



Christian Character Education and the Personality Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers: A Philippians 4:8 Perspective at SDN 138429 Tanjungbalai

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between Christian character education and the personality competence of Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers, framed through the ethical vision of Philippians 4:8 and examined within the context of SDN 138429 Tanjungbalai, where one PAK teacher serves 19 Christian students. The study aims to understand how the teacher's personality, shaped by spiritual maturity, moral integrity, and daily embodiment of biblical virtues, contributes to the formation of students' Christian character in a public-school environment. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) served as the dominant methodological approach, supported by complementary semi-structured interviews with the PAK teacher and a selection of students. The SLR synthesized theoretical and empirical studies on teacher personality, virtue ethics, and Christian moral formation, while interview data provided contextual nuances regarding daily interactions, students' moral perceptions, and the teacher's pedagogical strategies. The findings reveal that the eight virtue qualities in Philippians 4:8, truth, honor, justice, purity, loveliness, commendability, excellence, and praiseworthiness, function as a comprehensive moral compass for Christian educators. The integration of biblical virtues enables the teacher to create a nurturing, ethical, and spiritually meaningful learning environment. The study concludes that Christian character development in school settings relies significantly on teachers who consistently embody scriptural virtues, highlighting the need for Christian educators to cultivate personal spirituality, emotional maturity, and moral integrity as foundational components of pedagogical practice.

Keywords: *Character Education, Christian Religious Education, Personality Competence*

INTRODUCTION

Christian character education has increasingly become a strategic focus within Indonesia's public schooling system, particularly in regions where Christian students constitute a minority yet remain committed to cultivating spiritual, moral, and intellectual maturity. SDN 138429 Tanjungbalai, a public elementary school located in an urban-coastal area of North Sumatra, represents such a context, hosting 19 Christian students who receive

instruction from a single Christian Religious Education (PAK) teacher. Within this environment, the development of Christian character is not merely an academic expectation but a transformative process that integrates faith, virtue, and daily behaviour. This study explores how Christian character formation is influenced by the personality competence of PAK teachers, interpreted through the ethical and virtue-oriented lens of Philippians 4:8. The Pauline exhortation, calling believers to focus on what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and praiseworthy, provides a value framework central to the character education philosophy in Christian pedagogy. Personality competence, as defined in Indonesian teacher professionalism standards, refers to a teacher's integrity, emotional maturity, moral discernment, and exemplary behaviour that students can emulate. For PAK teachers, this competence carries additional spiritual meaning: the call to embody Christlike virtues and to manifest biblical values in every aspect of teaching, mentoring, and interpersonal interaction. Numerous studies affirm that teacher personality is one of the strongest determinants of students' moral development, shaping not only how they perceive ethical behaviour but also how they internalize and practice it (Sanderse, 2019; Lickona, 2021). In Christian education, this principle is amplified by the belief that character formation is ultimately grounded in a transformative encounter with the virtues taught in Scripture. Philippians 4:8 is particularly relevant in this regard, since it encapsulates a holistic moral vision that integrates cognitive discernment, affective purity, relational goodness, and moral excellence. The context of SDN 138429 Tanjungbalai introduces both opportunities and challenges for Christian character education. On one hand, the school provides a stable learning environment with sufficient space for cultivating discipline, respect, cooperation, and integrity among students. On the other hand, the limited number of Christian students, coupled with the complexity of navigating religious diversity, places additional demands on the PAK teacher's personality competence. The teacher must serve simultaneously as a moral role model, pastoral figure, mediator, and mentor who helps students develop resilience and moral clarity while engaging respectfully within a pluralistic community. Such a task requires the embodiment of Philippians 4:8 values, where truthfulness, justice, purity of intention, and praiseworthy conduct are continuously lived out before students. Christian character education is inherently relational, requiring daily interactions that reveal the authenticity of the teacher's personality. Students at the elementary level, especially those aged 7–12, are highly perceptive of teacher behaviour, often modelling virtues not because of formal instruction but because of lived demonstrations they observe. Research in moral education confirms that children internalize character most effectively through relational proximity, emotional trust, and consistent modelling (Nucci, 2014). Therefore, the PAK teacher's behaviour, communication style, conflict-handling ability, and spiritual disposition become crucial instruments in shaping students' Christian character. In this study, Philippians 4:8 serves as both a hermeneutical lens and an evaluative framework for examining how personality competence influences Christian character formation at SDN 138429 Tanjungbalai. The integration of biblical virtues with contemporary character education theories provides a rich interdisciplinary platform for understanding moral pedagogy. The aim of this research is to describe, analyze, and interpret how the personality competence of the PAK teacher contributes to the character formation of Christian students in this public-school setting, drawing from a systematic literature

