



Personality Formation of Christian Religious Education Teachers Based on Paul's Exemplary Leadership (Philippians 3:17): A Study at SDN 2 Timpah

Cicih

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: cicihserly@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Teacher personality plays a crucial role in shaping students' character, learning attitudes, and spiritual development, particularly in the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE). In Christian pedagogy, the teacher is not only a transmitter of knowledge but also a living model whose life reflects the values being taught. This study aims to explore the formation of Christian Religious Education teachers' personality based on the exemplary life of the Apostle Paul as articulated in Philippians 3:17, with a research locus at SDN 2 Timpah, Kapuas Regency, Indonesia. The biblical principle of imitation, as emphasized by Paul, provides a theological foundation for understanding teacher personality as a form of lived testimony and moral-spiritual leadership in educational settings. This research employed a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with Christian Religious Education teachers, school principals, and selected students, as well as classroom observations and document analysis. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns related to exemplary behavior, spiritual integrity, professional commitment, and relational leadership. Trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation of data sources, member checking, and prolonged engagement in the research field. The findings indicate that the teachers' personality formation is significantly influenced by their internalization of Pauline values, including humility, perseverance in faith, consistency between teaching and practice, and willingness to become role models for students. This study concludes that teacher personality grounded in the Pauline model of imitation serves as a strategic pedagogical and spiritual resource in strengthening character education and faith-based identity within public school contexts.

Keywords: *Personality Formation, Christian Religious Education, Leadership*

INTRODUCTION

Beyond pedagogical knowledge and technical teaching skills, teachers' personal character, attitudes, and moral integrity significantly influence classroom climate, student

motivation, and the formation of learners' values (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Hattie, 2009). In the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE), the personality of teachers becomes even more central, as educators are not only responsible for transmitting religious knowledge but also for modeling Christian character and spiritual maturity through their daily interactions with students (Groome, 2011; Pazmiño, 2008). Within Christian theology and educational thought, the concept of exemplary living is foundational. The Apostle Paul explicitly emphasizes the importance of role modeling in Philippians 3:17, where he exhorts believers to "join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us" (New Revised Standard Version). This Pauline call to imitation highlights the theological conviction that Christian leadership and formation are deeply rooted in lived example rather than in verbal instruction alone (Fee, 1995; Wright, 2013). For Christian educators, this principle implies that teaching is inseparable from personal witness, and that the teacher's personality becomes a key medium through which Christian values are communicated and embodied. Teacher personality and professional disposition have been linked to student engagement, classroom relationships, and the overall effectiveness of instruction. Studies in educational psychology and teacher education emphasize that teachers who demonstrate empathy, integrity, responsibility, and consistency are more likely to foster positive learning environments and support students' socio-emotional development (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2017). These findings resonate strongly with Christian educational perspectives, which stress that teaching is a vocation that integrates professional competence with spiritual and moral character (Palmer, 1998; Groome, 2011). Personality formation is not merely a psychological or professional issue but also a theological and spiritual process. Pazmiño (2008) argues that Christian educators are called to embody a holistic integration of faith, character, and pedagogical practice, reflecting Christ-centered values in both teaching methods and personal conduct. Similarly, Knight (2006) emphasizes that Christian education seeks to develop the whole person, including moral and spiritual dimensions, and that teachers play a decisive role in modeling the kind of character that Christian education aims to cultivate in students. The theological foundation provided by Philippians 3:17 is particularly relevant for understanding teacher personality formation in Christian Religious Education. Paul's emphasis on imitation is not rooted in self-exaltation but in a Christ-centered pattern of life that reflects humility, perseverance, and faithful obedience (Fee, 1995; Wright, 2013). In this sense, Paul's exemplary leadership serves as a paradigm for Christian educators, who are called to reflect Christlike character in their professional identity and daily teaching practice. The teacher, therefore, becomes not only an instructor but also a living curriculum, whose personality communicates values as powerfully as formal lesson content (Palmer, 1998). In public schools where Christian students and teachers often represent a minority, the role of CRE teachers as moral and spiritual role models becomes even more significant. In such settings, Christian educators are frequently expected to provide not only religious instruction but also personal guidance, emotional support, and character formation for students (Groome, 2011). This places additional responsibility on CRE teachers to demonstrate consistency between faith, personal character, and professional conduct.

