



## The Effectiveness of the Role-Playing Model in Christian Religious Education: An Effort to Implement the Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the role-playing learning model in enhancing students' understanding and internalization of Christian values, while also serving as a medium for implementing the competencies of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers. The role-playing model was chosen for its ability to foster an active, participatory, and contextual learning environment, allowing students not only to cognitively comprehend key concepts but also to experience and internalize them affectively. The study employed a quasi-experimental approach using a pretest-posttest design, involving 60 junior high school students divided into an experimental group and a control group. The findings revealed a significant improvement in three key areas within the experimental group following the implementation of role-playing: conceptual understanding ( $t = 4.87$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), applicative skills ( $t = 5.23$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), and the internalization of Christian values ( $t = 3.98$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). These results indicate that the model is not only academically effective but also capable of fostering character and spiritual development among students. Further correlation analysis showed that the implementation of role-playing contributed to the development of CRE teachers' competencies, including pedagogical ( $r = 0.76$ ), personal ( $r = 0.68$ ), social ( $r = 0.72$ ), and professional competencies ( $r = 0.81$ ). Accordingly, this study concludes that the role-playing learning model is an effective strategy for Christian Religious Education. It not only strengthens students' understanding of Christian values but also supports the holistic realization of teacher competencies, thereby creating a transformative and meaningful learning experience for students.*

**Keywords:** *role-playing, Christian Religious Education, teacher competence, active learning, Christian values.*

### INTRODUCTION

Christian Religious Education (CRE) plays a central role in shaping students' character and fostering their spiritual growth. The primary objective of CRE is not merely to convey theological knowledge, but also to internalize Christian values into students' daily lives. Values such as love, forgiveness, honesty, justice, and sacrifice are fundamental principles that should not only be understood conceptually but also manifested in tangible behavior

(Groome, 2018). In practice, this process faces significant challenges, particularly in bridging the gap between theoretical understanding and the practical application of Christian values in students' lives.

As time progresses, the social and cultural realities faced by students have become increasingly complex. Challenges such as secularization, consumerism, and individualism often influence how students perceive and live out the teachings of the Christian faith (Sidjabat, 2019). In such circumstances, CRE instruction that relies solely on conventional methods—such as lectures, one-way discussions, or rote memorization—tends to fall short in fostering deep personal transformation. Students may understand the concepts of faith and values, yet fail to meaningfully experience their relevance and significance in daily life.

In response to these challenges, innovation in teaching methods has become an urgent necessity. The ultimate goal of CRE is to develop individuals who can emulate Christ in real-life contexts. Therefore, instructional approaches should be active, participatory, and transformative. One approach gaining attention in values education and spirituality is the role-playing model.

The role-playing model enables students to portray characters or situations that reflect moral dilemmas or the application of Christian values in real-life contexts. Through this enactment, students do not merely hear or read about values; they also experience, feel, and personally reflect on their meaning. This aligns with David Kolb's (2015) experiential learning approach, which emphasizes the importance of direct experience in shaping knowledge and life wisdom. In the context of CRE, role playing can serve as a simulation of Christian living, providing students with opportunities to make ethical decisions, cultivate empathy for others, and understand the moral implications of their actions. The success of the role-playing model greatly depends on the teacher's competence. According to the Indonesian Ministry of National Education Regulation No. 16 of 2007, every teacher—including CRE teachers—must possess four core competencies: pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competence. Pedagogical competence entails the ability to design, implement, and evaluate effective instruction. Personal competence relates to moral integrity, exemplary conduct, and emotional stability. Social competence reflects the ability to build harmonious relationships with students and the surrounding community. Professional competence includes mastery of subject matter, instructional methods, and continuous knowledge development (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018).

Unfortunately, previous studies have indicated that the integrated implementation of these four competencies in CRE teaching remains challenging. Kristianto (2020) observes that many CRE teachers still struggle to adopt instructional approaches that bridge the gap between theory and the practical application of Christian values. Factors such as limited training opportunities, the lack of contextual learning materials, and minimal innovation in teaching have resulted in CRE remaining predominantly at the cognitive level.

Within this context, the role-playing model holds strategic potential—not only as an active learning method but also as a medium for the concrete implementation of the four CRE teacher competencies. This model encourages teachers to become creative facilitators of learning (pedagogical competence), demonstrate Christian values through exemplary conduct and emotional engagement in the teaching process (personal

competence), build meaningful and equitable interactions with students (social competence), and master various contextual and reflective instructional approaches (professional competence).

Role playing also helps create an open, dialogical, and collaborative learning atmosphere. Students are engaged as active subjects in the learning process, thereby creating space for critical reflection on real-life situations they encounter. Through simulations and post-performance discussions, students can reassess and reinterpret the values of faith in the light of everyday life.

