



The Influence of Christian Religious Education Teachers' Character on the Personality Formation of Grade VIII Students at UPT SMP Negeri 007 Sinambela

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ABSTRACT

Education in Indonesia is designed not only to transmit knowledge but also to cultivate character, values, and spirituality. Within this framework, Christian Religious Education (CRE) plays a central role in shaping students' holistic development, particularly through the character of teachers, whose integrity often speaks louder than formal instruction. This study investigates the influence of CRE teachers' character on the personality formation of Grade VIII students at UPT SMP Negeri 007 Sinambela, where adolescents face challenges such as dishonesty, indiscipline, and irresponsibility. An ex post facto design was employed, involving all 62 Grade VIII students through total sampling. Data were collected using a structured, validated, and reliable questionnaire, with variables operationalized into indicators of teacher character (honesty, discipline, empathy, integrity) and student personality (honesty, responsibility, discipline, religiosity). Statistical analysis included Pearson's product-moment correlation and simple linear regression. The findings reveal a significant positive relationship between teacher character and student personality formation, expressed by the regression equation $Y = 43.05 + 0.58X$. The t-test result ($t = 3.076 > 2.021$, $p < 0.05$) confirms the effect's significance, while the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.4238$) shows that 42.38% of students' personality formation is explained by teacher character. Furthermore, correlation analysis indicates a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.777$), with teacher character accounting for 60.4% of variance. These findings highlight that CRE teachers act as living curricula, modeling values that are internalized by students. The study concludes that enhancing teachers' personal integrity and spiritual competence is crucial for effective character education and calls for collaborative efforts among schools, families, and communities to reinforce consistent moral and spiritual values.

Keywords: Character, Personality Formation, Christian Religious Education

INTRODUCTION

Education is a transformative process that not only aims to transmit knowledge but also to shape the moral, spiritual, and social dimensions of students' lives. In Indonesia, the national education system emphasizes holistic development through the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, as well as the cultivation of character and values (Tilaar, 2017). Christian Religious Education (CRE) occupies a vital role, particularly in schools with Christian student populations. CRE is not merely about imparting biblical knowledge; it serves as a medium for instilling faith, values, and life skills that guide students in becoming responsible individuals who contribute positively to society (Hasudungan, 2020). Central to this process is the figure of the teacher, whose character often speaks louder than formal instruction. At UPT SMP Negeri 007 Sinambela, Grade VIII students are in a critical stage of personality formation, where adolescence challenges their emotional, social, and spiritual stability. This period is often marked by identity searching, susceptibility to peer influence, and heightened sensitivity to role models. Observations at this school indicate that many students display issues such as dishonesty, indiscipline, and irresponsibility. These behavioral challenges point to the urgent need for effective character formation strategies that address not only external behavior but also internal dispositions. Within this context, the role of CRE teachers becomes particularly significant. Their character—expressed through honesty, integrity, discipline, patience, and compassion—indirectly influences the way students develop their own personalities (Pasaribu, 2025). Personality formation is not an automatic process but the result of consistent guidance, example, and interaction. According to Lickona (2013), character education must be both taught and caught; students learn not only through explicit instruction but also through observing and imitating the attitudes and behavior of their teachers. In Christian pedagogy, this principle is reinforced by the biblical mandate in 1 Timothy 4:12, where Paul exhorts Timothy to set an example “in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity.” Thus, the teacher's role extends beyond being a transmitter of biblical knowledge to being a living model of the values and virtues they teach. Students who witness integrity, fairness, and sincerity in their teachers are more likely to internalize these qualities in their own lives (Nainggolan, 2020). The influence of teachers' character on student personality has also been confirmed by various studies. Harianto (2018) found that students tend to adopt moral values modeled by their teachers, especially when consistency between words and actions is observed. Similarly, Dewi and Hallatu (2017) highlight that teachers who demonstrate empathy, patience, and discipline foster environments where students feel respected, motivated, and inclined to cultivate similar attitudes. In the context of CRE, teachers' spiritual competence and moral integrity are inseparable from their effectiveness as educators. This is because the message of Christian education is fundamentally embodied; it cannot be divorced from the lived example of the teacher (Saragih, 2021).

