

Participation of Catholic Religious Education Teachers in Facilitating Catechetical Activities in the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, Pota

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Abstract. This study explores Catholic Religious Education (CRE) teachers' participation in facilitating catechetical activities at the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, Pota, as part of their mission to guide discipleship. Using a descriptive qualitative method involving observations, interviews, and documentation with the parish priest, catechetical commission head, Christian Base Community (KBG) leaders, and CRE teachers, the research analyzed their involvement. Findings indicate sufficient participation, supported by internal factors (commitment, responsibility, vocation) and external factors (family/parish support, training activities). This involvement contributes significantly to faith development, brotherhood, and service. The study concludes active teacher engagement and recommends structured training, continuous guidance from the parish/KBG, and regular communication between teachers and the parish to enhance catechetical initiatives and meet community spiritual needs.

Keywords: Participation, Catholic Religious Education Teacher, Catechesis, community catechesis, Parish.

1 Introduction

Catholic evangelization plays a crucial role in shaping the character and faith of Catholic believers. The Apostle Paul emphasizes that faith is nurtured through hearing (Romans 10:17). Catholic evangelization involves the proclamation and dissemination of the Word of God through verbal communication, actions, and various media channels, with the aim of fostering a life rooted in and guided by God's Word [1].

As part of the Church's mission, Catholic evangelization addresses challenges arising from socio-cultural pluralism, mitigates tensions related to ethnic and religious diversity, and responds to other contemporary issues. Catechesis is essential in overcoming obstacles to inculturation, fostering dialogue, and promoting mutual understanding [2].

The Church was established and continues to exist as a bearer of the Gospel message. Pope Paul VI, in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, affirms that the Church's fundamental purpose is to proclaim the Gospel [3]. This mission is rooted in Christ's command: "Go into the whole world, proclaim the Gospel and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). One of the key manifestations of Catholic evangelization is catechetical activity. Catechesis serves as a means to deepen the spirituality of believers in Christ. It can also be understood as the process of imparting faith to Christians, enabling them to internalize, strengthen, and apply their faith in everyday life [4].

Over time, catechesis has been classified into various forms, one of which is community catechesis. The evolution of catechesis is closely linked to the dynamic development of ecclesiological concepts [5]. Community catechesis facilitates the exchange of faith experiences among members of the congregation or specific groups. It is understood as a process of sharing and interpreting life experiences in the light of the Gospel, guiding participants toward a transformative vision (*metanoia*) that informs their decision-making and actions [6]. Community catechesis is perceived through multiple perspectives: as a dialogue of faith from an anthropological standpoint, as the communication of faith from a theological viewpoint, and as social analysis interpreted through Scripture from a sociological perspective [7]. The Second Vatican Council underscores that community catechesis is initiated by the people, originates from the people, and is directed toward the people.

Lalu [6] elaborates that, based on the discussions from the Second National Catholic Catechetical Meeting (*Pertemuan Kateketik Antar-Keuskupan Indonesia II, PKKI II*) held in Klender, community catechesis is defined as follows:

1. Community catechesis serves as a means of faith communication and the exchange of faith experiences among congregation members or groups. It prioritizes the practice of faith while still acknowledging the importance of doctrinal knowledge.
2. Within community catechesis, faith in Jesus Christ as the Mediator between God and His people is professed. This underscores that Jesus Christ serves as both the model and foundation of community catechesis. Through Christ, believers encounter God, and in Him, God draws near to His people.

In Jesus Christ, God draws near to His people, fostering a deep relationship with them. Consequently, community catechesis is understood as a means of faith communication and an exchange of faith experiences among members of the congregation, who bear witness to Jesus Christ.

According to Harmansi & Habur [7], participants in community catechesis include:

1. All believers who personally choose Christ and voluntarily gather to deepen their understanding of Him. This emphasizes that community catechesis is not restricted to specific groups; rather, any assembly of believers can serve as a space for catechesis.
2. A faith-based dialogue among equals, characterized by mutual respect and attentive listening. Each participant actively contributes, listens, and remains open to the workings of the Holy Spirit through others.

