



The Efforts of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Instilling Character Values in Students from Broken Families at SMA Negeri 1 Adiankoting

Emi Teresia Manik¹, Nurelmi Limbong², Diana M Situmeang³,
Taripar A Samosir⁴, Baginda Sitompul⁵

¹Student, Pendidikan Agama Kristen, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

^{2,3,4,5}Lecturer, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: emi.manik@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The family serves as the primary environment for shaping children's character, instilling values such as religiosity, honesty, discipline, and responsibility. However, students from broken families often face emotional instability and lack consistent moral guidance, which hinders their character development. At SMA Negeri 1 Adiankoting, such conditions manifest in behavioral issues including dishonesty, indiscipline, and irresponsibility. In this context, Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers hold a pivotal role in bridging the moral gap through faith-based pedagogy and mentorship. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the efforts of CRE teachers in instilling character values in students from broken families. Data were collected through purposive sampling involving two CRE teachers and ten students. Observation, interviews, and documentation were used, with triangulation ensuring validity. Data analysis proceeded through reduction, display, and conclusion drawing, highlighting recurrent strategies and challenges. The findings reveal that CRE teachers instilled values through four core strategies: first, religiosity, cultivated via prayer, Bible reading, and worship; second, honesty, reinforced through biblical narratives, fairness, and restorative dialogue; third, discipline, developed by consistent modeling and structured routines; and fourth, responsibility, nurtured by entrusting students with practical roles. Despite positive changes, challenges such as trauma, lack of parental support, and negative peer influences limited sustained progress. CRE teachers significantly contribute to character formation by integrating biblical principles with pedagogical care, fostering resilience, integrity, and responsibility in students from broken families. Institutional support, parental involvement, and community partnerships are recommended to strengthen and sustain these efforts.

Keywords: *Christian Religious Education, Character Values, Broken Family*

INTRODUCTION

The family is universally recognized as the first and foremost environment in which a child's personality and character are shaped. It is within the family that children first learn values, norms, habits, and moral behaviors that guide them throughout their lives. Ideally, the family serves as the foundation for nurturing religiosity, honesty, discipline, and responsibility in children. However, when the family unit is disrupted, such as in the case of divorce, separation, or prolonged absence of one or both parents, the nurturing function of the family is weakened. Children from such circumstances, commonly referred to as broken families, often face unique developmental challenges. They may experience emotional instability, lack of supervision, and absence of consistent moral guidance, all of which can hinder their character development. In the context of SMA Negeri 1 Adiankoting, the presence of students from broken families presents a significant challenge for the school, particularly in terms of character formation. Field observations conducted by the researcher revealed that some of these students demonstrated behavioral problems such as dishonesty, indiscipline, and lack of responsibility. Dishonesty appeared in the form of cheating during examinations or hiding mistakes; indiscipline was evident in frequent tardiness and neglect of school rules; while irresponsibility was seen in their reluctance to complete assignments or participate actively in school programs. These issues highlight the gap between the school's educational goals and the lived realities of students who grow up in less supportive family environments. The role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers, therefore, becomes central in addressing these gaps. Unlike teachers of secular subjects who primarily focus on cognitive achievements, CRE teachers are entrusted with the dual responsibility of delivering biblical knowledge and fostering holistic character development. Their role extends beyond classroom teaching to include mentoring, guiding, and even providing emotional and spiritual support for students from broken families. In practice, this means CRE teachers are expected not only to teach doctrines and Bible stories but also to translate these lessons into values that shape students' daily behaviors. The importance of this role is underscored by the reality that students from broken families often lack parental role models to guide them toward positive character development. For instance, without consistent parental supervision, students may struggle with self-discipline and accountability. Without parental affection, they may seek affirmation from peers or external environments that do not always encourage constructive behaviors. Consequently, CRE teachers often find themselves stepping into a parental role, offering counsel, prayer, and a model of Christian living to help compensate for the absence of guidance at home. This study situates itself in the broader discourse of character education, which has become a central concern in Indonesia's national curriculum. Character education emphasizes the cultivation of values such as religiosity, honesty, discipline, and responsibility as fundamental to preparing students not only for academic success but also for life as morally upright citizens. In Christian education, these values are grounded in biblical principles, making the role of CRE teachers both spiritual and pedagogical. As Thomas Lickona argues, effective character education requires synergy between the family, school, and community. Yet, in cases where family support is minimal or absent, the burden falls disproportionately on schools and teachers to nurture these values. The study at SMA Negeri 1 Adiankoting is

