



Evaluating Character Education Programs to Enhance Spiritual Resilience among Theology Students: A Kirkpatrick Model Analysis at STT Sangkakala

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Abstract

Character education in theological higher education is expected to form students who are not only academically competent but also spiritually resilient, morally responsible, and prepared for ministry. However, the effectiveness of such programs is often assumed rather than systematically evaluated. This study evaluates the character education program at STT Sangkakala in enhancing the spiritual resilience of theology students using the Kirkpatrick Model. Employing an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, quantitative data were collected through questionnaires from 65 active theology students, while qualitative data were obtained through interviews, observations, and document analysis involving institutional leaders, lecturers, dormitory supervisors, students, alumni, and church pastors. The evaluation focused on four levels: reaction, learning, behavior, and results. The findings show that the reaction level reached 79.09% with a mean score of 3.16, indicating positive student responses to the program. The learning level achieved the highest score, reaching 81.70% with a mean of 3.27, showing strong improvement in students' understanding of Christian character values and spiritual resilience. The behavior level reached 76.49% with a mean of 3.06, indicating initial behavioral transfer in spiritual discipline, responsibility, dormitory life, and ministry practice. However, the results level reached only 77.75% with a mean of 3.11, below the 80% success criterion, indicating that spiritual resilience was not yet fully stable or sustainable. This study contributes to theological education by showing that character education must move beyond value understanding toward continuous mentoring, reflective ministry practice, dormitory-based formation, and longitudinal evaluation.

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education is increasingly expected to prepare students not only as academically competent graduates but also as morally responsible, spiritually mature, and socially responsive individuals. This expectation is particularly important in faith-based and theological higher education, where learning is closely connected with value formation, spiritual discipline, and preparation for future service. Character education in universities should therefore not be understood merely as moral instruction, but as a structured process of cultivating virtues, ethical judgment, life purpose, and responsible conduct (Harrison & Laco, 2022; Hart, 2022). In theological education, this responsibility becomes more specific because students are prepared to serve as pastors, church ministers, teachers, spiritual mentors, and community leaders. They are expected to demonstrate consistency between theological understanding, personal integrity, and ministry

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practice. Therefore, character education in theological colleges must be designed as an integrated formation process involving academic learning, spiritual life, community experience, and practical ministry. Without such integration, theological knowledge may remain cognitive and fail to shape students' maturity in real ministry contexts.

The empirical reality faced by theology students shows that character formation is complex and cannot be achieved through classroom instruction alone. Theology students commonly encounter academic pressure, communal living challenges, spiritual struggles, uncertainty about vocation, interpersonal conflict, and ministry responsibilities during their education. These experiences can influence their emotional stability, spiritual commitment, self-discipline, and ability to remain faithful under pressure. Research among first-year theology students in Indonesia found that religious orientation and emotional regulation are associated with resilience, indicating that spiritual life and emotional management are important elements in theological student development (Cholili et al., 2024; Lehihi et al., 2025). In addition, theological education is expected to form students who are not only knowledgeable in doctrine but also morally mature and able to face ethical challenges in ministry (Boiliu, 2025; Park et al., 2025). This condition shows that character education programs need to be assessed not only from the perspective of implementation, but also from their actual contribution to students' spiritual resilience. Without systematic evaluation, institutions may assume that routine spiritual activities automatically produce character transformation, even though the resulting changes may still be partial, unstable, or uneven among students.

Spiritual resilience is a crucial outcome of theological education because future ministers must be able to endure difficulties, interpret suffering meaningfully, and maintain spiritual integrity in diverse life and ministry situations. Spiritual resilience refers to the capacity to draw strength from faith, hope, meaning in life, relationship with God, and supportive religious communities when facing adversity. Recent studies have shown that spirituality is positively related to student resilience, academic perseverance, self-reflection, and adaptive coping (Klutsey & Mahama, 2025; Shan & Xu, 2025). Evidence from university students also indicates that spirituality contributes to resilience and happiness, highlighting its role in supporting student well-being in higher education (David et al., 2022; Li, 2025). Similarly, a comparative study among students in South Korea and Japan found that spiritual health is associated with resilience, particularly when students possess a strong sense of life purpose and supportive relationships (Hatami & Shekarchizadeh, 2022; Karahan et al., 2024). These findings suggest that spiritual resilience should not be treated as an abstract religious ideal, but as a capacity that can be developed through intentional educational formation. Therefore, theological colleges need a structured evaluation framework to determine whether their character education programs truly strengthen students' endurance, responsibility, and spiritual maturity.