SDN 2 Timpah, Kapuas, provides a meaningful context for examining these issues. With 105 Christian students and only two Christian teachers, the formation of teacher personality based on biblical exemplarity becomes a strategic factor in sustaining Christian identity, values, and spiritual growth within the school environment. The limited number of Christian educators further highlights the importance of personal example, as students may have fewer opportunities to encounter Christian role models in their daily school life. Empirical studies that explicitly integrate Pauline theology with contemporary research on teacher personality in Christian Religious Education remain limited, particularly in the Indonesian context. Many studies focus on pedagogical competence, instructional strategies, or curriculum development, while fewer explore how biblical models of leadership and imitation inform the personal formation of Christian teachers (Pazmiño, 2008; Groome, 2011). This gap underscores the need for research that bridges biblical theology and educational practice in a systematic and empirical manner. This study aims to examine the personality formation of Christian Religious Education teachers based on Paul's exemplary leadership as articulated in Philippians 3:17, within the specific context of SDN 2 Timpah, Kapuas. By integrating biblical reflection with educational theory and empirical investigation, this research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how teacher personality, grounded in biblical exemplarity, shapes Christian educational practice and supports the holistic formation of students. In doing so, the study also seeks to enrich both Christian education scholarship and practical efforts to strengthen the personal and spiritual dimensions of teacher professionalism.

METHODS

A qualitative research design was used to explore the personality formation of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers based on Paul's exemplary leadership as articulated in Philippians 3:17. A qualitative approach was selected because the research seeks to understand in depth how biblical exemplarity is interpreted, embodied, and practiced by CRE teachers in their personal and professional lives. Qualitative methods are particularly appropriate for capturing participants' lived experiences, meanings, and reflective interpretations related to character formation and spiritual leadership (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The study was grounded in an interpretive paradigm, emphasizing the subjective meanings constructed by participants regarding their identity as Christian educators and their understanding of Paul's call to imitation. This design allows for a nuanced exploration of how theological concepts are translated into daily teaching practices and personal character development within a specific educational and cultural context. The research was conducted at SDN 2 Timpah, Kapuas, a public elementary school with 105 Christian students and two Christian teachers. Given the small number of Christian educators at the site, purposive sampling was employed to include all Christian teachers as key participants in the study. This total participation strategy ensured that the research captured the full range of experiences and perspectives of CRE-related personnel at the school. In addition to the two Christian teachers, supplementary perspectives were obtained from selected Christian students to provide contextual insights into how teacher personality and exemplary behavior were perceived and experienced in the classroom. Student participants were selected using criterion-based sampling, focusing on those who had received Christian Religious

Education instruction for at least one academic year. This criterion ensured that students had sufficient exposure to the teachers' practices and personalities to offer meaningful reflections (Patton, 2015). Data were collected using multiple qualitative techniques to enhance depth and credibility through methodological triangulation. The primary methods included semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the two Christian teachers to explore their understanding of Philippians 3:17, their perceptions of Paul's exemplary leadership, and how these theological principles informed their personal character and teaching practices. Interview guides were developed to allow flexibility while ensuring coverage of key themes such as role modeling, integrity, spiritual discipline, and professional identity. Classroom observations were carried out during Christian Religious Education sessions to examine how teachers' personalities and exemplary behaviors were manifested in real teaching situations. An observation protocol was used to focus on indicators such as teacher-student interactions, expressions of empathy and patience, consistency in behavior, and alignment between stated values and actual practices. Field notes were taken to capture both descriptive and reflective data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Initial coding was conducted to identify meaningful units related to teacher personality, exemplary leadership, imitation, and character formation. Codes were then grouped into broader categories and themes, such as Christ-centered modeling, integrity in professional conduct, relational sensitivity, and reflective spiritual practice. The analysis process was iterative, moving back and forth between data, codes, and emerging themes to refine interpretations. Constant comparison was used to identify similarities and differences across data sources, enabling the researcher to develop a coherent thematic structure that reflected both individual experiences and shared patterns among participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative findings, this study applied established criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was enhanced through triangulation of data sources (interviews, observations, and documents) and member checking, in which participants were invited to review summaries of the interview findings to confirm accuracy and resonance with their experiences. Confirmability was addressed by keeping reflexive notes to acknowledge and manage potential researcher biases, particularly given the theological and personal dimensions of the topic. Transferability was facilitated by providing rich, thick descriptions of the research context and participants, enabling readers to assess the relevance of the findings to other similar settings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative analysis of interview transcripts, classroom observations, and document reviews revealed several interrelated themes that illuminate how the personality formation of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SDN 2 Timpah is shaped by Paul's exemplary leadership in Philippians 3:17. The major themes that emerged include: Christ-centered modeling as the foundation of teacher personality, integrity and consistency in professional conduct, relational sensitivity and pastoral presence, reflective spiritual practices and personal discipline, and challenges and contextual constraints in embodying biblical exemplarity. These themes collectively demonstrate