review complemented by field interviews. Ultimately, this article argues that when PAK teachers embody the virtues emphasized in Philippians 4:8, they become catalysts for transformative character education that shapes not only moral decision-making but also personal identity, spiritual resilience, and social responsibility among students.

METHODS

The combination of a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) as the primary methodological approach, complemented by limited semi-structured interviews methods provides both theoretical depth and contextual grounding, enabling a comprehensive exploration of how the teacher's personality competence contributes to Christian character formation through the ethical framework of Philippians 4:8. Research questions were refined to examine the ways in which teacher personality influences character formation and how biblical virtues shape pedagogical practice. Comprehensive searches were conducted in peer-reviewed databases included: "Christian character education," "teacher personality competence," "virtue ethics in education," "biblical pedagogy," "Philippians 4:8," and "religious moral formation." Studies were screened using inclusion criteria: published between 2014-2024, focused on character development or teacher competence, written in English or Indonesian, and linked to Christian education or virtue-based pedagogy. Exclusion criteria removed studies unrelated to character formation, non-scholarly publications, and articles lacking methodological clarity. From an initial pool of 187 sources, 61 articles and books met the criteria for final synthesis. The synthesis process used thematic coding to identify recurring concepts: teacher moral identity, modelling of virtues, relational ethics, student imitation, spirituality in teaching, and practical implications of biblical virtue lists. These codes were then aligned with the eight virtues in Philippians 4:8, truth, honor, justice, purity, loveliness, commendability, excellence, and praiseworthiness, to build a conceptual framework. To contextualize the SLR findings, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the PAK teacher and six Christian students (representing various grade levels). The interview questions explored how the teacher understands Philippians 4:8, how personality affects classroom interaction, and how students perceive the teacher's influence on their character. Interviews lasted 20-30 minutes and were conducted in a conversational manner to allow natural expression. The teacher interview provided insights into pedagogical practices, emotional self-management, and moral modelling, while student interviews revealed how virtues such as honesty, respect, and kindness are experienced and interpreted in everyday school life. Field notes were taken to capture non-verbal cues, relational dynamics, and situational context. The SLR provides a robust theoretical foundation, while the interviews supply contextual nuance from SDN 138429 Tanjungbalai. Together, these methods allow the study to reveal how Christian virtues function pedagogically when embodied through teacher personality competence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings from the systematic literature review and complementary interviews indicate that the personality competence of the PAK teacher at SDN 138429 Tanjungbalai plays a central role in guiding Christian character formation. According to Philippians 4:8,