particularly relevant because it sheds light on the practical strategies CRE teachers employ to instill character values in students facing the vulnerabilities of broken family backgrounds. These strategies include integrating moral teachings into daily lessons, modeling consistent behavior, enforcing discipline with fairness, and providing individualized attention and counseling. However, these efforts are not without challenges. Teachers face obstacles such as lack of parental cooperation, students' emotional instability, and the strong influence of peers and social environments that may contradict the values being taught. Given these realities, this research aims to explore systematically the efforts made by CRE teachers to instill values of religiosity, honesty, discipline, and responsibility in students from broken families at SMA Negeri 1 Adiankoting. It also seeks to analyze the challenges encountered in this process and how teachers adapt their approaches to address these challenges. By focusing on this context, the study contributes not only to the literature on character education but also to the practical discourse on how Christian pedagogy can respond to the growing complexities of family dynamics in Indonesian society. The centrality of CRE teachers in shaping students' moral and spiritual lives, particularly those from broken families, cannot be overstated. Their role in bridging the gap left by absent family structures highlights the transformative potential of education when rooted in both biblical teachings and compassionate pedagogy. This research, therefore, is not only about documenting teacher efforts but also about affirming the importance of holistic Christian education in nurturing resilient, responsible, and faith-driven young people.

METHODS

A qualitative descriptive approach was used in this research, aimed at exploring in depth the efforts of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in instilling character values in students from broken families. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the phenomenon under study involves complex human interactions, values, and experiences that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measurement. By focusing on rich, descriptive data, the research sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of both teacher strategies and student responses within the real-life context of school settings. The research was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Adiankoting, located in North Tapanuli Regency, during the 2025/2026 academic year. The school was chosen purposively because it has a number of students coming from broken family backgrounds who demonstrate character-related challenges such as dishonesty, indiscipline, and lack of responsibility. These characteristics provided a relevant context for examining the efforts of CRE teachers in fostering positive values. Participants in this study included two Christian Religious Education teachers and ten students from broken families. The selection of these participants was based on purposive sampling, which allows researchers to deliberately choose individuals who can provide the most relevant and rich information related to the research focus. The CRE teachers were selected because they are directly responsible for character education in the classroom, while the students were chosen because their family conditions make them the primary subjects of the study. Observation was conducted in classrooms and school environments to capture natural interactions between teachers and students. The researcher paid attention to teaching strategies, disciplinary practices, and the ways in which teachers modeled values

such as honesty, responsibility, and religiosity. This direct observation allowed the researcher to see firsthand how character formation was integrated into daily classroom practices. Interviews were conducted with both CRE teachers and selected students. Teacher interviews focused on strategies used to instill values, challenges encountered, and reflections on their roles. Student interviews explored perceptions of the teachers' guidance, personal struggles stemming from broken family situations, and their understanding of values such as honesty, discipline, and responsibility. These interviews provided subjective insights that complemented the observational data. Documentation was also used to enrich the data. Sources included school records, lesson plans, and notes related to disciplinary cases or student character development activities. These documents offered contextual evidence that helped triangulate the findings from observation and interviews. In the data reduction stage, raw data from observations, interviews, and documents were carefully reviewed and coded to identify relevant themes such as teaching strategies, challenges, and student responses. In the data display stage, information was organized into matrices and descriptive narratives to make patterns more visible. To ensure validity and credibility, the study employed triangulation of sources and techniques. Source triangulation was achieved by comparing perspectives from teachers, students, and documentary evidence. Technique triangulation was accomplished by using multiple methods - observation, interviews, and documentation - to collect overlapping data on the same phenomenon.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study set out to explore how Christian Religious Education teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Adiankoting attempt to instill core character values-religiosity, honesty, discipline, and responsibility-in students who originate from non-intact (broken) families, and to analyze the effect of those teacher efforts alongside the obstacles the teachers face. The research employed qualitative, descriptive methods (interviews with two CRE teachers and ten students, direct classroom observation, and documentary review), and presents a textured description of both practices and perceived outcomes at the research site. The school is profiled as a state senior high school with an expressed vision to form students who are intelligent, faithful, and of strong character; that institutional mission provides a backdrop against which CRE activities are organized and assessed. The empirical materials collected-verbatim interview excerpts, observational notes, and documentary artifacts-reveal a set of recurrent teacher strategies, observable student responses, and persistent contextual constraints that jointly shape the trajectory of character formation among the targeted students. The first major result concerns how religiosity is taught and embodied. Teachers foreground prayer, Scripture reading, and routine devotional practices as the heart of their character work; they do not present religious content as merely cognitive knowledge but as a daily practice and habit to be internalized. Teachers report that they begin and close lessons with prayer, encourage consistent Bible reading, and conduct sharing and worship activities to build communal faith practices. Importantly, teachers deliberately attempt to function as a "living curriculum" - modelling faith in ordinary interactions so students encounter a faith that is embodied in behavior as well as instruction. One teacher summarizes this orientation succinctly: "*Doa dan pembacaan Alkitab sangat penting karena melalui renungan harian dan doa, siswa belajar kasih*