The method employed in community catechesis, as described by Harmansi & Habur [7] follows the "See, Judge, and Act" approach:

1. See – This stage involves identifying and analyzing the real-life situations or challenges faced by the community. Participants critically examine various social, political, economic, cultural, religious, and legal issues affecting communal life.

2. Judge – At this stage, participants reflect on Scripture and Church tradition, drawing inspiration from God’s Word to discern appropriate responses to their circumstances.
3. Act – With a heightened sense of responsibility, participants apply Christian values in formulating concrete actions to address and resolve real-life issues, ensuring a faith-driven response to societal challenges.

According to Kotan [8], the objectives of community catechesis are as follows:

1. To deepen the understanding of daily experiences in light of the Gospel.
2. To foster conversion (metanoia) to God and cultivate awareness of His presence in everyday life.
3. To strengthen faith, hope, and love, thereby reinforcing Christian life.
4. To promote a closer union with Christ and the Church, while actively engaging in the Church’s mission.
5. To equip believers to bear witness to Christ in their daily lives.

Kotan [8] further elaborates that the primary goal of community catechesis is to guide the faithful in interpreting their daily experiences through the lens of the Gospel. Additionally, it seeks to inspire personal conversion (metanoia) and a deeper recognition of God’s presence. It also aims to enhance faith, hope, and love, strengthening the foundation of Christian life. Furthermore, community catechesis encourages believers to develop a closer relationship with Christ, integrate more deeply into the Church community, and actively participate in its mission. Ultimately, it seeks to empower individuals to testify to Christ through their words and actions. In practice, the Church entrusts the task of evangelization and leading community catechesis to dedicated individuals. Widyawati [9] asserts that the responsibility of forming the faithful does not rest solely on the clergy—priests, monks, and nuns—but extends to all believers. Being baptized and a member of the Church is not sufficient; faith must be continually nurtured [10][11]. Among those who can support the Church in conducting community catechesis are Catholic Religious Education teachers, who, beyond their role as educators in schools and formal institutions, also play a vital role in the pastoral life and ministry of the Church.

The active participation of Catholic Religious Education teachers in Church life is essential, as they are individuals specifically trained in faith formation and commissioned to proclaim the teachings of Christ. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) designates catechists with the responsibility of carrying out catechesis, teaching about Jesus Christ, serving the Church, and fostering a closer relationship with Christ through prayer. As a result, catechists hold a significant position in the apostolic mission of catechesis [12]. Therefore, Catholic Religious Education teachers should demonstrate a deep commitment to the life and mission of the Church.

The Church acknowledges the laity’s significant role in fulfilling its mission in the world [13]. This highlights that Catholic Religious Education teachers, as laypersons, serve as facilitators in assisting and fostering the exchange of faith experiences in catechesis. To fulfill this role effectively, they must possess comprehensive competencies, including theological knowledge, spiritual depth, and pedagogical skills. Their expertise should encompass Scripture, theology, sociology, psychology, and communication sciences. Moreover, they must cultivate a profound spirituality, rooted in an intimate relationship with Christ, a life centered on the Eucharist, and a genuine love for God and others [7].

As members of the Catholic faith, Catholic Religious Education teachers are called to actively participate in the service of the Church. Their role extends beyond that of educators; they also serve as prophets, entrusted with proclaiming God's truth in response to contemporary challenges [14]. These teachers are responsible for delivering Catholic religious education across various educational levels, from kindergarten to secondary school [15]. It further explains that Catholic Religious Education teachers, as laypersons, share in the prophetic mission of Jesus Christ, who lived among the people and actively engaged in the realities of community life.

The mission of evangelization undertaken by Catholic Religious Education teachers is rooted in both Christology and ecclesiology, emphasizing their role in continuing Christ's work and serving the Church's mission.

The Christological foundation of evangelization is grounded in the primary mission of Jesus Christ. According to the Gospel, after being baptized by John, Jesus immediately began His ministry in Galilee by proclaiming the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14). He explicitly identified proclamation as His mission, declaring, "I must proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God, for this is why I was sent" (Luke 4:43). In fulfilling the prophetic message of Isaiah, Jesus brought good news to the poor (Luke 4:18). Therefore, the fundamental basis of the Church's evangelizing mission is Christological, as it directly stems from Christ's life, testimony, and mission [3].