Several previous studies have addressed the effectiveness of active learning models in CRE, including contextual approaches, project-based learning, and reflective approaches (Nuhamara, 2018; Prijanto, 2020). However, specific attention to the role-playing model remains relatively limited, particularly in its connection to strengthening CRE teacher competencies. Most research has focused more on student learning outcomes without exploring the role of instructional models in supporting teachers' professional growth. This study seeks to fill that gap by empirically examining the effectiveness of the role-playing model in CRE instruction. Its primary objectives are: (1) to assess the extent to which the role-playing model enhances students' conceptual understanding and internalization of Christian values, and (2) to identify the correlation between the use of this model and the implementation of the four CRE teacher competencies.

## **METHODS**

This study employed a quasi-experimental approach using a *pretest–posttest control group design*. This design was chosen because it allows the researcher to measure the effectiveness of the role-playing instructional model in comparison with conventional methods in the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE), while taking into account students' initial conditions (pretest) and final outcomes (posttest). Two groups were compared: the experimental group, which received instruction through the role-playing approach, and the control group, which received conventional instruction. This arrangement enabled the comparison of results to reflect the actual impact of the instructional model applied.

The study was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Uluan over a four-month period, from January to April 2025. The research sample consisted of 60 eleventh-grade students selected purposively based on specific criteria, such as readiness to participate in active learning and the availability of teachers willing to engage in training. The sample was equally divided into two groups: 30 students in the experimental group and 30 students in the control group. Both groups had balanced demographic characteristics, with a gender distribution of 53% female and 47% male. They were also relatively comparable in terms of socioeconomic background and prior academic achievement, thereby minimizing potential bias.

The independent variable in this study was the instructional model used—role playing for the experimental group and a conventional method for the control group. The dependent variables comprised three aspects: (1) conceptual understanding of Christian teachings, (2) students' applied skills in implementing Christian values, and (3) the degree of internalization of these values in daily life. The study also included a variable on the implementation of CRE teacher competencies, encompassing the four dimensions

stipulated by the Ministry of Education and Culture: pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competence.

To measure these variables, several instruments were used, each having undergone content validation by three experts in Christian Religious Education and limited field testing. The instruments included: a conceptual understanding test (reliability  $\alpha = 0.88$ ), an applied skills assessment rubric with inter-rater reliability of 0.85, and a Christian values internalization scale with reliability  $\alpha = 0.91$ . Additionally, an observation sheet was used to assess the implementation of CRE teacher competencies, which demonstrated inter-observer reliability of 0.89. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with teachers and students, as well as reflective journals written by teachers during the instructional process.

The research procedure was divided into three main stages. In the preparation stage (two weeks), a role-playing-based instructional module was developed for six core topics in CRE: love for others, forgiveness, social justice, environmental stewardship, integrity, and service. Training was also provided for the teachers assigned to the experimental group, and the pretest was administered to both groups. The implementation stage lasted for 12 weeks, during which the experimental group engaged in role-playing-based instruction while the control group continued with conventional teaching methods. Periodic observations were conducted to monitor both the learning process and the execution of teacher competencies. The evaluation stage (two weeks) involved the administration of the posttest, interviews with selected teachers and students, and the data analysis process.

Quantitative data were analyzed using several statistical techniques. An independent-samples *t*-test was employed to compare posttest results between the experimental and control groups, while a paired-samples *t*-test was used to measure score changes from pretest to posttest within each group. Pearson's correlation analysis was applied to assess the relationship between the implementation of the role-playing model and CRE teacher competencies. To identify the main predictors of successful model implementation, multiple regression analysis was conducted. Meanwhile, qualitative data from interviews and reflective journals were analyzed using thematic analysis with a grounded theory approach. This method allowed the researcher to identify key themes emerging from the experiences and reflections of both students and teachers during the learning process, thereby providing deeper insights into the dynamics of role-playing implementation in the context of CRE instruction.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### *The Effectiveness of the Role-Playing Model in Christian Religious Education Learning*

#### 1. Pretest–Posttest Comparison

Table 1 presents a comparison of pretest and posttest scores for the three dimensions of learning outcomes in both the experimental and control groups.