that teacher personality formation in this context is not a static trait but a dynamic, ongoing process shaped by theological convictions, professional responsibilities, and the socio-cultural realities of a public elementary school where Christian teachers are a minority. One of the most prominent themes to emerge from the data was the centrality of Christ-centered modeling as the foundation of teacher personality. Both Christian teachers consistently emphasized that their understanding of Paul's exhortation in Philippians 3:17 is rooted in imitation of Christ, mediated through Paul's own exemplary life. Teachers articulated that they do not view Paul's call to imitation as self-centered leadership but as an invitation to embody a Christlike pattern of humility, perseverance, and obedience. Interview data indicated that teachers consciously understand their personal lives as inseparable from their teaching ministry. One teacher reflected that "students do not only listen to what we say in class, but they also watch how we live, how we speak, and how we treat others." This perception aligns with theological interpretations of Philippians that emphasize the ethical and communal dimensions of imitation, where believers are called to live in a way that visibly reflects Christ's character (Fee, 1995; Wright, 2013). Classroom observations further supported this theme. Teachers were observed demonstrating patience, gentle correction, and respectful communication, even in challenging classroom situations. These behaviors were not limited to formal instruction but were evident in informal interactions, such as during breaks and transitions between lessons. This consistency suggests that exemplary modeling is not confined to religious instruction but permeates the broader relational culture of the classroom. This finding supports the notion that teacher personality functions as a "hidden curriculum" that powerfully shapes student values and attitudes (Palmer, 1998). In Christian Religious Education, this hidden curriculum takes on explicit theological significance, as the teacher's life becomes a visible expression of the faith that is being taught. The results therefore affirm that Christ-centered modeling is a foundational dimension of personality formation for CRE teachers.

The next theme concerns integrity and consistency in professional conduct. Both interview and observation data indicated that teachers place strong emphasis on aligning their words, actions, and professional responsibilities. Teachers described integrity as a non-negotiable aspect of their identity as Christian educators. They expressed a conviction that inconsistency between teaching and personal conduct would undermine their credibility and weaken the spiritual impact of their instruction. Integrity was manifested through punctuality, preparedness, fairness in assessment, and adherence to school regulations. Teachers repeatedly highlighted that being faithful in small responsibilities is an expression of their understanding of Christian calling. This resonates with Pauline ethics, where faithful living is understood as an expression of obedience to Christ in everyday life (Wright, 2013). Students' informal comments during classroom interactions also reflected awareness of this consistency. Some students referred to teachers as "examples" who are firm but fair, suggesting that students perceive a strong link between moral character and professional behavior. This supports educational research that emphasizes consistency and fairness as key dimensions of teacher professionalism and classroom trust (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). This theme can be interpreted through the lens of Philippians 3:17 as a call to embodied integrity. Paul's exhortation assumes that his life provides a credible model precisely because his conduct