The urgency of evaluating character education is also related to institutional accountability and continuous program improvement. At STT Sangkakala, character education has been implemented through classroom learning, campus worship, prayer communities, spiritual retreats, dormitory life, mentoring, field ministry, weekend ministry, and daily spiritual practices. These activities indicate that the institution has developed a holistic formation system for theology students. However, the existence of many program activities does not automatically prove that the program has achieved its intended outcomes, especially in producing stable spiritual resilience. The core empirical problem is that the program has been implemented continuously, but its effectiveness in shaping students' responses, understanding, behavioral transfer, and long-term spiritual resilience has not been systematically evaluated. Program evaluation is therefore needed to identify whether students respond positively to the program, whether their understanding of Christian character values improves, whether they apply these values in daily life and ministry, and whether their spiritual resilience becomes more sustainable. The Kirkpatrick Model is relevant for this purpose because it evaluates programs through four levels: reaction, learning, behavior, and results (Alsalamah & Callinan, 2021b; Paul et al., 2024). Nevertheless, this model must be applied critically because positive responses and learning outcomes do not always lead directly to behavioral consistency or long-term impact in complex higher education settings (Zhang & Xu, 2025).

Previous studies have provided important insights into character education, theological formation, spirituality, resilience, and program evaluation. Arthur, (2024) emphasized that character education in universities should cultivate virtues, responsibility, and life purpose rather than merely promote moral knowledge. (Wang et al., 2023) showed that spiritual formation in theological

education requires intentional institutional practices that integrate learning, mentoring, and student development. (Magezi & Madimutsa, 2023) argued that character formation is a fundamental requirement for theological leaders and students because theological education must prepare morally mature persons for ministry. In the broader field of resilience studies, Akbayram & Ketten, (2024); Bukhori et al., (2022); Graça & Brandão, (2024) confirmed that spirituality, religious orientation, emotional regulation, life purpose, and social support are closely related to student resilience. Meanwhile, studies on the Kirkpatrick Model have demonstrated its usefulness for evaluating educational and training programs through participants' reactions, learning, behavioral changes, and final results ((Alsalamah & Callinan, 2021a); (Quinton et al., 2022). Mixed methods research has also been recommended for evaluating complex educational phenomena because quantitative results can be deepened through qualitative explanations (Barnow et al., 2024; Battista et al., 2025). Although these studies are valuable, their findings remain fragmented because character education, spiritual resilience, theological formation, and program evaluation are often discussed separately rather than integrated into a single evaluative framework.

Despite these contributions, several critical limitations remain in the existing literature. Many previous studies have examined spirituality and resilience as related variables, but they have not evaluated character education as a structured institutional program. Other studies have discussed theological formation conceptually, yet they often lack empirical evidence on how program activities produce measurable changes in students' learning, behavior, and spiritual outcomes. Research using the Kirkpatrick Model has been widely applied in training and higher education contexts, but its application in theological character education remains limited. More importantly, previous studies rarely explain why students may understand character values and respond positively to formation programs, yet still struggle to demonstrate consistent behavior and sustainable spiritual resilience. This gap is significant because character education cannot be considered successful only because students appreciate the program or understand its values. Its deeper effectiveness depends on whether those values are transferred into daily conduct, ministry practice, and long-term spiritual endurance. Therefore, a critical research gap exists in the need for a mixed-methods evaluation that examines character education for theology students through the four levels of the Kirkpatrick Model while explaining the gap between value understanding, behavioral practice, and sustainable spiritual resilience.

Based on this gap, the present study aims to evaluate the character education program in enhancing the spiritual resilience of theology students at STT Sangkakala using the Kirkpatrick Model. Specifically, this study examines students' reactions to the program, their learning of Christian character values and spiritual resilience, the behavioral changes that occur after program participation, and the final outcomes related to spiritual resilience. Unlike previous studies that mainly examined spirituality and resilience as separate or correlational variables, this study evaluates how character education operates across reaction, learning, behavior, and results levels in shaping spiritual resilience among theology students. This study contributes theoretically by extending the application of the Kirkpatrick Model to theological higher education and by showing that character education evaluation must move beyond satisfaction and cognitive learning toward behavioral transfer and long-term spiritual outcomes. It also contributes to the literature on spiritual resilience by explaining how institutional formation, dormitory life, mentoring, and ministry practice shape students' capacity to endure and grow through faith. Practically, the findings are expected to provide empirical evidence for STT Sangkakala and similar theological institutions to strengthen character education through continuous mentoring, reflective ministry practice, dormitory-based formation, pastoral counseling, and longitudinal evaluation. By integrating quantitative and qualitative data, this study offers a comprehensive understanding of how character education works, where it succeeds, and why its final impact on spiritual resilience may still require further strengthening.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach with an explanatory sequential design within an evaluative research framework. This design was selected because the study first measured the achievement of the character education program quantitatively and then used qualitative data to

