

Research Article

The Implications of Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory in the Creation of Homilies by Indonesian Catechists

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Abstract: This study was motivated by a real problem in the Catholic Church in Indonesia, where homilies delivered by catechists are often considered boring, unstructured, and lacking in spiritual inspiration for the congregation. The main objective of this study is to offer practical solutions through the application of Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT), specifically through modeling methods to improve the preaching skills of catechists. The method used was qualitative discourse to explore Bandura's theory and in-depth interviews with active catechists in the regions of Java, Medan, Flores, and Sumba, who were selected using purposive sampling techniques. The results of the study show that catechists effectively use role models from various backgrounds to follow the four stages of modeling: attention, retention, behavior production, and motivation. Important elements studied include depth of content, structured thinking, use of humor, vocal techniques, and mastery of verbal and non-verbal language. By adopting this strategy, catechists are able to overcome the crisis of preaching and deliver a more lively and inspiring message to their listeners. As a suggestion for further research, it is recommended to examine the effectiveness of digital platforms as a source of modeling for young catechists and the impact of formal evaluation systems by the faithful on the professionalism of their preaching in order to ensure the quality of liturgical preaching in the future.

Keywords: Albert Bandura; Catechist; Homily; Modeling; Social Learning Theory.

1. Introduction

The Catholic Church has two forms of liturgical order, namely the Eucharistic liturgy and the Liturgy of the Word. Both serve as the source and strength of a Catholic's faith. The Eucharistic liturgy is the realm where the actions performed by Christ are made present again, allowing all the faithful to participate in them, and according to the Code of Canon Law (Can. 899 - § 1), it is stated, 'for the reception of the body and blood of Christ who offers Himself' (*Kitab Hukum Kanonik*, 1983). Meanwhile, the Liturgy of the Word holds significance for soaking in the word of God as spiritual nourishment, in addition to receiving the body and blood of Christ. In the writings of Yohanes Rusae and his colleagues, it is explained that the Eucharistic Celebration is the center of the entire Christian life, both for the universal Church and the collection of local Churches. Furthermore, they also provide an understanding of the Liturgy of the Word. According to them, the Liturgy of the Word is an action between God and His people, in which Christ Himself is present in His Word because He speaks when the Scriptures are read in the Church (Rusae, 2023, hlm. 76).

Quoting from Martasudjita's writing, "Eucharist" is derived from the Greek word eucharistia, which means thanksgiving. In his conclusion, he states that the Eucharist is an expression of gratitude for God's salvific work accomplished through Christ, culminating in the events of the paschal mystery (His suffering, death, and resurrection) (Martasudjita, 2005, hlm. 28–29). Meanwhile, the Liturgy of the Word is explained as a dialogical encounter

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between God, who is present through the sacred readings, and the faithful who respond to them (Martasudjita, 2005, hlm. 133–134). Therefore, an important note that should be highlighted is that the sacred readings proclaimed in the Liturgy of the Word must not be taken from outside the Holy Scriptures. This is also reaffirmed in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) number 57: "It is not permitted to replace the readings and response psalms, which contain the Word of God, with other texts not from the Bible" (Komisi Liturgi-KWI, t.t., hlm. 14). This paper will specifically examine the role of the Liturgy of the Word in supporting the growth of the faithful's attitude of faith through the proclamation of the Gospel by catechists in Indonesia.

After gaining a basic understanding of the meaning and role of the Eucharistic liturgy and the liturgy of the word within the liturgical structure, as well as the specific aspects to be discussed, the study will proceed to focus more sharply on a core concern, namely the presence of boring sermons or homilies delivered by the homilists. The term 'homily' comes from the Greek language, with the term *Homilia*. It means a conversation in a context of closeness with others, fellowship, gathering, assembly, and an explanation of something that leads others to a point of understanding (Senduk, 2022, hlm. 169). This concept was first introduced by Origen in an effort to explain the Scriptures within a celebration (Boli Ujan, 2015, hlm. 20). The issue is prevalent throughout Indonesia, where there are preachers or homilists who are boring to their listeners.

In places far from the reach of the clergy, it is often the catechists who have to handle it. The question is, who is meant by catechists and what is their role in the liturgical order? The word catechist itself comes from the root word 'katechein,' which means to convey or proclaim, to spread, and to provide teachings about faith to others. Thus, a catechist is someone who becomes God's messenger to proclaim and announce the good news and joy of the gospel (Woga, 2024, hlm. 84). However, they often also face various challenges in preparing themselves when intending to proclaim the Gospel to God's people.