aligns with his teaching. In this study, CRE teachers appear to internalize this principle, viewing professional integrity not merely as an institutional requirement but as a spiritual discipline and a form of witness. Other significant theme is relational sensitivity and pastoral presence. Teachers described their roles as extending beyond academic instruction to include emotional support, moral guidance, and spiritual encouragement. In a context where Christian students may face social or emotional challenges, teachers see themselves as pastoral figures who are called to listen, empathize, and provide counsel. Observations revealed that teachers frequently engaged in personal conversations with students, particularly those who appeared distressed or disengaged. These interactions were characterized by attentive listening, gentle encouragement, and expressions of care. Teachers explained that such relational practices are informed by their understanding of Christian love and pastoral responsibility. This finding aligns with Christian education literature that emphasizes the relational and pastoral dimensions of teaching (Groome, 2011; Pazmiño, 2008). Teacher personality, in this sense, is not limited to moral character but also includes relational dispositions such as empathy, compassion, and attentiveness. These dispositions reflect a Christlike approach to leadership and care, consistent with Pauline exhortations to live in love and humility. From a Pauline perspective, relational sensitivity can also be seen as an expression of communal ethics. Philippians emphasizes unity, mutual care, and humility within the Christian community. By embodying these values in their relationships with students, CRE teachers enact a lived theology that makes abstract biblical principles tangible in daily school life.

Another key theme concerns reflective spiritual practices and personal discipline as foundations for personality formation. Teachers consistently reported engaging in personal spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible reading, and reflection. They described these practices as essential for sustaining their personal faith and for maintaining emotional and spiritual resilience in the face of professional challenges. Teachers emphasized that personal spirituality is closely connected to their professional identity. One participant noted that without regular spiritual reflection, it becomes difficult to maintain patience, humility, and emotional stability in the classroom. This highlights the role of spiritual disciplines as internal resources that support external behaviors and professional conduct. This finding supports theological and educational perspectives that emphasize the integration of spirituality and professional life in Christian education (Pazmiño, 2008; Palmer, 1998). Personality formation is thus understood not only as a matter of external behavior but also as the result of internal spiritual formation. Philippians 3:17, when interpreted within the broader context of Paul's spiritual life, suggests that exemplary living flows from a deep and sustained relationship with Christ. In this study, reflective spiritual practices function as a sustaining mechanism that enables teachers to live out the values they teach. This reinforces the idea that teacher personality formation is an ongoing spiritual journey rather than a fixed personal trait. Teachers described moments of frustration and emotional exhaustion, particularly when dealing with large class sizes, administrative responsibilities, and students with complex personal backgrounds. In such situations, maintaining patience, empathy, and consistency requires intentional effort and spiritual resilience. This highlights the tension between theological ideals and practical realities. This finding is consistent with broader research on teacher stress and burnout, which emphasizes the emotional demands of teaching and the

importance of supportive structures for sustaining teacher well-being (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2017). From a Christian education perspective, these challenges underscore the need for communal and institutional support systems that nurture teachers' spiritual and emotional health. This tension can be understood within a Pauline framework that acknowledges human weakness and the ongoing nature of spiritual growth. Paul's own writings reflect an awareness of struggle, perseverance, and reliance on God's grace. In this sense, the challenges faced by CRE teachers do not negate their commitment to exemplary living but rather highlight the dynamic and imperfect nature of spiritual and personality formation. Although students were not the primary interview participants, observational data and informal feedback suggest that students are keenly aware of teachers' personal character and relational behaviors. Students appeared to respond positively to teachers who demonstrated patience, fairness, and personal concern. Such responses indicate that teacher personality has a tangible impact on students' experiences of Christian Religious Education. This finding supports the educational literature emphasizing that students' perceptions of teacher character significantly influence classroom climate, trust, and engagement (Hattie, 2009; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). In Christian education contexts, these perceptions take on additional significance, as students may interpret teacher behavior as a reflection of Christian values and faith itself. This underscores the formative power of example emphasized in Philippians 3:17. Paul's call to imitation assumes that others are watching and learning from the lives of Christian leaders. In this study, students appear to function as active interpreters of teacher behavior, drawing implicit lessons about Christian character from what they observe in daily school life.