Jesus not only proclaimed the Gospel Himself but also commissioned His disciples to continue this mission. Before His ascension, the Risen Christ gave a clear mandate to His apostles: "Go, therefore, make disciples, baptize them, and teach them" (Matthew 28:19-20). The apostles were entrusted with spreading the Gospel, a mission that extends to all baptized believers. Through the Sacrament of Baptism, every member of the faithful is sent forth as an evangelizer, called to proclaim what they have heard, seen, and experienced concerning the Word of Life [3].

The ecclesiological foundation highlights the Church as a community of believers, a fellowship of Christ's disciples formed through the proclamation of the Gospel. From the time of the Early Church, the community of faith emerged as a response to Jesus' message. The Church is entrusted with the mission to proclaim what it has received, not for its own benefit, but to share it with all of humanity. In this sense, the Church is both the fruit of proclamation and the agent of proclamation, continuously called to spread the Gospel [3].

An evangelizer is not only a person of prayer but also a laborer in faith, working with sacrificial zeal through the power of the Holy Spirit, patiently awaiting the fruits of their mission. Without the Holy Spirit, all evangelization efforts are in vain. Pope Paul VI emphasized this by stating, "Evangelization techniques are good, but even the most advanced techniques cannot replace the gentle work of the Holy Spirit." Similarly, Pope Francis stressed the Holy Spirit's role in the Church's mission, stating, "I am aware that words of encouragement will not suffice if the fire of the Holy Spirit does not burn in our hearts. Evangelization filled with the Holy Spirit is evangelization guided by the Holy Spirit because He is the soul of the Church called to proclaim the Gospel" [1].

This study aims to analyze the participation of Catholic Religious Education teachers in facilitating catechetical activities at the Parish of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Pota. The parish, which belongs to the Reo Deanery within the Diocese of Ruteng, regularly organizes community catechesis. These catechetical activities take place during prayer gatherings in Basic Ecclesial Communities (KBG), as well as during significant liturgical seasons such as the National Bible Month (BKSN) and Lent. Based on preliminary observations and interviews, Catholic Religious Education teachers in the Parish of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Pota,

actively engage in parish life. Therefore, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of their participation in facilitating catechetical activities within the parish.

2 Method

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive method, which aims to explore and understand the underlying phenomena of certain events that are not yet fully known [16]. Qualitative research examines subjects in their natural settings, with the researcher serving as the primary instrument in data collection. Data gathering is conducted through triangulation, and analysis follows an inductive approach, prioritizing meaning over generalization [17]. Consequently, qualitative research involves an in-depth exploration of events and phenomena in their natural context, with the researcher playing a central role in the investigative process.

The study employs observation, interviews, and documentation as data collection techniques. Interviews were conducted from April 24 to May 4, 2023, in the Parish of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Pota. The participants included the parish priest, the head of the catechetical section, five Basic Christian Community (KBG) leaders, and ten Catholic Religious Education teachers. The interview questions were open-ended, allowing respondents to provide comprehensive responses, express their perspectives, and share personal experiences regarding the involvement of Catholic Religious Education teachers in leading catechetical activities within the parish. The data analysis process involved three key stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

3 Result

The research findings indicate that Catholic Religious Education teachers in the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, Pota, generally demonstrate active participation in leading community catechetical activities. According to RD. BAG (interview, April 24, 2024): "Most Catholic Religious Education teachers actively engage in guiding community catechesis. The parish consistently involves them in catechetical activities and provides support through recollections, pilgrimages, training programs, and other initiatives to encourage their enthusiasm in leading community catechesis."

This statement was corroborated by the majority of respondents, who acknowledged the active involvement of Catholic Religious Education teachers in facilitating catechesis. For instance, BJ (interview, April 24, 2024) remarked: "I am part of the parish's catechesis facilitation team, and I actively participate in guiding community catechesis. So far, the parish has consistently involved Catholic Religious Education teachers in leading catechesis, both in Basic Ecclesial Communities (KBG) and sub-parishes." Similarly, VD (interview, April 25, 2024) shared: "I actively lead community catechesis as part of the parish's catechesis facilitation team. The parish continuously integrates Catholic Religious Education teachers into catechetical guidance, both at the KBG level and in sub-parishes." Another respondent, LT (interview, April 26, 2024), further emphasized: "Most Catholic Religious Education teachers have responded

positively to their role as evangelizers. They actively participate in leading catechesis, whether in sub-parishes or KBGs."