Some previous studies that discuss similar themes are, first, by Stevan Halim, who found several methods of delivering sermons in front of Generation Z. He found that delivering sermons to Generation Z could involve using everyday experiences, inspirational stories, and sermons that present challenges (Halim, 2024, hlm. 42). Second, a paper by Prasetijo that pays special attention to the message from Pope Francis for catechists as the proclaimers of the Gospel. His writing explains that catechists must enrich their sermons while making them more engaging. The message from Prasetijo's writing is that a sermon will be engaging if it proclaims Christ, who loves everyone, sacrificed His life for the salvation of all, and lives beside everyone to be present as a supporter, enlightener, and liberator (Prasetijo, 2017, hlm. 16). Third, research conducted by Senduk titled 'Homily Models and Their Meaning in the Faith Life of the Congregation: A Study at the Parish of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Woloan'. The research findings showed that the Woloan congregation understood the meaning of the homily, there was uniformity in the understanding between the congregation and the priests regarding the meaning of the homily, there was a uniqueness in the way priests delivered the homily, the homilies delivered always provided inspiration, and lastly, a good homily is one that has been carefully and creatively prepared (Senduk, 2022, hlm. 167).

From the three previous studies, all are interconnected, and the common link is that they all proclaim the saving gospel of Christ to everyone. In the first study, the emphasis was on delivering sermons in a way that captivates attention; the second focused on preparing oneself as a preacher or homilist; and the third addressed sermons that must be creatively prepared to provide fresh inspiration to their audience. Of course, the previous studies did not indicate the main goal of this research, and therefore, this study becomes urgent to conduct, namely to help catechists find modeling in their ministry work, particularly in the stage of preparing to deliver a sermon. Through modeling, they can be assisted in overcoming the criticism that their sermons are often boring or lack clear direction. The focus of this research is on how to address the crises faced by catechists in proclaiming the Word of God among the people of God. The uniqueness offered is an in-depth and critical reflection on Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT) in helping catechists who will serve as Gospel preachers to the people of God in places where they are needed. Based on this background, this study will answer several fundamental questions as its objectives: 1) What is the background of Albert Bandura's thinking? 2) What are Albert Bandura's ideas? 3) What is the contribution of Albert Bandura's ideas to catechists in Indonesia?

2. Method

The method used in this research is a qualitative discursive method regarding the thoughts of Albert Bandura and an interview method with several catechists selected geographically across Indonesia. In other words, they were chosen from several dioceses in Indonesia. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a data collection technique based on certain criteria according to the purpose of this study, and the criteria are those who are members of the catechists and actively engaged in their ministry (Subhaktiyasa, 2024, hlm. 2727). Through a literature review, this study will delve into secondary sources such as journal articles discussing Albert Bandura's thoughts. The data obtained, both from the interviews and the literature review, will be examined in depth to find concrete steps that lead to solving the concerns that serve as the reference point in this study.

3. Results and Discussion

Background of Albert Bandura's Thought

Albert Bandura is a prominent figure in the field of Social Learning Theory (SLT) (de la Fuente, Kauffman, & Boruchovitch, 2023, hlm. 01). He was born in Mundare, a small town in Alberta, Canada, on December 4, 1925 (Nurul Wahyuni & Wahidah Fitriani, 2022, hlm. 61). His theory is rooted in the work of Julian Rotter in 1954, with his ideas about clinical psychology and social learning (Olusegun, Olutunde, & Oluwatoyin, 2014, hlm. 193). The theory developed by Bandura is a combination of behavioral learning principles (such as reinforcement) and cognitive perspectives. His thinking not only explains how a person's personality is formed, but also how each person's relatively stable behavior is learned, generalized, and can change over time. The SLT developed by Rotter emphasizes the role of expectancies and reinforcement value in shaping the behavior of those who imitate it (Firmansyah & Saepuloh, 2022, hlm. 300). An example that can help understand Rotter's thinking is a young child (sixth grade) who sees their older sibling always receiving praise (positive reinforcement) when the sibling helps their parents. The child observes that helping parents is something good to emulate. Then, the young child does what their older sibling does and also receives the same reward as their sibling. The behavior of frequently helping becomes a part of them when they enter new social environments. Returning to Bandura, he developed the theory of the figure who influenced him (Rotter) through the Bobo doll experiment (Hardiyanti, 2020, hlm. 4). The experiment involved adults being in a room with transparent glass through which they could be seen. Then, children were placed in an adjacent room next to the adults, separated only by a partition. The adults performed aggressive actions toward the doll in their room, such as hitting, kicking, punching, and treating the doll as harshly as possible. Bandura's ideas were confirmed when the children, in a different room, performed exactly the same actions. The children acted in the same way as the adults had (Irham & A. W, 2014, hlm. 62).