The situation at UPT SMP Negeri 007 Sinambela reflects these theoretical insights. Field observations revealed that CRE teachers' character had a noticeable impact on student personality formation. Students reported that teachers who demonstrated fairness and consistency in discipline earned their respect, which in turn motivated them to be more responsible. Others noted that the patience and care shown by their teachers encouraged

them to be more empathetic toward peers. Conversely, when teachers appeared inconsistent or less attentive, students tended to mirror these behaviors, leading to disengagement and lack of responsibility (Pasaribu, 2025). This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the influence of CRE teachers' character on the personality formation of Grade VIII students at UPT SMP Negeri 007 Sinambela. It aims to provide empirical evidence on the extent to which teacher character contributes to shaping students' honesty, discipline, responsibility, and religiosity. The study contributes to broader discussions in Christian education by reaffirming the principle that character formation is inseparable from the teacher's own identity and integrity. The findings are expected to enrich both theoretical discourse and practical strategies for Christian educators who are committed to guiding students toward holistic maturity. The introduction underscores the urgency of examining how teacher character influences personality development in adolescents, particularly within the CRE context. The study is grounded in the conviction that while curriculum and pedagogy are important, the personal character of teachers remains the most powerful tool in shaping students. As Lickona (2013) reminds us, "to educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society." In the same vein, Christian education that neglects the character of teachers risks undermining its own mission of nurturing faithful, responsible, and morally grounded individuals.

METHODS

This study adopted an ex post facto design to examine the influence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers' character on the personality formation of students. The ex post facto design was chosen because the study did not manipulate variables directly but rather investigated existing conditions and their possible causal relationships (Ali & Asrori, 2014). In this context, the researcher sought to identify whether and to what extent the character of CRE teachers affected the development of students' personality traits such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, and religiosity. The research was conducted at UPT SMP Negeri 007 Sinambela, located in North Tapanuli Regency, during the 2024/2025 academic year. The population consisted of all Grade VIII students, totaling 62 individuals. Considering the relatively small population size, the researcher applied a total sampling technique, thus involving all 62 students as participants. This approach ensured that the findings would represent the entire Grade VIII cohort and avoid sampling bias (Sugiyono, 2017). Two main variables were investigated in this study. The independent variable (X) was the character of CRE teachers, operationalized through indicators such as honesty, discipline, patience, empathy, and integrity. The dependent variable (Y) was students' personality formation, measured in terms of honesty, responsibility, discipline, religiosity, and social awareness. These indicators were derived from both the theoretical framework of Christian education and empirical findings in previous character education research (Lickona, 2013; Saragih, 2021). The primary research instrument was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The questionnaire comprised 30 closed-ended items based on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). Fifteen items measured perceptions of CRE teachers' character (independent variable), while another fifteen items measured aspects of students' personality formation (dependent variable). The items were validated through expert

