

The Effect Of Church Image On Congregation Satisfaction With Hospitality As A Moderator Variable In The GBKP Congregation In The Medan Region

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Abstract: This study examines the effect of Church Image on Congregation Satisfaction, with Hospitality as a moderating variable, among the congregation of the Batak Karo Protestant Church (GBKP) in Medan. Church Image influences congregants' perceptions of the quality of church services and their level of satisfaction, while Hospitality acts as a moderator in this relationship. Using a quantitative approach and a survey method involving 343 congregants, data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using multiple linear regression and moderated regression analysis (MRA). The findings indicate that Church Image has a positive and significant impact on Congregation Satisfaction. Hospitality also has a direct positive effect on congregational satisfaction. However, as a moderating variable, Hospitality exhibits a significant negative influence on the relationship between Church Image and Congregation Satisfaction, suggesting that increased Hospitality paradoxically weakens the positive impact of Church Image on Congregation Satisfaction. These findings imply that efforts to enhance Church Image must be accompanied by consistent service quality to ensure that congregants' expectations are met, thereby optimizing their satisfaction levels.

Keywords: Church Image, Congregation Satisfaction, Hospitality, GBKP Congregation, Moderated Regression Analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

GBKP (Gereja Batak Karo Protestan) is an ethnic Protestant Christian denomination with deep roots in the Kabanjahe region of North Sumatra. Since its establishment by the German missionary H.C. Kruyt in 1890, the church has developed into one of the key religious institutions serving the Karo community. As of 2023, GBKP has recorded more than 326,804 members distributed across 640 church assemblies (Runggun) and 927 church assembly service posts (Perpulungen) (SKMS GBKP, 2023).

Although the number of GBKP members continues to increase, data indicate that their participation in various church activities remains far below expectations. According to the GBKP Research and Development report (SKMS GBKP, 2023), the average participation rate among congregants is only about 40%, which is significantly lower than the targeted 70% (Ginting, 2022; Tarigan, 2023). This low level of participation not only reflects the challenges in mobilizing active involvement among members but also suggests fundamental issues related to their satisfaction with church services.

Congregational satisfaction is achieved when the needs and expectations of the church members are met by the institution, both in terms of religious services and the fulfillment of their spiritual and emotional requirements (Dobocan, 2015). When church services are perceived as falling short of expectations, the resultant experience is unsatisfactory. A preliminary survey conducted in the initial phase of this study revealed that 61.1% of the congregants felt dissatisfied with the church services, particularly in aspects of

leadership, inter-administrative communication, facilities, and the responsiveness of church officials in executing their duties. Such dissatisfaction may contribute to the low participation rate in church activities and even pose the risk of members transferring to another church or ceasing their religious engagement.

One of the main factors influencing congregational satisfaction is the organizational image (Church Image). In the context of the church, Church Image reflects the congregants' perceptions of the quality of services, facilities, and church policies. Previous studies have demonstrated that organizational image has a significant and positive effect on consumer satisfaction (Minkiewicz et al., 2011; Razavi et al., 2012; Owino, 2013; Melastri & Giantari, 2019). In the church setting, organizational image encapsulates the congregants' views on the quality of services, the adequacy of facilities, and the responsiveness of church leadership.

Furthermore, the attitudes and behaviors of individuals within an organization play an important role in shaping its image. Research by Crane (1991) and Yan (2014) indicates that the warmth and respect exhibited by organizational staff have a significant impact on consumer satisfaction. The courteous, polite, and respectful behaviors identified under the concept of hospitality have been shown to play a crucial role in enhancing consumer experiences and strengthening an organization's image (Ariffin et al., 2015; Ilham et al., 2023).

Hospitality, or the quality of cordiality, refers to the nature of the interaction between service providers and consumers (Spektor, 1961). It involves elements such as warmth, respect, and the sense of security experienced by consumers (Pezzotti, 2012). In the context of the church, the cordiality demonstrated by church staff can reinforce the relationship between the church's image and the congregational satisfaction (Kennedy, 1977).