The Social Learning Theory (SLT) developed by Bandura holds the view that ideal learning is learning that starts from the process of observation, duplication (imitation), and modeling the attitudes and behaviors of others. Therefore, Bandura's SLT is a theory that proves that humans learn from and imitate each other. In short, Bandura's theory is a theory in which people model the behavior of others (Purnaningtyas & Fauziati, 2022, hlm. 2420). Thus, human behavior is actually the result of modeling with others (Nurul Wahyuni & Wahidah Fitriani, 2022, hlm. 62). The most concrete example of this concept can be seen in cooperative learning models in the classroom because, in the classroom, there is a teacher who acts as an example or role model, and students then learn from the teacher's behavior (Mishra, 2023, hlm. 27).

Albert Bandura's Modeling Theory

Bandura's modeling theory is divided into four parts, namely attention, retention (representation), behavior production, and motivation along with reinforcement (Nurul Wahyuni & Wahidah Fitriani, 2022, hlm. 2420). The following explanation will further clarify the points intended by Bandura:

Attention

In this section, Bandura explains that humans observe the behavior of other humans or certain objects and then pay serious attention. For example, research conducted by Afian and Endang which applied Bandura's social theory in schools found that participants paid attention to their teachers while they performed teaching actions (Purnaningtyas & Fauziati, 2022). Additionally, there is research conducted by Putri, Puji, and Triyanto, which found that

the behavior of drama participants was successfully imitated by other viewers (Putri, Puji, & Triyanto, 2025). Or the most popular example on social media today is when a new popular song comes out, it receives attention because behind that attention there is a specific purpose to be achieved, namely memorizing the song.

Retention (storing/remembering)

At this point, a person who pays attention to others or certain objects records everything they see and then continuously remembers it. The technique for recording information that is noticed in the first stage can be through memory or, nowadays, digitally through devices like a phone. For example, a child remembers all the ways their mother makes the bread they like the most—from the ingredients to the actual process of making the cake.

Creating

At this phase, a person gets the opportunity to do the same things as the figure they look up to. Therefore, willingly or not, they must prepare themselves and present themselves in front of the object or people who will be their audience. An example that can clarify this phase is (continuing the example in section b) when a child who has successfully remembered all the ways their mother makes the most delicious bread tries it themselves and succeeds. So, at this point, all the behaviors carried out by the child are, according to Albert Bandura, called the creating or production phase.

Motivation and reinforcement

Albert Bandura named the fourth phase as motivation and reinforcement. At this point, the subject who performs an action as done by the model is motivated to repeat what the model has done. Conversely, the subject may refuse to perform the model's action because they receive negative reinforcement. Reinforcement consists of two types: negative and positive. Negative reinforcement occurs when the subject's actions result in a poor outcome. Positive reinforcement occurs when the subject's actions receive praise from others. For example (continuing from example part c), the child is more motivated to make a delicious cake because they receive praise from their mother and others who taste the cake they made (positive reinforcement). On the other hand, if the child fails to make the cake and their mother scolds them for wasting ingredients, the child is no longer motivated to do it (falls under negative reinforcement).

Qualitative Analysis of Interview Results

In preparing homilies, Catholic catechists use various methods. Based on the interview results, Catholic catechists tend to look at examples (as one way) of people who have taken on the roles they are tasked with (role models). In this interview, those chosen as information sources were individuals who have role models in preparing or delivering homilies. Interestingly, the interviews also revealed that each figure they emulate does not only come from the Catholic Church (priests, brothers, sisters, and friars), but also from Protestant denominations (pastors), and public figures (both from abroad and within the country) who are not clergy. The informants interviewed in this study come from several regions in Indonesia, such as Java, Medan, Flores, and Sumba. The following are several points summarizing what they learned and how they learned from their role models:

Depth of homily content

For them, the depth of a homily is important because a homily delivered by the catechist can serve as a source of spiritual inspiration for those who listen. It will be very boring if the depth of the homily is not taken into account by the homilist and will seem long to those listening. They also say this is the reason why many congregants complain about the length of a homily. If the homily is very well-prepared, then the length of time will not be an issue for the listeners. In fact, it will feel short if the homily is very engaging to its audience. Therefore, for them, this becomes a part of what they learn from role models when preparing their own homilies.

Structured mindset

In delivering a homily, according to the results of the interview, a structured frame of mind is an important element that must receive attention during the preparation of the homily. They say that, as far as their observations of the rule model are concerned, the homily bearer is successful if his thinking is in order. They learned a lot from the rule model in enriching this field.

Humor

According to them, an important part that needs to be considered is the ability to attract the attention of the people, make the atmosphere fluid, and make the listener not rigid in listening to the homily. One of the ways they find in themselves is their rule model the ability to use humor while delivering a homily. However, they noted that not all of the homilies were

accompanied by humor. This means that they offer to be smart in using humor while delivering homilies.

Verbal language and non-verbal language

Another aspect they learn from their role model is the choice of words in their pronunciation. For them, language is very important because it is a bridge that contributes very much in proclaiming the Gospel to the people. They are very interested in their role model that uses languages that are very close to their audience. For example, the use of regional languages, even if the role model comes from outside the region or abroad. In addition, the use of proper body language in delivering a homily. For them, this requires continuous practice, so that when delivering a homily, it does not look rigid and monotonous.