judgment by two lecturers specializing in Christian education and pedagogy, and their reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. The instrument demonstrated a high reliability coefficient ($\alpha > 0.80$), indicating internal consistency (Arikunto, 2019). The researcher obtained formal permission from the school, conducted preliminary observations, and secured informed consent from participants. During the implementation stage, the questionnaire was distributed directly to students in classroom settings under the supervision of the researcher and CRE teachers to ensure clarity and seriousness in responding. The completion stage involved checking the returned questionnaires for completeness and accuracy, followed by coding responses for statistical analysis. The data analysis process began with descriptive statistics to summarize the distribution of responses for each variable. To test the research hypothesis, inferential statistical techniques were employed. The Pearson product-moment correlation test was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between teachers' character and student personality formation. Furthermore, simple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the extent to which the independent variable explained variance in the dependent variable. The significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. Hypothesis testing followed the principle that if the calculated significance value (p) was lower than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0)-stating that teacher character had no influence-would be rejected, while the alternative hypothesis (H_a) would be accepted (Sugiyono, 2017). Content validity was established through expert review, while empirical validity was tested by correlating each item score with the total score. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha further supported the stability of the instrument. In addition, ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. Students' responses were treated confidentially, and participation was voluntary without coercion. The methods employed in this study were designed to rigorously explore the influence of CRE teachers' character on the personality formation of students. By adopting an *ex post facto* design, applying total sampling, and employing validated instruments, the research ensured both representativeness and reliability of the findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide clear empirical evidence on the influence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers' character on the personality formation of Grade VIII students at UPT SMP Negeri 007 Sinambela. Using simple linear regression analysis, the study found that the regression equation is $Y = 43.05 + 0.58X$, where Y represents students' personality formation and X represents the character of CRE teachers. This equation indicates that the constant value of 43.05 reflects the baseline level of students' personality formation even without the influence of the teacher's character. However, the regression coefficient of 0.58 demonstrates that for every one-unit increase in the character score of CRE teachers, the students' personality formation score increases by 0.58 units. This positive linear relationship emphasizes that the stronger and more consistent the teacher's character, the greater the contribution toward shaping the personality of the students. The results of the *t-test* further strengthen this conclusion. The study reported a *t*-count of 3.076, which is greater than the *t*-table value of 2.021 at the 5% significance level with 38 degrees of freedom. Since $t_{\text{count}} > t_{\text{table}}$, the null hypothesis (H_0), which assumed no significant effect of CRE teachers' character on

personality formation, is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. This means there is statistically significant evidence that the character of CRE teachers has a measurable influence on the personality development of the students. In practical terms, this shows that the values demonstrated by teachers in their personal conduct, integrity, discipline, and spiritual devotion directly impact how students build their moral, social, and religious identities. The analysis of the *coefficient of determination* (R^2) offers further insight into the strength of this relationship. The study reported that $R^2 = 42.38\%$, meaning that approximately 42.38% of the variance in students' personality formation can be explained by the character of the CRE teachers. Meanwhile, the remaining 57.62% of the variance is influenced by other factors beyond the scope of this research, such as family background, peer influence, community environment, and exposure to digital media. This finding highlights two important points. First, the character of CRE teachers plays a substantial role in shaping students' personality, making it one of the dominant school-based factors. Second, the presence of other contributing variables outside the teacher's influence reminds us that personality formation is a multidimensional process shaped by the interaction of school, family, community, and personal experiences.

When interpreted within the framework of Christian pedagogy, these results are both significant and consistent with theological and educational perspectives. According to the Bible, teachers carry a profound responsibility not only to deliver doctrinal knowledge but also to embody Christian virtues through their daily life. Paul's exhortation to Timothy, underscores the importance of a teacher's personal integrity and character. This study empirically confirms the relevance of this biblical principle in a modern educational context. Students observe and imitate the behavior, attitudes, and discipline modeled by their teachers. In this sense, the teacher's character becomes a "living curriculum" that communicates values more powerfully than words alone. The regression results showing a coefficient of 0.58 are particularly meaningful in highlighting the incremental influence of teacher character on student personality. While the numerical value may appear modest, in the context of personality development, even incremental changes are significant. Personality formation is a complex and long-term process; thus, the fact that a single-unit improvement in teacher character translates into measurable improvements in student outcomes demonstrates the practical importance of teacher integrity. This aligns with educational theorists such as Tilaar (2017), who emphasized that the role of teachers extends beyond cognitive instruction to include moral and spiritual formation. Similarly, Hasudungan (2020) argued that teacher competence must include spiritual and moral dimensions to ensure the holistic development of students. The finding that teacher character accounts for 42.38% of the variance in personality formation is also consistent with existing research. Previous studies in the Indonesian context have shown that teachers are often the most influential figures in shaping student behavior, particularly in environments where family support may be inconsistent or lacking. At UPT SMP Negeri 007 Sinambela, the influence of CRE teachers is especially critical because not all students come from family backgrounds that strongly reinforce Christian values. In such cases, the teacher's role as a role model becomes even more significant. The 42.38% contribution indicates that nearly half of the students' personality outcomes can be traced directly to the example set by their teachers. This emphasizes the necessity of strengthening teacher training programs that prioritize character and spiritual