Previous research has also noted that hospitality can enhance consumers' perceptions of an organization's image. For instance, a study by Gidaković and Zabkar (2022) highlighted the importance of "warmth" in creating a positive impression of an organization. In the church, the friendly and supportive demeanor of the church staff can reflect its overall policies and values.

To further understand this relationship, the present study aims to analyze the influence of Church Image on Congregation Satisfaction and explore the moderating role of Hospitality. Based on theoretical considerations and previous findings, this study hypothesizes that: (1) Church Image exerts a significant positive influence on Congregation Satisfaction, and (2) Hospitality, as a moderating variable, affects the relationship between Church Image and Congregation Satisfaction. Accordingly, this study is expected to provide practical recommendations for churches in enhancing service effectiveness and improving congregational engagement through more inclusive and expectation-aligned service strategies.

II. METHOD

This research employs a quantitative approach aimed at examining the relationships among variables—namely, Church Image as the independent variable, Congregation Satisfaction as the dependent variable, and Hospitality as the moderating variable. The quantitative approach enables the collection and analysis of numerical data through statistical procedures, as described by Creswell and Creswell (2023). The design used is correlational, which intends to evaluate the interrelationships among the variables as well as to identify the moderating role of Hospitality.

The subjects of this study are adult members of GBKP in Medan City, selected through purposive sampling. The sample was chosen based on specific criteria: participants must be at least 18 years old, must be members of GBKP in Medan City, and must be willing to participate in the study. The sample size was determined according to the calculation proposed by Hair et al. (2019), by multiplying the total number of research indicators by seven, resulting in a sample of 343 respondents. Data were collected through a survey using a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire designed to measure the congregants' perceptions of the research variables.

The research instruments consist of three main scales. The Congregation Satisfaction scale was modified from Silverman et al. (1983) and encompasses eight aspects: religious service, church member, church policy, religious education, church leaders, special programs and activities, church facilities, and clergy. Church Image is measured using the dimensions developed by Tran et al. (2015), namely visual expression, positive feelings, environmental expression, online appearance, staff/employees appearance, attitude and

behavior, and external communications. Hospitality is measured using the 3-Hs of Hospitableness proposed by Tasci and Semrad (2016), which include the dimensions of heartwarming, heart-assuring, and heart-soothing.

Prior to conducting the Moderated Regression Analysis (MRA), the measurement instruments were validated using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to ensure the factor structure of the research variables. The CFA values were evaluated using the criteria proposed by Hair et al. (2019): a Chi-square (χ^2) significance level greater than 0.05, CFI and TLI values greater than 0.93, an RNI greater than 0.93, and an RMSEA below 0.08. Subsequently, reliability was assessed by examining the Cronbach's Alpha values to determine the internal consistency of each scale, with the recommended threshold being greater than 0.80 (Azwar, 2017). The validity and reliability values are presented in Table 1 and Table 2, respectively, and have been declared to meet the recommended criteria.

Table 1 *Validity Test Results (CFA)*

Variable	Chi-square (χ^2)	CFI	TLI	RNI	RMSEA
Congregation Satisfaction	1.00	1.00	1.07	1.06	0.00
Church Image	1.00	1.00	1.11	1.10	0.00
Hospitality	1.00	1.08	1.00	1.07	0.00

Table 2 *Reliability Test Results*

Variable	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Congregation Satisfaction	32	0.984
Church Image	20	0.958
Hospitality	14	0.978

After the measurement instruments were declared valid and reliable, the research data were subsequently tested using classical assumption tests, including normality, linearity, heteroscedasticity, and multicollinearity, prior to conducting the Moderated Regression Analysis (MRA). The analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 22.

III. RESULTS

This study involved 343 respondents from the GBKP congregation in Medan City. An overview of the subjects based on their social categories is presented in Table 3. The results indicate that the majority of respondents were from the Mother's Fellowship (35.0%), followed by Father's Fellowship (28.6%) and Youth Fellowship (24.8%), while the Elderly Fellowship accounted for a lower participation rate of 11.6% of the total respondents.