Vowels

For them too, vowels are very much needed to pay attention. Vowels are the key to determining which points need a grown sound or a loud voice. This is not an easy thing for them because when they are delivering a homily, it turns out that the points that should need to be emphasized in a loud voice are instead done in a soft voice. Of course, not 100% of the message that is to be conveyed can be absorbed by the people.

Learning techniques

Some of the speakers also told how they got the desired data from their role model. Of course, this is an input from their role model, which is how to learn from others. They said that in order to get a structured thought, the in-depth homily of the technical model rules that they often use is to make a summary or note of the homily of their model rules.

Evaluating

Some of them conveyed that after delivering their homilies, they often ask or request feedback from those who listened to them during the homily (friends, children, spouse, priest, and so on). What they evaluate is what is lacking and what is already good to maintain. Often, they find people who evaluate them honestly, meaning they say it as it is. If they make a mistake or are not engaging, the person who corrects them directly says it is wrong or uninteresting during the delivery of the homily. According to them, they are very happy to receive such criticism. However, there are also congregants who correct them dishonestly. This means they feel insecure, that their delivery is not engaging, but the person correcting them ends up saying it was very interesting. Of course, their intention is good, which is to make catechists not feel inadequate and to be confident in delivering the homily in the future. However, the catechists feel that such corrections do not help them.

Discussion on Bandura's Thought Contributions and Interview Results

The most significant contribution of Albert Bandura's thinking for catechists, particularly in the context of catechetical ministry in Indonesia, is the application of Social Learning Theory (SLT) through the modeling method. This theory helps catechists not only rely on their own subjective theories but also learn through observation and imitation of role models when preparing and delivering homilies or sermons in an engaging manner before the congregation. Some points for further discussion are as follows:

Four Stages of Modeling in Catechist Tasks

Bandura offers a systematic framework consisting of four phases for catechists to develop their evangelization skills: first, Attention. Catechists pay careful attention to how role models (such as priests, pastors, or public figures) deliver their messages. They observe aspects such as the depth of content, structured thinking patterns, and the use of humor. Second, Retention (Storing/Remembering). Catechists record the information they observe in memory, notebooks, or using current electronic tools. From interviews, an interesting point that significantly helps in this stage is that catechists often make summaries or notes from their role models' homilies to review later when given similar tasks.

Third, Production (Behavior Production). Catechists reproduce the behaviors they have learned by preparing and presenting themselves before the congregation. This is the stage where catechists execute the material they have prepared based on the examples they learned from their role models. Fourth, Motivation and Reinforcement. Catechists need motivation to continue evangelizing. Positive reinforcement, such as praise or appreciation from the congregation, can boost their enthusiasm, while evaluations or honest critiques serve as feedback for improving future performances.

Addressing the Crisis of Boring

Sermons One of the practical contributions of SLT theory is helping catechists overcome criticism that their sermons are often boring or lack clear direction. By imitating strategies from role models in structuring thought processes and content depth, catechists

can deliver more engaging homilies and become a source of spiritual inspiration for the congregation.

Expanding Role Models

Bandura's thinking allows catechists the flexibility to learn. From interviews conducted via WhatsApp (both calls and chats), catechists acknowledged that finding a role model nowadays is not difficult. They find role models not only from the clergy (priests) but also learn from non-clerical figures. In this context, they also learn a lot from public figures in terms of speaking techniques and message delivery.

4. Conclusion

Albert Bandura's thought, born in Canada in 1925, provides a strong foundation for understanding human learning processes through Social Learning Theory (SLT). Building on the ideas of Julian Rotter, Bandura developed this theory through the "Bobo Doll" experiment, which demonstrated that both aggressive and positive behaviors can be learned through observation and imitation. The core of Bandura's theory is modeling, where people do not learn merely mechanically, but cognitively pay attention to, retain, and reproduce behaviors observed from figures considered role models in their social environment.

In the context of pastoral service by Catholic catechists in Indonesia, Bandura's modeling theory provides significant practical contributions for catechists to overcome the challenge of boring homilies. Through four systematic stages (attention, retention, behavioral reproduction, and motivation), catechists can learn in a structured way from their role models, whether clergy members or other public figures. They adopt key elements such as the depth of homily content, structured thinking patterns, use of humor, as well as appropriate vocal and body language techniques. The evaluation and appreciation process from the congregation acts as positive reinforcement, motivating catechists to continue improving the quality of their preaching. As a proposal for further development of Albert Bandura's ideas, future research can focus on the effectiveness of Bandura's modeling through digital media, considering that many catechists are now beginning to seek role models through online video platforms.

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