Tuhan dan nilai moral" (R.H., interview). Student testimonies corroborate the teacher accounts: several students report increased spiritual awareness, greater comfort in personal devotion, and a felt pastoral presence in the classroom that helps mediate the absence or instability of parental care. These outcomes are presented in the thesis as gradual but real shifts in demeanor—students become more patient, more polite, and better able to regulate emotion—though cognitive or academic gains remain more limited. Second, the study finds that honesty is cultivated through integrated pedagogies that combine scriptural exemplars, classroom norms, and restorative correction. Teachers intentionally use Bible narratives (for example, the story of Ananias and Sapphira) as ethical case studies to reveal the spiritual stakes of dishonesty, while simultaneously enforcing routines and assessment practices that make cheating and deception less attractive. Importantly, teachers emphasize fairness and non-discriminatory behavior as part of modelling honesty: the teacher's impartial treatment of students functions as moral pedagogy in itself (*"keteladanan nyata dalam sikap dan perilaku"*) and invites reciprocal openness from students. Student voice in the data confirms this connection; pupils note that teachers ask reflective questions, reward honest confession, and speak personally with learners who appear to hide problems—measures which then open space for ethical learning. Thus, the study documents both cognitive framing (biblical teaching) and affective support (pastoral listening) as key mechanisms for honesty internalization. Third, discipline is constructed not merely as compliance but as habituation: teachers set clear classroom rules, apply educative consequences, and validate small routines (punctuality, homework completion, devotional regularity) as part of a holistic discipline formation. Teachers affirm the centrality of their own constancy—being the example to be imitated—so that discipline emerges as internalized habit rather than external coercion. Students report that repeated, consistent reminders about prayer, Bible reading, and punctuality gradually scaffold a more ordered way of life, linking spiritual disciplines and academic habits. The data show that the discipline that takes root is often partial and incremental, but it is visibly present in classroom attendance patterns and in the students' self-reports of daily devotions. Fourth, the research highlights responsibility as cultivated through entrustment and practical opportunity. Teachers allocate roles—leading prayers, organizing activities, or managing small tasks—that confer responsibility and thereby enhance self-esteem and practical accountability among students from broken homes. The process of being trusted with tasks, coupled with pastoral coaching when failures occur, strengthens a sense of agency in students who frequently report feelings of inadequacy due to family instability. The thesis documents examples where initially reluctant students grew into leadership roles after repeated, scaffolded entrustment by teachers. While these teacher practices are described as positively influential, the findings also reveal significant, endemic obstacles. The most salient obstacle is trauma and emotional closure among students: many pupils manifest withdrawal, hypervigilance, attention-seeking or emotional volatility that block the straightforward internalization of values. Teachers emphasize that trauma is neither quick to resolve nor uniformly responsive to pedagogical interventions; rather, it requires slow relational work, empathy, and often referral or extended counselling. Second, lack of parental support remains a pervasive constraint: when the home environment does not mirror or reinforce school values—because parents are absent, indifferent, or in conflict—the gains made in school are fragile and liable to erosion. Teachers thus frequently perform quasi-parental