Table 3 *Overview of Research Subjects Based on Church Categories*

Kategori Jemaat	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Father's Fellowship (Mamre)	98	28.6%
Mother's Fellowship (Moria)	120	35.0%
Youth Fellowship (Permata)	85	24.8%
Elderly Fellowship (Saitun)	40	11.6%
Total	343	100%

Prior to performing regression analysis, classical assumption tests were conducted to ensure that the data met the necessary statistical requirements. According to Mehta and Patel (2010), the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicates a normal distribution when

the Exact Sig. value is greater than 0.05. For the linearity test, as noted by Shadiqi (2023), the “Linearity” row must have a p-value of less than 0.05 for the relationship between variables to be considered linear. The Glejser test was employed to detect heteroscedasticity, and as stated by Ghazali (2006), a p-value greater than 0.05 indicates the absence of heteroscedasticity in the regression model. In testing for multicollinearity, if the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is less than 10 and Tolerance is greater than 0.10, then multicollinearity is not a concern (Hair et al., 2010; Kutner et al., 2005).

The results of the classical assumption tests, as shown in Table 4, indicate that the data meet the requirements for normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and do not exhibit multicollinearity, thereby making them suitable for use in the moderated regression analysis.

Table 4 *Classical Assumption Test Results*

Test	Result	Interpretation
Normality Test (Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test)	0.093 (Exact Sig.)	Data are normally distributed ($p > 0.05$)
Linearity Test	$p = 0.000$	The relationships among variables are linear ($p < 0.05$)
Heteroscedasticity Test (Glejser Test)	$p = 0.638$ (Church Image), $p = 0.257$ (Hospitality)	No heteroscedasticity is present ($p > 0.05$)
Multicollinearity Test	VIF = 1.966 Tolerance = 0.509	No multicollinearity issues (VIF < 10, Tolerance > 0.10)

Once it was confirmed that the regression model satisfied the fundamental statistical assumptions, a Moderated Regression Analysis (MRA) was conducted to examine the influence of Church Image on Congregation Satisfaction as well as to investigate the moderating role of Hospitality.

Table 5 *Regression Analysis Results (F-Test)*

Model	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F-Test	p-value
Church Image → Congregation Satisfaction	0.577	0.575	464.214	0.001
Church Image + Hospitality → Congregation Satisfaction	0.676	0.674	236.284	0.001

The regression analysis results presented in Table 4 indicate that Church Image explains 57.7% of the variability in Congregation Satisfaction. When Hospitality is included as a moderator, the proportion of explained variance increases to 67.6%. A significant F-Test ($p < 0.001$) demonstrates that the overall regression model has strong predictive power.

Table 6 *Hypothesis Test Results (T-Test)*

Model	Beta Coefficient	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Church Image → Congregation Satisfaction	0.759	21.546	0.001	Church Image has a significant positive effect on Congregation Satisfaction.
Hospitality → Congregation Satisfaction	1.030	4.759	0.001	Hospitality has a positive effect on Congregation Satisfaction.

Model	Beta Coefficient	t- value	p- value	Interpretation
Hospitality sebagai Moderator (CI*H)	-0.956	-2.848	0.005	As a moderator, Hospitality exhibits a negative effect on the relationship between Church Image and Congregation Satisfaction.

Hypothesis testing further revealed that Church Image has a significant positive effect on Congregation Satisfaction. Additionally, Hospitality exerts a direct positive effect on Congregation Satisfaction. However, its role as a moderator is negative, meaning that an increase in Hospitality could weaken the positive influence of Church Image on Congregation Satisfaction.

IV. DISCUSSION

Research findings indicate that Church Image has a significant positive influence on Congregation Satisfaction, supporting the findings of Minkiewicz et al. (2011), Razavi et al. (2012), Owino (2013), Melastri and Giantari (2019), and Li (2020), which affirm that organizational image contributes to consumer satisfaction. In the context of a church, a positive church image reflects congregants' perceptions of the quality of services, facilities, and church policies that meet their expectations.