explain the meaning and context of the numerical findings. Explanatory sequential mixed methods are appropriate when qualitative evidence is needed to deepen and interpret quantitative results in complex educational settings (Christodoulou, 2025; Latif & Wasim, 2024; Thornberg et al., 2022). The evaluation framework was based on the Kirkpatrick Model, which assesses program effectiveness through four levels: reaction, learning, behavior, and results (Alsalamah & Callinan, 2021c; Cheung et al., 2023). This model was relevant because the study examined students' responses to the program, their understanding of Christian character values, the transfer of values into behavior, and the final impact on spiritual resilience. However, the model was applied critically because character formation and spiritual resilience do not always develop in a simple linear sequence (Lowstuter, 2026).

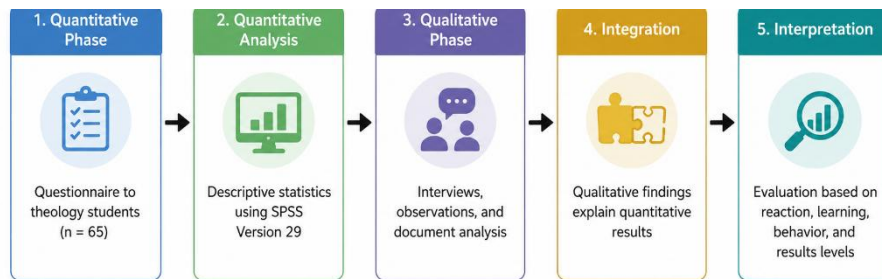


Figure 1. Explanatory Sequential Mixed-Methods Design

Figure 1 shows the explanatory sequential design used in this study. The quantitative phase identified the level of program achievement, while the qualitative phase explained the processes and contextual factors behind the results. This design helped the study evaluate not only whether the program was effective, but also why some evaluation levels were stronger than others.

Research Context and Participants

The study was conducted at STT Sangkakala Salatiga, Indonesia, from January to March 2026. This institution was selected because character education is implemented as an integral part of theological student formation through classroom learning, campus worship, prayer communities, spiritual retreats, dormitory life, mentoring, field ministry, weekend ministry, and daily spiritual practices. The study evaluated the existing character education program rather than introducing a new intervention. Therefore, the research focused on how the program was experienced, understood, practiced, and perceived to influence students' spiritual resilience.

The quantitative participants were 65 active theology students selected through purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria were active student status, direct participation in the character education program, willingness to complete the questionnaire, and availability during the data collection period. Students who had not participated in the program or were unavailable during data collection were excluded. Purposive sampling was used because evaluative research requires participants who have direct experience with the program being assessed (Bouncken et al., 2026; Samuel & Merkebu, 2026). The qualitative phase involved 23 informants, consisting of one chairperson of the theological college, four lecturers, two dormitory supervisors, six students, six alumni, and four church pastors. These informants were selected because they could provide institutional, instructional, residential, student, alumni, and ministry perspectives on the character education program.

Table 1. Participants and Informants

Group	Data Source	Sampling Technique	n	Role in the Study
Active theology students	Questionnaire	Purposive	65	Quantitative respondents
Chairperson	Interview	Purposive	1	Institutional perspective
Lecturers	Interview	Purposive	4	Academic and instructional perspective
Dormitory supervisors	Interview and observation	Purposive	2	Dormitory formation perspective
Students	Interview	Purposive	6	Direct participant experience
Alumni	Interview	Purposive	6	Long-term program perspective
Church pastors	Interview	Purposive	4	Ministry-based observation

Table 1 summarizes the participants and informants involved in the study. The table shows that the evaluation included both direct student respondents and supporting informants who were closely related to the implementation and outcomes of the program. This composition strengthened the study because character education was examined from academic, residential, institutional, alumni, and church ministry contexts.

Research Instruments

Data were collected using a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, observation notes, and document analysis. The questionnaire was developed based on the four levels of the Kirkpatrick Model. The reaction level measured students' satisfaction, perceived relevance of the program, learning methods, and engagement. The learning level measured students' understanding of Christian character values, spiritual resilience, self-awareness, and conceptual application of values. The behavior level measured the application of character values in spiritual discipline, personal responsibility, academic integrity, social relationships, dormitory life, and ministry involvement. The results level measured the perceived impact of the program on spiritual resilience, including students' ability to face pressure, interpret difficulties through faith, maintain spiritual discipline, and demonstrate responsibility in ministry.

