, but also effectively helps teenagers deal with the spiritual challenges they face during adolescence. During this time, teenagers often experience identity crises, spiritual confusion, and a search for the meaning of life. Peer-Group Mentoring is a place where teenagers can find the support they need to navigate these challenges. This method is rooted in the concept of mutual support and guidance between teenagers of the same age. In this intimate and trusting environment, they can learn, share, and grow together, developing deep and meaningful relationships with their peers. Peer-Group Mentoring allows teenagers to talk openly about their spiritual struggles, identify the challenges they face, and receive guidance from mentors who understand their situation because they are in a similar age range.

The close mentor-mentee relationship in Peer-Group Mentoring not only strengthens spiritual learning but also facilitates adolescents in their need for strong peer relationships. In adolescence, peer relationships play a vital role in emotional and social development. Through Peer-Group Mentoring, adolescents are invited to form a supportive community where they can share experiences, challenges, and successes in a spiritual context. This gives them a sense of community and solidarity, which is essential for their emotional and spiritual well-being. In addition, Peer-Group Mentoring provides an opportunity for adolescents to develop leadership skills and independence in a spiritual context. They learn not only through mentors but also through their peers, through interactions that encourage character development and spiritual responsibility. With ongoing monitoring and evaluation, this mentoring process becomes a powerful tool for forming a generation of young people who are strong in faith, able to face life's challenges, and have character rooted in the teachings of Christ.

Overall, Peer-Group Mentoring is a very effective approach in shaping the spirituality of Christian teenagers. This approach creates a supportive, open, and collaborative environment, where teenagers are expected to have a deep understanding and also live out Christian values in their daily lives. Thus, Peer-Group Mentoring not only helps teenagers develop spiritual knowledge but also helps them overcome spiritual challenges and fulfill their need for peer relationships. This method makes them stronger, wiser, and more rooted individuals in the Christian faith, and prepares them to face life with a strong faith and a solid community around them.

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