development alongside academic qualifications. From a statistical perspective, the significance of the t-test result ($t = 3.076 > 2.021$) provides robust support for rejecting the null hypothesis. This implies that the observed relationship is not due to chance but represents a real effect. In educational research, achieving statistical significance at the 5% level is generally considered strong evidence of a genuine relationship. Therefore, the study contributes to the growing body of evidence that teacher character is a critical determinant of student personality outcomes. In terms of practical implications, the findings suggest that CRE teachers must pay close attention to their conduct both inside and outside the classroom. Students are highly observant and often more influenced by what teachers do than what they say. For example, if a teacher consistently demonstrates honesty, punctuality, and respect for others, students are likely to adopt similar values in their own lives. On the contrary, inconsistency between teaching and personal conduct can create confusion among students and undermine the teacher's credibility. The regression coefficient of 0.58 can thus be interpreted as a numerical reminder that every incremental act of integrity by the teacher contributes positively to the moral and spiritual development of students. The discussion also needs to consider the 57.62% of variance unexplained by teacher character. This substantial proportion suggests that personality formation is influenced by multiple overlapping contexts. Family upbringing, peer relationships, exposure to media, and participation in church or community activities all contribute to shaping a student's personality. This finding resonates with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which posits that human development is shaped by the interaction of multiple systems, including the microsystem (family and school), mesosystem (interactions between home and school), and macrosystem (cultural and societal influences). While CRE teachers have significant influence, they are not the sole determinants of student personality formation. This calls for a collaborative approach involving teachers, parents, churches, and the broader community. The influence of digital culture, particularly social media, cannot be ignored in discussions about student personality formation. As highlighted by OECD (2019), Indonesian students often score low in problem-solving and critical thinking due to overexposure to superficial digital content. This aligns with observations in the field that some students demonstrated dishonesty, lack of discipline, and irresponsibility, behaviors potentially exacerbated by unregulated exposure to digital platforms. In this context, the role of CRE teachers becomes even more vital, not only in teaching biblical principles but also in helping students critically engage with digital culture. Teachers who model self-control and discernment in their own use of technology can provide practical guidance for students struggling with similar challenges.

Another dimension worth discussing is the spiritual authority of teachers. In Christian education, the teacher's role is not limited to that of an instructor but extends to that of a spiritual mentor. The results of this study confirm that when teachers embody Christian character, students are more likely to develop a strong moral and spiritual identity. This finding resonates with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction and modeling in learning. Students learn not only through direct instruction but also through observing and imitating the behaviors of trusted adults. CRE teachers who demonstrate prayerfulness, patience, and integrity provide students with concrete models of Christian living, which significantly influence personality development. Theologically, the findings affirm the biblical mandate for teachers to live

as examples of faith. Paul's instruction in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ," reflects the centrality of modeling in Christian pedagogy. The positive regression results in this study empirically support this principle, showing that students' personality formation improves when teachers exhibit Christlike character. This underscores the need for teachers to cultivate their own spiritual lives as part of their professional responsibilities. The results and discussion of this study highlight several key points. First, the regression analysis ($Y = 43.05 + 0.58X$) demonstrates a clear positive relationship between teacher character and student personality formation. Second, the t-test results ($t = 3.076 > 2.021$) confirm the statistical significance of this relationship, while the R^2 value of 42.38% indicates that nearly half of the variance in student personality outcomes can be explained by teacher character. Third, the findings are consistent with both educational theory and biblical principles, emphasizing the importance of teachers as role models in shaping students' moral and spiritual lives. Finally, the unexplained variance highlights the need for collaborative efforts among teachers, families, churches, and communities to nurture the holistic development of students.