The questionnaire used a four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This scale was used to reduce neutral responses and encourage clearer evaluative judgments. The qualitative instruments consisted of semi-structured interview guidelines, observation notes, and document analysis protocols. These instruments were aligned with the same four Kirkpatrick levels so that the qualitative findings could explain the quantitative results consistently.

Table 2. Instruments and Indicators

Instrument	Data Type	Evaluation Focus	Main Indicators
Questionnaire	Quantitative	Reaction, learning, behavior, results	Satisfaction, understanding, behavioral application, spiritual resilience
Semi-structured interview	Qualitative	Program experience and impact	Perceptions, value internalization, behavioral change, spiritual growth
Observation	Qualitative	Behavior and program implementation	Spiritual discipline, dormitory life, worship participation, ministry practice
Document analysis	Qualitative	Program context and institutional evidence	Curriculum, activity reports, student development records, institutional documents

Table 2 presents the instruments and indicators used in the study. The questionnaire generated quantitative evidence of program achievement, while interviews, observations, and document analysis provided contextual explanations. The use of multiple instruments supported data triangulation and strengthened the credibility of the evaluation.

Validity, Reliability, and Trustworthiness

The questionnaire was reviewed before data collection to ensure that the items were relevant to the four levels of the Kirkpatrick Model and the construct of spiritual resilience. Content validity was examined through expert judgment involving specialists in educational evaluation, theological education, and research methodology. The experts reviewed the clarity, relevance, and representativeness of each item. Revisions were made to remove ambiguous wording and strengthen the alignment between indicators and constructs. Reliability was examined using Cronbach's alpha, with a coefficient of 0.70 or higher used as the minimum acceptable criterion for internal consistency in social science research. Qualitative trustworthiness was strengthened through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking to ensure that the interpretation of interview, observation, and document data remained consistent with participants' experiences (McGill et al., 2023).

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted in several stages. First, the researcher obtained permission from STT Sangkakala and coordinated the research schedule with the relevant institutional units.

Second, the research instruments were prepared, reviewed by experts, and revised based on the feedback received. Third, the questionnaire was distributed to 65 active theology students who met the inclusion criteria. Before completing the questionnaire, participants received information about the research purpose, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw from the study. Fourth, the quantitative data were analyzed to determine the achievement of the character education program at the reaction, learning, behavior, and results levels. Fifth, qualitative data were collected through interviews with the chairperson, lecturers, dormitory supervisors, students, alumni, and church pastors. Observations were conducted during relevant institutional and formation activities, while document analysis was carried out by reviewing curriculum documents, activity reports, student development records, and institutional documents related to character education.



Figure 2. Research Procedure

Figure 2 illustrates the research procedure from preparation to final interpretation. The sequence shows that the qualitative phase was conducted after the quantitative phase to explain the statistical findings more deeply. This procedure ensured that the evaluation process remained systematic, transparent, and replicable.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics with SPSS Version 29. The analysis included valid cases, mean scores, percentages, rank order of achievement, and category interpretation for each Kirkpatrick level. The percentage score was calculated by comparing the obtained score with the maximum possible score. The evaluation criteria were applied progressively: the reaction level was considered successful if it reached at least 61%, the learning level at least 70%, the behavior level at least 75%, and the results level at least 80%. These criteria were used to distinguish initial program acceptance, learning achievement, behavioral transfer, and final program impact.

Qualitative data were analyzed through data reduction, coding, categorization, thematic interpretation, and conclusion drawing. Interview notes, observation records, and documents were organized according to the four Kirkpatrick levels. Repeated patterns related to students' responses, value understanding, behavioral change, spiritual discipline, ministry responsibility, and spiritual resilience were identified and grouped into themes. The qualitative findings were then integrated with the quantitative results at the interpretation stage. This integration followed the logic of explanatory sequential mixed methods, in which qualitative data are used to explain and enrich quantitative findings (Caesar, 2025; Hwang et al., 2025). Through this process, the study was able to identify not only the level of program achievement, but also the contextual factors that supported or limited the development of students' spiritual resilience.

Research Ethics

This study followed academic ethical principles throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw without academic or institutional consequences. Informed consent was obtained before questionnaire completion, interviews, and observations. The anonymity of student respondents was maintained by removing personal identifiers from the dataset. Interview participants were coded according to their roles, such as lecturer, student, alumni, dormitory supervisor, pastor, and institutional leader. All data were used only for academic purposes and stored securely to prevent unauthorized access. The researcher also maintained transparency in

reporting the findings and avoided data manipulation, selective reporting, or interpretation beyond the available evidence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of this study are presented according to the four evaluation levels of the Kirkpatrick Model: reaction, learning, behavior, and results. The quantitative findings describe the level of program achievement based on students' questionnaire responses, while the qualitative findings explain the meaning and context behind the numerical results. This section first presents an overview of the character education program at STT Sangkakala, followed by the overall evaluation results, findings at each Kirkpatrick level, and the integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence.