However, a small number of Catholic Religious Education teachers were less engaged in catechetical activities. SJ (interview, May 1, 2024) observed: "Some Catholic Religious Education teachers are less responsive or involved in leading catechesis. While they attend KBG activities, their participation in facilitating catechetical sessions remains limited." Similarly, MGA (interview, May 2, 2024) admitted: "Recently, I have been less involved in facilitating catechesis due to personal circumstances. The realities in the field do not always align with expectations—sometimes the congregation is receptive, but at other times, they are not."

From these findings, it can be concluded that the majority of Catholic Religious Education teachers in the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, Pota, actively participate in catechetical leadership. This is evidenced by their inclusion in the parish's catechesis facilitation team and the parish's consistent efforts to support and encourage their involvement through various initiatives.

Internal Factors Influencing Participation

The internal factors that influence the participation of Catholic Religious Education teachers in catechetical activities include commitment, readiness, leadership qualities, and a sense of responsibility as educators entrusted with Christ's mission. RD. BAG (interview, April 24, 2024) emphasized: "Internal factors affecting participation include personal willingness and moral responsibility as Catholics." Teachers also recognized the significance of these factors. For instance, OO (interview, April 29, 2024) noted: "Internal factors include the commitment to lead catechesis, motivation, and enthusiasm for engaging in Church activities, particularly in guiding catechesis." Similarly, MEJ (interview, May 1, 2024) added: "Commitment and motivation to lead catechesis, responsibility as servants of the Church, and readiness to fulfill the mission of evangelization are key internal factors influencing participation."

In conclusion, commitment, responsibility, and readiness play a crucial role in shaping the participation of Catholic Religious Education teachers in facilitating catechetical activities within the Parish of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Pota.

External Factors Influencing Participation

External factors that influence the participation of Catholic Religious Education teachers include support from the parish, the congregation, and their families. RD. BAG (interview, April 24, 2024) stated: "The parish consistently provides support for Catholic Religious Education teachers in their ecclesiastical service. Furthermore, encouragement from their families and the ability to coexist harmoniously within a predominantly Muslim community serve as motivation for them to remain steadfast in their mission as evangelizers." Similarly, YM (interview, April 26, 2024) explained: "External factors influencing my involvement in catechetical guidance include support from my parents, family, and social environment. Their motivation and prayers strengthen my commitment to fulfilling my role as both a teacher and an evangelizer." Additionally, FH (interview, May 2, 2024) remarked: "My participation is also influenced by the social and community environment, which consistently appreciates our presence. This recognition personally inspires me to persevere in carrying out my evangelizing mission."

However, certain external challenges may hinder participation. MGA (interview, May 3, 2024) pointed out: “Some members of the congregation express disinterest during my catechetical sessions. On occasion, they reject my guidance, assuming that I am unqualified to lead catechesis. Consequently, I have shifted my focus toward my responsibilities as a teacher in school.” Meanwhile, IE (interview, May 3, 2024) emphasized the significance of understanding the congregation’s needs: “A catechist must recognize the expectations, desires, and attitudes of the community in order to address their spiritual needs effectively.”

In conclusion, external factors such as parish and family support, awareness of congregational expectations, and the ability to navigate challenges play a crucial role in shaping the participation of Catholic Religious Education teachers in leading catechetical activities.

Impact of Participation

The involvement of Catholic Religious Education teachers in facilitating community catechesis has a positive influence on their personal faith, the faith of the congregation, and the sense of fellowship within the community. RD. BAG (interview, April 24, 2024) stated: “The participation of Catholic Religious Education teachers enhances their self-confidence, deepens their faith in Christ, and promotes a spirit of fraternity and tolerance within the diverse community.” Likewise, LT (interview, April 24, 2024) observed: “Their involvement results in greater enthusiasm for service and strengthens communal bonds.” Additionally, OO (interview, April 29, 2024) highlighted: “By leading catechetical activities, I gain more confidence, help reinforce the congregation’s commitment to the Church, and foster a stronger sense of brotherhood among its members.”