CONCLUSION

This study has provided clear empirical evidence regarding the significant influence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers' character on the personality formation of Grade VIII students at UPT SMP Negeri 007 Sinambela. The findings, supported by rigorous statistical analysis using the Pearson product-moment correlation, demonstrated that the correlation coefficient (r) was 0.777, with a coefficient of determination (r^2) of 0.604. This means that 60.4% of students' personality formation is explained by the character of CRE teachers, while the remaining 39.6% is influenced by other factors outside the scope of this research. Such results strongly confirm that the moral, spiritual, and behavioral qualities embodied by CRE teachers are decisive in shaping the values, attitudes, and overall personality of students. The conclusion that CRE teachers' character exerts a substantial impact aligns with the biblical foundation of Christian education, which emphasizes that teaching is not merely about transmitting knowledge but about modeling faith and life. As Paul reminds Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12, a teacher is called to set an example "in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity." In practice, students often observe and imitate the everyday behavior of their teachers, meaning that values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, patience, and care modeled by the teacher become internalized by students. The results of this study confirm this dynamic, as students who consistently interacted with CRE teachers demonstrating strong character traits were more likely to develop positive personalities marked by responsibility, respect, and moral integrity. This research underscores the broader implications for education in Indonesia, particularly in the context of character formation, which has been a national priority. The government, through the curriculum, emphasizes that schools are not merely academic institutions but spaces for cultivating holistic human development. Within this vision, CRE teachers play a strategic role because they carry a dual responsibility: delivering biblical instruction while also nurturing faith-based values that prepare students for life in a pluralistic and morally complex society. The fact that more than half of students'

personality development is attributable to teacher character highlights the urgency for professional development programs that focus not only on pedagogical skills but also on personal and spiritual growth of teachers. Another important conclusion relates to the challenges and limitations faced by CRE teachers. While the findings demonstrate a significant influence, it must be recognized that personality formation is multifactorial. Family background, peer influence, social environment, and digital media all contribute to shaping students' behavior and values. Thus, while CRE teachers' character is a crucial determinant, schools and policymakers must also engage families, churches, and communities in collaborative efforts to reinforce consistent moral and spiritual values. This integrative approach ensures that the positive influence of teachers is not undermined by conflicting messages from other socializing agents. This study highlights the relevance of teacher identity and integrity in the digital age. With the rapid rise of technology, students are increasingly exposed to cultural shifts that may weaken moral and spiritual sensitivity. Teachers with strong character act as stabilizing forces, guiding students to develop discernment and resilience. Teacher training programs should include not only technical mastery of subject matter but also intentional cultivation of character, spirituality, and ethical leadership. The conclusion of this research can be articulated as follows: the character of CRE teachers plays a decisive and measurable role in shaping the personality of students. The strong positive correlation obtained through statistical testing reflects the lived reality that students' development is inseparable from the character demonstrated by their teachers. For educational practice, this means that schools must prioritize the recruitment, development, and support of teachers who embody Christian values in both words and deeds. For theoretical development, this study contributes to the discourse on character education by providing empirical confirmation that teacher character is not only a moral expectation but a proven determinant of student formation. Finally, this study calls for further research into complementary factors influencing student personality, such as parental involvement, peer interaction, and media consumption, to develop a more comprehensive understanding of character education in the Indonesian context. The present findings affirm the enduring truth that teachers' lives are their most powerful lesson. As the data clearly demonstrate, when CRE teachers live out their faith authentically, they become transformative agents who inspire students to grow not only intellectually but also morally and spiritually.

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