Christian virtue is grounded in a disciplined focus on “whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, or praiseworthy.” These eight virtue categories provided the interpretive lens through which the teacher’s personality and practice were assessed. Students described the teacher as someone who “always speaks honestly,” “never gets angry easily,” and “treats everyone fairly,” demonstrating alignment with the Pauline virtues of truth, justice, and honor. Consistency between biblical values and visible behavior emerged as the strongest factor influencing students’ moral perception. This pattern confirms the broad consensus in character education literature asserting that children’s moral growth is shaped more by who the teacher is than by what the teacher merely teaches (Nucci, 2014; Lickona, 2021). Interviews revealed that the teacher intentionally integrates Philippians 4:8 into daily conduct, particularly through honesty and emotional temperance. Students noted that the teacher often says, “*We follow what is right because God sees us,*” linking moral obligations to spiritual accountability. This relational manner reflects what scholars describe as “virtue embodiment pedagogy,” where teachers serve as living exemplars of ethical and spiritual ideals (Sanderse, 2019). The SLR confirmed that moral modelling remains the most powerful mechanism for transmitting values to children aged 7-12, the age group encompassing all 19 Christian students at SDN 138429 Tanjungbalai. Thus, the teacher’s personal integrity, reliability, and emotional stability functioned as a daily, observable curriculum of character formation. This finding aligns directly with Paul’s instruction in Philippians, where moral excellence is not taught merely as moral principles but through imitation. Just as the Philippian believers were encouraged to imitate Paul as he imitated Christ (Phil. 4:9), students imitate teachers whose lives reflect Christlike dispositions. The personality competence of the PAK teacher functions as a modern embodiment of Pauline pedagogy, where the teacher’s life becomes the interpretive key through which students learn to apply Philippians 4:8 in practical ways.

Truthfulness and Integrity as Pillars of the Teacher’s Personality Competence

The first virtue in Philippians 4:8, “truth” was strongly expressed in the teacher’s practice. Students reported that “the teacher never lies,” “keeps promises,” and “is fair when checking assignments.” These behaviours fostered trust, a central component of moral education cited repeatedly in the literature (Collie, 2022). Trust allows students to feel secure and valued, promoting psychological openness to moral instruction. The SLR revealed that integrity remains a core dimension of personality competence in the Indonesian national teacher standards and in Christian education discourse. The teacher’s emphasis on truthfulness was also evident in classroom discipline. Instead of using fear-based approaches, the teacher uses restorative dialogue-asking students to explain the truth of a situation, identify the wrongdoing, and seek reconciliation. This approach aligns with restorative justice principles, which scholars link to the biblical practice of truthful confession and relational healing (Harriott & Manfra, 2019). It also helps students understand honesty not as punishment avoidance but as a virtue tied to dignity and responsibility. Integrity was evident in the teacher’s stewardship of teaching time and classroom responsibilities. Observations from the interview suggested the teacher arrives punctually, prepares lessons diligently, and admits mistakes openly when they occur. By demonstrating authentic humility and responsibility, the teacher embodies the “true and

honorable” virtues of Philippians 4:8, providing students with a moral reference they perceive as trustworthy and consistent. The next virtue, “honor” or “nobility” was reflected in the teacher’s respectful treatment of students, colleagues, and school staff. Students mentioned that the teacher “does not embarrass anyone,” “corrects mistakes kindly,” and “always speaks politely even when angry.” These dispositions cultivate what educational philosophers identify as “ethics of respect,” a foundational component of human dignity in character formation (Noddings, 2016). The SLR highlighted that respectful teacher–student interactions significantly correlates with students’ self-esteem, moral reasoning, and openness to correction. At SDN 138429 Tanjungbalai, this was visible when the teacher mediated conflicts among Christian students. Instead of reprimanding them harshly, the teacher used reflective questioning, helping students recognize the dignity of others. This approach mirrors Paul’s exhortation to pursue honorable conduct that reflects Christlike humility and relational sensitivity. The teacher also models honor by respecting cultural diversity. SDN 138429 Tanjungbalai is situated in a pluralistic environment where students of different religions and ethnic backgrounds interact daily. The teacher consistently acknowledges the dignity of all students, encouraging Christian pupils to learn from differences without compromising their faith. The SLR emphasized that such intercultural respect is crucial in strengthening moral identity while cultivating social harmony in religiously diverse contexts (Wong & Bostwick, 2021). Hence, the teacher’s honorable conduct not only shapes Christian character but fosters a peaceful school culture.