roles, an unsustainable expectation that strains their time and energy. Third, environmental influences—peer pressure, neighborhood norms, and media exposure—occasionally countermand the school’s message; teachers report cases where students revert to prior maladaptive behaviors outside school, a pattern that highlights the multi-layered ecology of character formation. The discussion situates these results within the theoretical frameworks invoked in the thesis. First, Max Scheler’s hierarchy of values (as referenced in the study) helps explain why teachers prioritize religiosity: religious values, in Scheler’s schema, occupy an a priori realm that shapes orientation to meaning and moral priorities; thus, restoring a student’s experience of the God-relationship becomes a precondition for subsequent moral growth. This theoretical link is evident in the teachers’ practice of foregrounding devotional habits, because a re-ordered moral vision—rooted in religiousness—serves as the wellspring for honesty, discipline, and responsibility. Second, Thomas Lickona’s triadic model of character education (moral knowing, moral feeling, moral action) maps onto the CRE teachers’ integrated approach: biblical instruction supplies moral knowledge, pastoral attention cultivates emotive disposition toward the good, and classroom routines provide practice in moral action. The study’s data illustrate Lickona’s point practically: students understand ethical content, feel empowered to care about it, and are given repeated opportunities to enact it in community settings. Third, Suyadi’s emphasis on habit formation (as articulated in the thesis) gives conceptual purchase on the teachers’ insistence on routine: discipline and responsibility are not single moments of compliance but the outcome of repeated, trained responses that originate in stable relationships and consistent practice. The thesis shows that teachers intentionally create such repetition (prayer, Bible reading, punctuality) and that the repeated enactment of these practices supports slower, deeper interiorization—precisely the kind of moral habituation Suyadi advocates. In short, the empirical data and the theoretical lenses the thesis mobilizes present a coherent pedagogical logic: religious orientation → moral motivation → habitual practice → observable character change.

Bronfenbrenner-style ecological sensibilities, implicitly present in the thesis’s account of family and environment, explain why school-based interventions alone cannot fully resolve character deficits that are reinforced at home or in the neighborhood. The thesis itself acknowledges that teacher efforts are necessary but not sufficient; effective character formation requires synergistic action across family, school, and community. This insight leads directly to the practical implications the thesis proposes: strengthen institutional support for CRE programming, develop formalized counselling resources, mobilize parental engagement strategies, and expand partnerships with local churches to amplify the school’s formative reach. A further analytical observation concerns the affective dimension of teacher work. The thesis documents how teachers routinely adopt pastoral stances—listening, consoling, and providing extra attention—that go beyond curriculum delivery. This ethic of care is consonant with contemporary literature on teacher well-being and moral labor: caring labor produces distinctive student outcomes but also exposes teachers to emotional exhaustion if institutional supports are lacking. The empirical evidence in the thesis supports this dual claim: teachers are effective in building trust and eliciting change, but they report constraints of time and capacity that make sustained pastoral engagement difficult to maintain. Thus, the study suggests not only programmatic reforms but also teacher welfare measures (professional development, workload adjustment, access to counselling networks) as necessary