Overview of the Character Education Program

The character education program at STT Sangkakala is implemented as an integrated component of theological student formation. The program is not positioned as a separate activity, but is embedded in academic learning, spiritual formation, dormitory life, mentoring, and ministry practice. Its main purpose is to form theology students who demonstrate integrity, spiritual maturity, responsibility, and readiness for ministry.

The program emphasizes Christian character values such as faith, love, humility, hope, perseverance, responsibility, and integrity. These values are developed through formal and non-formal activities, including classroom instruction, campus worship, daily devotions, Bible discussions, spiritual retreats, prayer communities, dormitory formation, field ministry, weekend ministry, and personal mentoring. The overall structure of the program shows that character formation is designed to occur through repeated learning, shared life, spiritual practice, and ministry experience.

Table 3. Components of the Character Education Program at STT Sangkakala

Program Component	Main Function in Character Formation
Classroom learning	Provides conceptual understanding of Christian values, ethics, leadership, and spirituality
Campus worship and prayer communities	Strengthen spiritual discipline, worship habits, and communal faith practices
Spiritual retreats	Encourage self-reflection, spiritual renewal, and awareness of personal growth
Dormitory life	Develop discipline, responsibility, cooperation, conflict management, and shared accountability
Mentoring	Provides personal guidance, spiritual support, and reflective accompaniment
Field and weekend ministry	Trains students to apply character values in real ministry and community contexts
Daily spiritual practices	Build consistency in prayer, devotion, self-control, and spiritual responsibility

Table 3 shows that the character education program is built through multiple formation spaces. The program combines cognitive, spiritual, social, and practical dimensions, allowing students to encounter character values not only as classroom concepts but also as lived practices in community and ministry settings.

Overall Evaluation Results

The quantitative findings show that the character education program achieved positive results across the four levels of the Kirkpatrick Model. The highest achievement was found at the learning level, with a mean score of 3.27 and a percentage of 81.70%. The lowest achievement was found at the behavior level, with a mean score of 3.06 and a percentage of 76.49%. The results level reached 77.75%, which was categorized as high but did not meet the established success criterion of 80%.

Table 4. Evaluation Results Across the Four Kirkpatrick Levels

Kirkpatrick Level	Mean	Percentage	Category	Success Criterion	Decision
Reaction	3.16	79.09%	High	≥ 61%	Achieved
Learning	3.27	81.70%	Very high	≥ 70%	Achieved
Behavior	3.06	76.49%	High	≥ 75%	Achieved
Results	3.11	77.75%	High	≥ 80%	Not achieved

Table 4 indicates that three evaluation levels met the established success criteria: reaction, learning, and behavior. However, the results level did not meet the expected standard. This pattern shows that the program has been effective in generating positive responses, improving students' understanding, and encouraging initial behavioral changes, but has not yet fully produced stable and sustainable spiritual resilience.



Figure 3. Evaluation Results Across the Four Kirkpatrick Levels

Figure 3 visualizes the percentage achievement of the character education program across the four Kirkpatrick levels. The learning level shows the strongest achievement, while the behavior level is the lowest. This pattern indicates that students' understanding of Christian character values developed more strongly than their consistent behavioral application. The results level also remained below the success criterion, showing that spiritual resilience had not yet become fully stable and sustainable.

Reaction Level

At the reaction level, the program achieved a mean score of 3.16 and a percentage of 79.09%, which falls into the high category. This result indicates that students responded positively to the character education program. They perceived the program as relevant to their spiritual needs, meaningful for their personal development, and useful for preparing them for ministry life.

Qualitative evidence from the original findings showed that students valued mentoring, spiritual retreats, discussions, and communal spiritual activities as meaningful parts of the program. These activities helped them reflect on personal weaknesses, recognize the need for growth, and understand that spiritual maturity requires a continuous process. The program was also perceived as helpful because it connected character values with students' daily experiences in campus, dormitory, and ministry contexts.

However, the qualitative findings also showed that positive reaction did not always lead to strong engagement. Some students still participated passively, especially when the activities were delivered in a one-directional format. Several program sessions were perceived as less interactive, which limited students' opportunity to express personal struggles and reflect more deeply. This finding indicates that the program was generally well received, but still needs more participatory and dialogical learning strategies.

The strongest reaction emerged from activities that involved direct experience and reflection. Spiritual retreats and mentoring were considered more impactful than routine instructional sessions because they created space for emotional, relational, and spiritual renewal. Nevertheless, these experiences required follow-up activities to maintain their impact. Without continuous mentoring

after intensive activities, students' positive impressions tended to remain temporary and did not always develop into consistent commitment.