Furthermore, this study found that Hospitality exerts a positive influence on Congregation Satisfaction, consistent with previous research demonstrating that consumer satisfaction arises when service providers offer high-quality hospitableness/hospitality (Ariffin, Nameghi, & Zakaria, 2013; Ginting, 2022; Ariffin, Nameghi, & Soon, 2015; Ilham et al., 2023). In the church setting, the cordiality of church staff plays an important role in enhancing congregants' experiences and shaping a positive perception of the religious organization. Elements of hospitality, such as warmth, attentiveness, and respectful behavior from church personnel, contribute to establishing a closer relationship with the congregation.

However, the role of Hospitality as a moderating variable displays a negative effect on the relationship between Church Image and Congregation Satisfaction. These findings suggest that an increase in Hospitality may actually weaken the positive effect of Church Image on Congregation Satisfaction, indicating that higher congregational expectations regarding church services are not always adequately met. This observation is in line with the concepts proposed by Oliver (2015) and Silverman et al. (1983), who stated that discrepancies between expectations and actual experiences can lead to dissatisfaction, even when an organization strives to enhance its hospitality aspect.

Theoretically, this study contributes to a better understanding of how Church Image and Hospitality influence Congregation Satisfaction within a religious context. The results underscore the importance of maintaining a balance between the church's image and the quality of services delivered directly by church personnel. The finding of the negative moderating role of Hospitality offers a novel perspective, suggesting that increased cordiality may raise expectations that are not necessarily aligned with the structural aspects of the church, thereby necessitating more consistent service strategies.

Practically, churches can use the results of this study to design more effective approaches for enhancing congregational satisfaction. Strengthening Church Image should be accompanied by clear service standards to better meet congregants' expectations. Moreover, any improvements in Hospitality should be supported by effective communication strategies to ensure that the cordiality displayed by church staff does not lead to mismatched expectations among congregants.

Despite providing valuable insights, this study has several limitations that deserve consideration. First, the research was conducted solely in Medan City, so the findings may not be generalizable to GBKP congregations in other regions with different social and cultural conditions. Second, the study employed a self-report survey method, which may have introduced bias in respondents' assessments of Church Image, Hospitality, and Congregation Satisfaction.

Third, the study examined only the relationships among the key variables without exploring other factors that might influence congregational satisfaction, such as aspects of worship attendance, social support within the church, or overall community

engagement. To obtain a more comprehensive understanding, future research could consider additional variables that contribute to enhancing congregational involvement.

To enrich the findings of this study, several recommendations for future research can be made. First, subsequent studies could be conducted with a wider geographical scope, including GBKP congregations from various regions, so that the results may be more representative. Second, a mixed-methods approach that combines surveys with in-depth interviews could be used to explore congregants' perceptions more holistically. Additionally, future research could investigate more effective church service strategies to maintain a balance between Church Image and Hospitality, thereby better fulfilling congregants' expectations.

CONCLUSION

This study found that Church Image has a positive effect on Congregation Satisfaction, indicating that congregants' perceptions of service quality and the church's image contribute to their level of satisfaction. In addition, Hospitality also has a positive influence on Congregation Satisfaction, demonstrating that the friendliness and attentiveness of church staff enhance the overall congregational experience. However, when Hospitality functions as a moderating variable, the study results reveal that Hospitality has a negative impact on the relationship between Church Image and Congregation Satisfaction, meaning that an increase in Hospitality may weaken the positive influence of Church Image on congregational satisfaction.

These findings carry theoretical implications by emphasizing that a balance between the church's image and the quality of direct services must be maintained to optimally meet congregants' expectations. Practically, churches should develop consistent service strategies, ensuring that improvements in Hospitality are accompanied by effective communication to avoid mismatches between congregants' expectations and their actual experiences. The limitations of this study include its confined geographic scope and the potential bias inherent in self-report methods; hence, future research should consider a broader scope and employ a mixed-methods approach for a more comprehensive analysis.

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