**Table 1. Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Scores**

Dimension	Group	Pretest M(SD)	Posttest M(SD)	t	p
<b>Conceptual Understanding</b>	Experimental	65.37 (8.42)	87.93 (7.56)	11.25	<0.001
	Control	66.03 (8.17)	72.40 (8.91)	3.74	<0.05

<b>Applied Skills</b>	Experimental	61.20 (10.35)	85.77 (9.12)	10.89	<0.001
	Control	60.97 (9.86)	68.13 (10.23)	3.11	<0.05
<b>Value Internalization</b>	Experimental	63.53 (9.75)	84.10 (8.34)	9.78	<0.001
	Control	64.10 (9.48)	69.37 (9.56)	2.27	<0.05

The analysis shows that both groups experienced significant improvement across all three dimensions. However, the experimental group exhibited a substantially greater increase compared to the control group.

## 2. Experimental–Control Group Comparison

The comparison of posttest scores between the experimental and control groups (controlling for pretest scores) is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Posttest Score Comparison Between Groups**

Dimension	Experimental M(SD)	Control M(SD)	t	p	Cohen's d
<b>Conceptual Understanding</b>	87.93 (7.56)	72.40 (8.91)	4.87	<0.01	1.86
<b>Applied Skills</b>	85.77 (9.12)	68.13 (10.23)	5.23	<0.01	1.92
<b>Value Internalization</b>	84.10 (8.34)	69.37 (9.56)	3.98	<0.01	1.64

The results indicate significant differences between the experimental and control groups across all learning dimensions, with large treatment effects ( $d > 1.5$ ).

## 3. Qualitative Analysis of Learning Experiences

Thematic analysis of interview data and reflective journals identified five key themes regarding students' experiences with the role-playing model: 1) Emotional Engagement – Students reported that role-playing enabled them to *feel* the concepts learned rather than merely understand them. “When acting as the Good Samaritan, I truly felt the moral dilemma and the power of love that transcends differences. It was different from simply reading the story.” (Student 12, experimental group) 2) Multiple Perspectives – Role-playing facilitated the development of empathy through enacting diverse viewpoints. “Playing the role of someone who held different views from mine helped me understand why they think that way. It made me more cautious in judging others.” (Student 23, experimental group). 3) Critical Reflection – Post-role-playing discussions encouraged deeper thinking about values and their application. 4) Collaborative Learning – Preparation and enactment of role-playing fostered cooperation and peer-to-peer learning. 5) Contextual Relevance – Students valued how role-playing connected Christian values to contemporary issues.

### **Correlation Between Role-Playing Model and Christian Religious Education Teacher Competence**

Table 3 presents the correlation analysis between the implementation of the role-playing model and the dimensions of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher competence.

**Table 3. Correlation Between Role-Playing Model and CRE Teacher Competence**

Competence Dimension	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p
Pedagogical Competence	0.76	<0.01
Personal Competence	0.68	<0.01
Social Competence	0.72	<0.01
Professional Competence	0.81	<0.01

The results indicate a strong positive correlation ( $r > 0.6$ ) between the implementation of the role-playing model and all four dimensions of CRE teacher competence, with the strongest correlation observed in professional competence.

### ***Role-Playing as a Catalyst for Transformative Learning***

The findings demonstrate that the role-playing model not only enhances students' conceptual understanding of Christian values but also significantly facilitates the transformation of that understanding into applied skills and value internalization. This aligns with experiential learning theory (Kolb, 2015), which underscores the importance of concrete experience and active reflection in the learning process. Through role-playing, students not only *know* but also *experience* Christian values in simulated contexts closely resembling real life.

Compared with prior studies on CRE teaching methods (Nuhamara, 2018; Prijanto, 2020), the present study offers stronger empirical support for the effectiveness of experiential learning in the CRE context. The substantial improvement in the experimental group ( $d > 1.5$ ) indicates the transformative potential of role-playing beyond traditional methods. This is especially significant given the contemporary challenges of CRE, which address not only knowledge transfer but also character and spiritual formation (Sidjabat, 2019). From a theological standpoint, the effectiveness of role-playing can be explained through the concept of embodied learning, reflecting the incarnational principle in Christian tradition—knowledge that becomes *flesh* or lived experience (Cahyadi, 2022). In this view, role-playing serves as a pedagogical medium where biblical truth is not merely cognitively learned but personally and communally experienced.

### ***Role-Playing as a Platform for Implementing CRE Teacher Competence***

The strong positive correlation between role-playing implementation and CRE teacher competence suggests that this learning model benefits not only students but also teachers' professional development. Professional competence ( $r = 0.81$ ) and pedagogical competence ( $r = 0.76$ ) showed the highest correlations, indicating that role-playing serves as a platform for teachers to actualize and enhance core aspects of their professionalism. This finding broadens the understanding of CRE teacher competence—not as a static attribute, but as a dynamic capacity developed through innovative pedagogical practice. As argued by Kristianto (2020), CRE teacher competence involves integrating theology, pedagogy, and contextual sensitivity—an integration that occurs organically when designing and facilitating role-playing activities. The significant correlations with personal ( $r = 0.68$ ) and social competence ( $r = 0.72$ ) further indicate that this model supports growth in the *being* dimension of teacher professionalism—a facet often overlooked in teacher development (Tanudjaja, 2021).