Learning Level

The learning level showed the highest achievement among all evaluation levels, with a mean score of 3.27 and a percentage of 81.70%. This result indicates that the character education program successfully improved students' understanding of Christian character values and spiritual resilience. Students demonstrated increased awareness of values such as faith, love, humility, perseverance, responsibility, integrity, and spiritual endurance.

Qualitative evidence showed that students began to connect character values with their personal lives. They did not understand faith merely as doctrine, but increasingly viewed it as a source of strength when facing academic pressure, social conflict, and ministry challenges. Students also began to recognize that spiritual resilience requires discipline, self-awareness, dependence on God, and willingness to grow through difficult experiences.

The findings also showed that learning occurred through multiple formation spaces. Classroom learning provided conceptual understanding, while dormitory life and ministry activities helped students encounter the practical meaning of the values they learned. Mentoring and reflection sessions helped students identify the gap between what they understood and how they lived. This indicates that the program was effective in moving students from basic knowledge toward reflective awareness.

However, the learning outcomes were not evenly distributed among all students. Some students demonstrated deep reflection and were able to connect character values with faith experiences and ministry responsibilities. Others still understood the values at a conceptual level and struggled to translate them into daily practice. This difference indicates that the program needs differentiated mentoring and reflective activities that respond to students' varying levels of readiness, maturity, and spiritual experience.

Behavior Level

At the behavior level, the program achieved a mean score of 3.06 and a percentage of 76.49%, which was categorized as high and met the minimum success criterion. This result indicates that the character education program had begun to influence students' behavior. Behavioral changes appeared in spiritual discipline, personal responsibility, social relationships, academic integrity, dormitory life, and ministry involvement.

Qualitative evidence from the original findings showed that students began to practice more consistent prayer, Bible reading, worship participation, and responsibility in daily activities. Some students also showed improvement in managing conflict, fulfilling dormitory obligations, participating in ministry, and responding to personal problems more calmly. These changes indicate that the program contributed to the initial transfer of character values into students' real-life behavior.

However, behavioral change remained the lowest achievement among the four levels. The qualitative findings revealed that students' application of character values was still inconsistent. Some students were able to demonstrate discipline and responsibility in certain situations, but struggled to maintain those behaviors when facing repeated pressure, fatigue, personal conflict, or ministry difficulties. This suggests that behavioral transformation was still developing and had not yet become stable habit formation.

Dormitory life and field ministry emerged as important contexts for observing behavioral change. In the dormitory, students were required to practice discipline, cooperation, conflict resolution, and responsibility in daily interactions. In field and weekend ministry, students were challenged to apply humility, perseverance, responsibility, and spiritual maturity in real service contexts. These settings revealed that students had begun to change, but also showed that they still required structured guidance, monitoring, and post-ministry reflection.

Results Level

At the results level, the program achieved a mean score of 3.11 and a percentage of 77.75%. Although this result was categorized as high, it did not meet the established success criterion of 80%.

This finding is the most important result of the study because it shows that the program has produced positive effects but has not yet achieved optimal final impact on students' spiritual resilience.

Qualitative evidence from the original findings indicated that students had begun to experience changes in the way they viewed life and faced problems. Students were reported to have started learning to surrender to God and not rely solely on themselves when facing pressure. The findings also showed that students began to recognize the importance of living rightly, honestly, and responsibly, even in small matters. These changes indicate that the program contributed to spiritual awareness, responsibility, and reflective maturity.

Nevertheless, spiritual resilience had not yet become stable among all students. The original findings showed that students still frequently experienced failures in daily practice and that their changes were not yet fully consistent. Some students still experienced inconsistency in spiritual discipline, emotional vulnerability under pressure, and difficulty maintaining faith-based responses during recurring problems. This explains why the results level did not reach the expected success standard.

Findings from lecturers, dormitory supervisors, alumni, and church pastors supported this interpretation. Lecturers observed improvement in students' maturity and responsibility, but noted that the changes were not equally visible among all students. Dormitory supervisors observed progress in discipline and spiritual habits, but also saw fluctuations in daily consistency. Alumni viewed character formation as a long-term process that continues after formal education. Church pastors observed that students showed greater responsibility in ministry, although some still required guidance to develop maturity and perseverance in real service situations.

These findings indicate that spiritual resilience cannot be formed through program participation alone. It requires sustained mentoring, dormitory-based formation, reflective ministry practice, pastoral counseling, and long-term evaluation. The results level therefore shows that the character education program has moved in a positive direction, but needs a more continuous and structured formation system to strengthen students' spiritual resilience more consistently.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings shows a clear pattern. The character education program was strongest in improving students' understanding, followed by positive response, final impact, and behavioral application. This pattern indicates that students were more likely to understand character values than to apply them consistently or demonstrate stable spiritual resilience.