Justice and Fairness as Expressions of Teacher Consistency

Justice, the commitment to fairness and impartiality, is the other virtue highlighted in Philippians 4:8. The students interviewed affirmed that the teacher “treats all students equally,” “does not favor anyone,” and “gives fair grades based on effort.” Fairness is a major determinant of character development because it teaches students that moral rules apply consistently to all, forming the basis for ethical reasoning and empathy (Borg & Falzon, 2021). The SLR findings support this, showing that teachers who demonstrate fairness are perceived as moral authorities whose actions inspire imitation. In this study, fairness was especially important because Christian students represent a minority group in the school. The teacher’s fairness toward all students, Christian or non-Christian, reinforced a sense of justice aligned with biblical teachings on neighborly love and impartiality. The teacher also demonstrates justice through classroom management. Punishments and rewards are distributed consistently, based on clear and known expectations. This transparency helps students internalize a sense of justice not centered on fear but on moral clarity and responsibility. According to Paul, justice aligns believers with the righteousness of God, and the teacher applies this principle by ensuring decisions uphold fairness grounded in compassion. Purity, moral and spiritual integrity, appears prominently in Philippians 4:8 as a virtue shaping Christian thought life. The PAK teacher at SDN 138429 Tanjungbalai models purity through speech, attitude, and emotional discipline. Students noted that the teacher “never uses harsh words,” “controls anger,” and “avoids talking about others behind their backs.” Such behaviors align with what Christian pedagogy identifies as “purity of heart,” which manifests in sincere intentions and disciplined emotions (Reimer, 2022). The SLR highlighted that moral purity in teachers

significantly affects students' belief formation. Children observe teachers' emotional reactions more closely than adults expect, often interpreting them as moral lessons. By controlling emotions, the teacher demonstrates that purity involves inward discipline, not just outward behavior. Purity was taught explicitly during PAK lessons where the teacher encouraged students to avoid cheating, gossiping, and disrespectful behavior. These lessons were tied not merely to school rules but to biblical teachings, allowing students to link classroom behavior with Christian morality. This approach reinforces the Pauline principle that purity involves aligning thoughts, intentions, and actions with God's truth.

The Pauline virtue of "whatever is lovely" refers to actions that foster harmony, kindness, and relational beauty. Students consistently described the teacher as "kind," "gentle," and "friendly." This relational warmth creates a psychologically safe environment where students feel valued and emotionally secure, conditions proven to enhance character development and moral learning (Glynn, 2021). The teacher's kindness is shown in multiple ways: greeting students cheerfully, helping those who struggle academically, offering encouragement, and mediating conflicts calmly. These behaviors embody what some scholars call "pastoral pedagogy," where teaching becomes an act of caring service reflecting Christlike compassion. The SLR affirmed that kindness in teaching is not sentimental but a transformative relational force that shapes students' attitudes toward virtue. The teacher's kindness extended beyond the classroom. During interviews, students shared stories of the teacher visiting their families during difficult times or giving extra support during illness. Such acts reinforce the idea that Christian character involves not only doctrinal knowledge but embodied love, an essential theme in Pauline ethics. "Whatever is commendable" refers to conduct that is worthy of imitation and public praise. The PAK teacher's lifestyle, as observed through interviews, aligns with this principle. Students and colleagues perceive the teacher as a moral anchor whose personal life reflects the values taught in class. This consistency boosts the credibility of moral instruction, reinforcing that Christian character is a holistic identity rather than selective behavior. The SLR revealed that commendability is a crucial dimension of personality competence. Teachers who demonstrate integrity in their personal lives-family, worship, community relations-strengthen the authenticity of their moral instruction. At SDN 138429 Tanjungbalai, the teacher's participation in church ministry and community service enhances students' respect while offering tangible examples of Christian character lived out beyond the school. Excellence, the pursuit of the highest moral and spiritual standards, is the final virtue in Philippians 4:8. The teacher's commitment to excellence was evident in meticulous lesson preparation, creative pedagogical strategies, and consistent encouragement for students to give their best. Excellence in teaching communicates to students that character requires discipline, effort, and dedication. The SLR supported this finding, noting that teachers who demonstrate excellence inspire students to pursue moral greatness, not merely rule compliance (Lovat et al., 2019). Excellence also manifests in the teacher's professional growth, including attending workshops, reading Scripture regularly, and seeking feedback on teaching. Such efforts model lifelong learning, a virtue students observe and imitate. The overall findings of this study reveal a dynamic interplay between biblical virtues, teacher personality competence, and student character development. Philippians 4:8 provides a virtue-based framework that the PAK teacher implicitly and explicitly embodies. This embodiment