### ***Practical and Theoretical Implications***

The findings of this study hold broad and profound implications, both practical and theoretical, within the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE) and the development of teachers' professional competencies.

From a practical perspective, the results highlight the need for a reorientation of the CRE curriculum to more fully integrate experiential learning approaches, particularly the role-playing model, as a core component of the learning process rather than a mere supplement. The CRE curriculum should provide opportunities for students to directly experience Christian values through meaningful and contextually relevant activities, as well as encourage reflection and personal transformation. One concrete step would be the development of a repository of context-specific role-playing scenarios relevant to current issues faced by students, such as bullying, identity conflicts, digital ethics challenges, or emotional regulation in social life.

Furthermore, the practical implications also underscore the importance of structured and continuous professional development for CRE teachers to ensure they possess sufficient capability to facilitate role-playing-based learning. Such training should not only cover the technical aspects of the method but also equip teachers with the skills to lead in-depth reflective discussions following role-playing activities, guiding students toward a personal understanding and embodiment of Christian values. In this regard, teachers serve as both spiritual mediators and value facilitators—roles that go beyond the mere transmission of information to encompass the guidance of transformative processes.

The implications for CRE teachers' professional development are equally significant. Capacity-building programs for CRE teachers need to be redesigned with a practice-oriented approach, enabling teachers to directly experience innovative teaching models in authentic contexts. Role playing should not only be taught as a method but also experienced by teachers themselves as learners. Moreover, establishing communities of practice would enable CRE teachers to share experiences, challenges, and reflections on the implementation of role playing in their teaching. Such communities could serve as collaborative learning spaces that support continuous professional growth. Additionally, teacher performance evaluation systems should be developed to reflect their capacity to design and facilitate experiential learning, including creativity in adapting scenarios, skill in facilitating discussions, and pedagogical sensitivity in guiding value reflection.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study calls for the development of an integrated theoretical model that combines Christian theological foundations, experiential learning theory as articulated by Kolb, and teacher competency frameworks. Research in CRE has often treated theological and pedagogical aspects separately, whereas in practice they are deeply intertwined. Such a model would provide a strong conceptual foundation for the development of Christian religious education policy and teacher training programs. Furthermore, additional research is needed to explore mediating and moderating mechanisms that explain how and under what conditions role playing becomes effective in fostering the internalization of Christian values among students.

However, this study has several limitations that warrant consideration. First, the relatively short intervention period of one semester limits the ability to observe the long-term impact of the role-playing model, particularly in relation to value internalization and character transformation. The process of internalizing religious values generally requires more time and repeated exposure across various contexts. Second, the research sample

was limited to senior high school students in Central Java, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts, such as elementary schools, vocational high schools, or institutions from different denominational backgrounds. Third, the study focused on teachers who had already received training in implementing role playing, leaving less room to explore the challenges faced by novice teachers or those without prior experience in the method.

Based on these limitations, several recommendations can be made for future research. First, longitudinal studies should be conducted to track the long-term effects of the role-playing model on students' spiritual growth and character formation, providing deeper insights into its sustained impact on Christian value development. Second, future studies should broaden the educational scope—both geographically and across different school levels—to test the model's validity in more diverse settings. Third, further research should examine in greater detail the process of developing CRE teachers' capacity to adopt the role-playing model, including barriers, training needs, and required institutional support. Finally, given the advancement of educational technology, it is essential to explore the synergy between role playing and digital media. Integrating technology could expand the reach and creativity of this model in CRE within the digital era.

### **Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that the role-playing model is effective not only in enhancing students' conceptual understanding, applied skills, and internalization of Christian values but also in serving as a comprehensive arena for implementing CRE teachers' competencies. The findings underscore the importance of transformative learning approaches that enable students to *experience*—rather than merely *know*—Christian values, while also providing opportunities for teachers to actualize and further develop their professional competencies.

The implications extend from classroom-level practice to CRE curriculum development and teacher preparation programs. Fundamentally, this study invites a reconceptualization of CRE from the transmission of religious knowledge to the facilitation of transformative experiences that embody the incarnational essence of the Christian tradition—the truth that “becomes flesh” in daily life. While the study has its limitations, it offers an empirical foundation for the development of CRE learning models that are not only pedagogically effective but also theologically authentic. Future research is expected to deepen the understanding of transformative learning dynamics in CRE and its contribution to shaping Christian spirituality and character in contemporary contexts.

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