Table 5. Joint Display of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Kirkpatrick Level	Quantitative Finding	Qualitative Explanation	Integrated Interpretation
Reaction	79.09%; high; achieved	Students valued mentoring, retreats, discussions, and spiritual activities, but some sessions were still perceived as less interactive	The program was well received, but student engagement needs to be strengthened through more participatory methods
Learning	81.70%; very high; achieved	Students developed stronger understanding of Christian character values and began linking faith with life pressure and ministry responsibility	The program was most effective in strengthening knowledge, awareness, and reflective understanding
Behavior	76.49%; high; achieved	Students showed initial changes in discipline, responsibility, worship habits, and ministry involvement, but consistency remained uneven	Character values had begun to transfer into behavior, but stable habit formation had not yet fully developed
Results	77.75%; high; not achieved	Students showed spiritual growth, greater responsibility, and stronger awareness of dependence on God, but spiritual resilience remained unstable	The program produced positive impact, but sustainable spiritual resilience still requires continuous formation

Table 5 presents the integrated interpretation of quantitative and qualitative findings. The quantitative data show the level of achievement, while the qualitative data explain the process behind each achievement. The integration reveals that the main challenge of the program is not student acceptance or understanding, but the sustainability of behavioral change and spiritual resilience.

Overall, the findings show that the character education program at STT Sangkakala has been effective in building positive responses, improving understanding of Christian character values, and encouraging initial behavioral change. However, the program has not yet fully achieved its final outcome of stable and sustainable spiritual resilience. The strongest aspect of the program lies in learning, while the weakest aspect lies in behavioral consistency. Therefore, the results indicate the need to strengthen continuous mentoring, dormitory-based character formation, post-ministry reflection, pastoral counseling, and longitudinal evaluation.

Discussion

The findings indicate that the character education program at STT Sangkakala was most successful at the learning level, suggesting that the program strongly influenced students' cognitive and reflective understanding of Christian character values and spiritual resilience. This pattern implies that the program has effectively created learning conditions in which students can recognize the meaning of faith, love, humility, responsibility, perseverance, and integrity as essential elements of theological formation. Conceptually, this supports the learning level of the Kirkpatrick Model, which assumes that program effectiveness begins when participants acquire new knowledge, awareness, attitudes, or skills after participating in structured activities (Alsalamah & Callinan, 2021; Paul et al., 2024). The result also aligns with studies emphasizing that character education in higher education should cultivate moral awareness, life purpose, and responsible agency rather than merely transmit normative values (Harrison & Laco, 2022; Hart, 2022). In theological education, the finding reinforces the view that spiritual formation requires intentional institutional practices that connect learning, mentoring, and student development (Wang et al., 2023). However, the high achievement at the learning level also reveals an important conceptual tension: understanding values does not automatically mean that students have internalized them as stable dispositions. Therefore, this study extends previous discussions by showing that character education in theological colleges may first produce reflective understanding before it becomes consistent behavioral transformation.

The positive result at the reaction level shows that students perceived the character education program as relevant, meaningful, and connected to their spiritual and ministry needs. This finding is important because favorable student responses create the initial psychological and relational conditions needed for deeper learning and formation. Within the Kirkpatrick framework, reaction is not merely satisfaction; it reflects participants' acceptance of the program's relevance, method, and perceived usefulness for their development (Quinton et al., 2022). The finding is consistent with studies showing that spiritual and character-based learning becomes more effective when students experience it as personally meaningful and connected to their lived realities (David et al., 2022; Li, 2025). Nevertheless, the qualitative findings also show that positive reaction did not always produce active engagement, especially when some sessions were delivered in a one-directional manner. This indicates that character education requires dialogical, participatory, and reflective learning environments rather than routine instructional delivery. Theoretically, this modifies the simple use of the Kirkpatrick Model by showing that reaction should not be interpreted only as satisfaction, but also as readiness for deeper engagement, self-reflection, and behavioral transfer.