forms the moral environment in which students learn to practice honesty, respect, fairness, purity, kindness, commendability, and excellence. The SLR confirmed that character formation is relational, experiential, and imitative. Interviews showed that students perceive the teacher not only as an academic instructor but as a moral and spiritual role model whose life offers a concrete picture of Christian virtue. Therefore, the personality competence of the PAK teacher is not peripheral but central to the success of Christian character education at SDN 138429 Tanjungbalai.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how Christian character education is shaped through the personality competence of Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers, viewed through the biblical-ethical orientation of Philippians 4:8 and contextualized within SDN 138429 Tanjungbalai. Through a combination of a systematic literature review and complementary interviews, the research demonstrates that the teacher's personality is not merely an additional pedagogical factor but the central medium through which Christian virtues are interpreted, modelled, and practiced by students. In the setting of a public elementary school with 19 Christian students and one PAK teacher, the embodiment of ethical and spiritual virtues becomes the most accessible and observable pedagogy for nurturing Christian character. The findings indicate that the eight virtues listed in Philippians 4:8, truth, honor, justice, purity, loveliness, commendability, excellence, and praiseworthiness, function as a holistic moral framework that informs both the identity and practice of the PAK teacher. Students do not primarily internalize these virtues through cognitive instruction but through witnessing consistent, authentic, and relationally grounded behaviour demonstrated by the teacher. This supports a wide body of literature emphasizing that teacher personality is a powerful determinant of children's character formation because students tend to imitate the attitudes, emotional patterns, and moral decisions of educators they respect and trust. The PAK teacher at SDN 138429 Tanjungbalai demonstrated these virtues concretely in everyday actions: by being truthful even in small matters, treating all students with respect, acting fairly when solving conflicts, upholding moral purity in speech and behavior, maintaining a gentle demeanor, demonstrating excellence in teaching, and consistently encouraging students to develop praiseworthy qualities. Such practices create a moral climate that strengthens Christian character formation not only among Christian students but also contributes to a broader school culture of kindness, honesty, and mutual respect. The study further reveals that teacher personality competence in Christian education extends beyond the professional domain to encompass a deeply theological identity. The teacher's personal relationship with God, daily devotional habits, and commitment to prayer directly shape their emotional stability, patience, and moral clarity. These spiritual disciplines empower the teacher to embody Philippians 4:8 not as an abstract ideal but as an integrated lifestyle that flows naturally into their pedagogical approach. As a result, students perceive the teacher not simply as an instructor but as a spiritual role model whose life communicates the meaning of Christian character more effectively than formal instruction alone. This research highlights a crucial implication: Christian character education cannot rely solely on curriculum or instructional materials. It must be rooted in teachers whose personality embodies integrity, compassion, and virtue. The findings suggest that future teacher

development initiatives, especially within Christian education, should prioritize spiritual formation, emotional maturity, moral consistency, and the integration of biblical virtues into daily life. At the school level, administrators should recognize the value of character-based leadership among teachers and provide environments that support ethical modeling. The study affirms that the personality competence of PAK teachers, illuminated by the virtues of Philippians 4:8, plays a transformative role in shaping students' Christian character. When teachers authentically reflect these virtues, students gain a living example of what it means to be truthful, honorable, just, pure, loving, excellent, and praiseworthy. Such formation contributes not only to personal moral development but also to the cultivation of a school environment grounded in dignity, mutual care, and spiritual resilience.

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