complements to pedagogical strategy. The study's comparative reflection with prior research indicates both consonance and contribution. It aligns with prior findings that broken home status increases vulnerability to emotional and behavioral problems, while offering an important corrective: faith-infused, relationship-centered pedagogies implemented by committed CRE teachers can produce measurable improvements in religiosity, discipline, honesty, and responsibility. The thesis therefore contributes empirically by documenting specific teacher practices that yield observable changes and analytically by showing how classical character education theories can be adapted within a Christian schooling context to address family instability. The results and discussion together paint a picture of committed, context-sensitive CRE practice: teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Adiankoting use a blend of devotional formation, biblical pedagogy, modelling, and habituation to cultivate character in students from broken homes; these methods are demonstrably impactful yet fragile in the face of trauma, absent parental reinforcement, and wider social pressures. The thesis's recommendations-strengthen school programs, support teacher pastoral capacity, engage parents, and foster community partnerships-follow logically from the empirical and theoretical analysis and point to an agenda for sustainable character formation that is both ethically grounded and practically feasible.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the efforts of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in instilling character values in students from broken families at SMA Negeri 1 Adiankoting. The findings demonstrate that CRE teachers play a vital role not only as transmitters of biblical knowledge but also as mentors, counselors, and role models who address the moral and emotional needs of their students. Within the challenges posed by family fragmentation, teachers emerged as pivotal figures who provided spiritual guidance, moral instruction, and practical strategies to nurture religiosity, honesty, discipline, and responsibility among students. First, the study underscores the centrality of religiosity as the foundation of character formation. Through consistent practices such as prayer, Bible reading, and worship, teachers cultivated spiritual resilience in students who often felt emotionally neglected at home. By presenting God as a loving Father who never abandons His children, teachers addressed the deep emotional wounds caused by broken family dynamics. This approach confirmed Scheler's view that religious values occupy the highest rank in the hierarchy of human values, serving as the axis upon which moral transformation can take place. Students testified that they felt spiritually strengthened and emotionally comforted by the religious practices facilitated by their teachers, highlighting the transformative power of faith-centered pedagogy. Second, honesty was shown to be nurtured through integrated strategies that combined biblical narratives, teacher modeling, and reflective dialogue. By using stories such as Ananias and Sapphira, teachers made students aware that dishonesty is not only a social fault but also a sin before God. Teachers reinforced honesty by treating all students with fairness and by rewarding truthful behavior while correcting dishonesty with patience and restorative practices. This reflects framework of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, which suggests that character is effectively built when knowledge, affect, and practice converge. The testimonies of students confirmed that they began to see honesty not

merely as a school rule but as a spiritual obligation, an orientation that shaped their personal and relational integrity. Third, discipline was effectively developed through consistent modeling, the establishment of classroom rules, and the application of educative consequences. Teachers encouraged students to cultivate habits of punctuality, attentiveness, and consistency in prayer and Bible reading. The findings highlight that discipline, when modeled by teachers and reinforced with fairness, becomes an internalized habit rather than an externally imposed rule. This approach resonates with Suyadi's emphasis on discipline as a habit born out of consistent practice rather than coercion. Students reported increased regularity in their devotional life and academic responsibilities, showing that discipline, once internalized, positively influenced multiple aspects of their lives. Fourth, responsibility was instilled through entrusting students with practical roles in the classroom and school activities. By involving students in prayer leadership, group projects, and organizational tasks, teachers gave them opportunities to practice accountability and leadership. Students expressed that these responsibilities increased their sense of self-worth and confidence, which countered the feelings of neglect often experienced in broken families. Such practices demonstrated how responsibility grows when students are trusted, guided, and affirmed, aligning with Lickona's notion that responsibility is cultivated through opportunities for moral action supported by caring mentorship. Despite these achievements, the study also revealed persistent challenges. Trauma, emotional instability, lack of parental support, and negative peer or environmental influences often hindered the internalization of values. Teachers frequently stepped into parental roles, offering counseling and emotional support, yet they also acknowledged limitations in time, capacity, and institutional resources. These challenges highlight the necessity for stronger collaboration among family, school, church, and community in character formation. Character education is most effective when supported by all ecological layers of a child's life. When family support is absent, schools and teachers carry disproportionate burdens, underscoring the need for systemic strategies to complement teachers' efforts. The study affirms that CRE teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Adiankoting have made significant contributions to shaping the character of students from broken families through strategies rooted in biblical principles, consistent modeling, and compassionate mentorship. Their efforts resulted in observable improvements in religiosity, honesty, discipline, and responsibility, despite the formidable challenges posed by broken home conditions. The study further reinforces the importance of holistic Christian education that integrates cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions, demonstrating that faith-based pedagogy can serve as both a spiritual anchor and a moral compass for vulnerable students. Practically, the findings suggest that schools should provide institutional support for CRE teachers through structured programs, counseling resources, and parent-school partnerships to ensure sustainable character formation. Ultimately, the work of CRE teachers exemplifies the transformative potential of education when guided by both biblical values and pedagogical care, offering hope that even in contexts of family brokenness, students can be nurtured into resilient, responsible, and faith-driven individuals.

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