The behavior level revealed a more complex pattern because students had begun to apply character values in spiritual discipline, responsibility, dormitory life, social relationships, and ministry practice, yet the consistency of these behaviors remained uneven. This finding suggests that behavioral transfer is more difficult than cognitive learning because it requires repetition, environmental support, role modeling, emotional regulation, and sustained mentoring. The result supports the critical view that the Kirkpatrick levels should not be treated as a direct linear chain, because achievement at the learning level does not automatically produce strong behavioral change (Zhang & Xu, 2025). It also aligns with studies showing that resilience among theology students is shaped not only by religious orientation but also by emotional regulation, social support, and the ability to manage pressure (Cholili et al., 2024; Lehihi et al., 2025). The lower score at the behavior level may be explained by the demanding context of dormitory life and field ministry, where students

are required to practice values under real social and spiritual pressure. This finding is consistent with theological formation literature, which argues that character is not formed through instruction alone but through lived community, mentoring, and ministry experience (Magezi & Madimutsa, 2023; Park et al., 2025). Thus, the study contributes a contextual insight that behavioral change in theological education depends on the strength of the formative ecosystem surrounding students.

The results level is the most critical finding because the program produced positive spiritual development but did not reach the established success criterion for stable and sustainable spiritual resilience. This means that the program has helped students interpret difficulties through faith, develop responsibility, and strengthen spiritual awareness, but these outcomes have not yet become stable capacities across all students. The finding supports previous studies showing that spirituality is associated with resilience, happiness, well-being, and life purpose among university students (Hatami & Shekarchizadeh, 2022; Karahan et al., 2024; Klutsey & Mahama, 2025; Shan & Xu, 2025). However, it also extends those studies by demonstrating that spirituality alone is insufficient when it is not supported by continuous formation, reflective guidance, and long-term monitoring. The difference between high learning achievement and lower final impact suggests that spiritual resilience is not merely a result of understanding religious values, but a developmental capacity formed through repeated practice, crisis interpretation, relational support, and ministry experience. This explains why students may show spiritual awareness while still struggling with inconsistency under recurring pressure. Therefore, the study contributes to the global literature by positioning spiritual resilience as an outcome that requires institutional continuity rather than episodic spiritual activities.

Overall, this study fills an important gap by integrating character education, theological formation, spiritual resilience, and program evaluation into a single mixed-methods evaluative framework. Previous studies have often examined spirituality and resilience as correlational variables or discussed theological formation conceptually, but this study shows how a character education program operates across reaction, learning, behavior, and results levels. The findings support the usefulness of the Kirkpatrick Model for evaluating theological education programs, while also demonstrating the need to apply the model critically in contexts where outcomes are moral, spiritual, and developmental rather than merely technical. The main conceptual contribution is the identification of a transformation gap between value understanding, behavioral consistency, and sustainable spiritual resilience. Practically, this gap suggests that STT Sangkakala and similar theological institutions should strengthen continuous mentoring, dormitory-based formation, post-ministry reflection, pastoral counseling, and longitudinal evaluation. The study also shows that the success of character education should not be judged only by students' satisfaction or learning gains, but by the extent to which values become embodied in daily conduct and resilient ministry practice. In this sense, the research offers a new perspective for theological higher education by framing character education as a long-term formative system rather than a collection of spiritual activities.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the character education program at STT Sangkakala has made a positive contribution to the formation of theology students' spiritual resilience, although its final impact has not yet reached an optimal and fully sustainable level. The evaluation using the Kirkpatrick Model shows that the program achieved the success criteria at the reaction, learning, and behavior levels. Students responded positively to the program, developed stronger understanding of Christian character values, and began to apply these values in spiritual discipline, personal responsibility, dormitory life, social relationships, and ministry practice. The strongest achievement appeared at the learning level, indicating that the program was particularly effective in strengthening students' awareness and reflective understanding of faith, love, humility, perseverance, responsibility, integrity, and spiritual resilience. However, the results level did not meet the established success criterion, showing that students' spiritual resilience was still developing and had not yet become fully stable across all participants.

The main contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that character education in theological higher education should be evaluated not only through students' satisfaction or value understanding, but also through behavioral transfer and long-term spiritual outcomes. The findings

reveal a transformation gap between understanding Christian character values, applying them consistently, and developing sustainable spiritual resilience. This gap indicates that spiritual resilience cannot be formed through program participation alone, but requires continuous mentoring, dormitory-based formation, reflective ministry practice, pastoral counseling, and longitudinal evaluation. Therefore, STT Sangkakala and similar theological institutions need to strengthen character education as an ongoing formative system rather than a series of routine spiritual activities. Future research should examine the long-term development of spiritual resilience through longitudinal designs, larger samples, and comparative studies across theological institutions to provide broader evidence on the effectiveness of character education programs in theological higher education.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Ester Uru Hida contributed to the conceptualization of the study, research design, data collection, data analysis, and preparation of the original manuscript. Bambang Ismanto contributed to methodological supervision, validation of the research framework, critical review, and refinement of the academic structure of the manuscript. Tri Widiarto contributed to theoretical strengthening, interpretation of findings, manuscript review, and final editing.

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