In summary, the participation of Catholic Religious Education teachers in catechetical ministry contributes to spiritual growth, a deeper understanding of Church teachings, and an enhanced sense of unity both for themselves and the wider faith community.

4 Discussion

Catholic Religious Education teachers are members of the Catholic laity who actively engage in pastoral activities, interact with the community, and play a vital role in deepening the faithful's understanding of their beliefs [18]. Their dual mission as educators and evangelizers is rooted in their vocation as disciples of Christ. As educators, they are entrusted with fulfilling Christ’s command to proclaim the message of salvation to all people. Just as Christ commissioned His disciples, He also calls these educators to go forth and proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God.

The research findings reveal that Catholic Religious Education teachers in the Parish of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Pota, have responded to this divine calling by actively participating in community catechesis. Their engagement demonstrates their role as Christ’s disciples, who, through the Sacrament of Baptism, are commissioned to share the Good News they have heard, witnessed, and experienced.

Several factors influence the participation of Catholic Religious Education teachers in community catechesis, including personal commitment, family support, and encouragement from the broader community. These factors can be classified into two main categories: internal and external influences.

Internal Factors

Internal factors pertain to personal characteristics that consistently influence human behavior, including biological instincts, psychological needs, and cognitive aspirations. For Catholic Religious Education teachers, internal motivation encompasses their dedication to the mission, their sense of responsibility as both educators and servants of the Church, and their preparedness to fulfill the task of evangelization. This commitment is deeply rooted in their faith and sincere willingness to serve the Church.

The study found that Catholic Religious Education teachers are driven by a strong sense of duty and moral responsibility as members of the Catholic faith. This intrinsic motivation empowers them to embrace their vocation with dedication and accountability, enabling them to contribute actively to community catechesis.

External Factors

External factors refer to influences outside an individual that shape their behavior and attitudes. For Catholic Religious Education teachers, these factors include support from family, encouragement from the parish and congregation, and the broader social environment. Family support and parish initiatives—such as recollections, pilgrimages, and training programs—play a crucial role in strengthening their commitment and perseverance in catechetical activities.

However, certain challenges persist, including limited understanding of congregational needs and a lack of active participation from the community. Addressing these challenges requires attentiveness to the spiritual and practical needs of the congregation, along with effective communication strategies to foster trust and collaboration.

Impact of Participation

The active participation of Catholic Religious Education teachers in community catechesis generates significant positive impacts. It fosters their spiritual development, deepens their understanding of Church teachings, and enhances their confidence and sense of belonging within the community. For the congregation, the guidance provided by these teachers serves as an inspiration, strengthening their faith, reinforcing their commitment to the Church, and cultivating a spirit of unity and cooperation among its members.

5 Conclusion

Catholic Religious Education teachers are members of the laity who are chosen and commissioned to continue Christ's mission. Just as Christ entrusted His disciples with the proclamation of the Good News of the Kingdom of God, these educators are also called to fulfill this sacred task.

Serving as a vital link between the Church and the faithful, Catholic Religious Education teachers are responsible for deepening the understanding of Catholic doctrine, guiding the congregation in Church teachings, and fostering spiritual growth. As witnesses of faith, their steadfast and active engagement in catechesis reflects their commitment to this divine calling.

The study's findings indicate that Catholic Religious Education teachers have played a significant role in facilitating community catechesis within the Parish of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Pota. Their dedication is driven by internal motivations, such as a strong sense of commitment and responsibility, as well as external support from their families and parish initiatives, which further inspire and enhance their effectiveness in this role.

Moreover, their involvement has led to spiritual enrichment, strengthened communal bonds, and reinforced the congregation's devotion to practicing their faith. The Catholic Religious Education teachers in the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, Pota, exemplify the essential role of the laity in advancing the Church's mission of evangelization and nurturing the faith of believers.

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