A central contribution of this study lies in its demonstration of how Pauline theology is practically integrated into contemporary educational practice. The data reveal that teachers do not treat Philippians 3:17 as a purely doctrinal text but as a lived ethical and vocational guide. The verse functions as a theological lens through which teachers interpret their professional identity, personal conduct, and relational responsibilities. This integration supports Groome's (2011) argument that Christian education is inherently praxis-oriented, involving a dynamic interaction between belief, reflection, and action. Teacher personality formation, in this sense, is not merely shaped by abstract theological knowledge but by the ongoing enactment of theological convictions in concrete educational contexts. The study also contributes to Christian education scholarship by providing empirical evidence that biblical exemplarity can serve as a meaningful conceptual framework for understanding teacher personality. This bridges a gap between theological reflection and educational research, demonstrating that Pauline ethics can inform not only spiritual discourse but also practical dimensions of teacher professionalism. The specific context of SDN 2 Timpah adds further depth to the findings. With only two Christian teachers serving 105 Christian students, the influence of teacher personality is magnified. In such a setting, each teacher's personal example carries significant weight in shaping students' perceptions of Christian identity and values. Teachers described feeling a heightened sense of responsibility to serve as visible and consistent role models. This sense of responsibility aligns with Pauline leadership concepts, where leaders are called to be examples precisely because their lives are visible and influential within the community. The rural and public-school context also means that

Christian teachers must navigate pluralistic environments and institutional boundaries. This adds complexity to the task of embodying Christian exemplarity, requiring wisdom, sensitivity, and adaptability. The findings suggest that teachers at SDN 2 Timpah are actively negotiating these dynamics, seeking to live out their faith authentically while respecting institutional norms. The findings suggest that personality formation among CRE teachers at SDN 2 Timpah is a holistic process that integrates Christ-centered modeling, integrity, relational sensitivity, spiritual discipline, and contextual negotiation. Philippians 3:17 functions as a unifying theological framework that gives meaning and direction to this process. The results support theoretical perspectives that view teacher personality as a central dimension of educational effectiveness and moral formation (Palmer, 1998; Groome, 2011). They also affirm Pauline theology as a valuable resource for conceptualizing leadership, example, and character formation in Christian education. The findings challenge purely technical or competency-based models of teacher professionalism by highlighting the inseparability of personal character and professional practice. In this study, teaching effectiveness is deeply intertwined with who the teacher is, not merely with what the teacher does. This has significant implications for teacher education, professional development, and school leadership in Christian education contexts. The findings suggest that schools and educational authorities should prioritize not only pedagogical training but also spiritual and character formation for CRE teachers. Structured opportunities for spiritual reflection, peer support, and theological engagement may strengthen teachers' capacity to embody exemplary leadership. School leaders are also encouraged to recognize the emotional and spiritual demands placed on teachers and to provide supportive environments that promote well-being and sustainability. Such support is essential for enabling teachers to live out the ideals of Pauline exemplarity in realistic and sustainable ways. This study reveals that the personality formation of CRE teachers at SDN 2 Timpah is deeply shaped by Paul's exemplary leadership as articulated in Philippians 3:17. Through Christ-centered modeling, integrity, relational care, and spiritual discipline, teachers seek to embody a lived theology that integrates faith and professional identity. While challenges and constraints are present, teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to exemplary living as a central dimension of their vocation. These findings affirm the enduring relevance of Pauline theology for contemporary Christian education and highlight the critical role of teacher personality in shaping holistic and transformative learning environments.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the personality formation of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SDN 2 Timpah, Kapuas, through the theological framework of Paul's exemplary leadership as articulated in Philippians 3:17. Using a qualitative research design, the study provided an in-depth understanding of how biblical exemplarity is interpreted, internalized, and embodied by Christian educators within a public elementary school context. The findings affirm that teacher personality formation is a holistic and dynamic process that integrates theological conviction, spiritual practice, professional responsibility, and relational engagement. The results demonstrate that Christ-centered modeling functions as the foundational dimension of teacher personality. Teachers consciously understand their roles not merely as transmitters of religious

content but as living examples whose personal conduct, attitudes, and relational behaviors communicate Christian values to students. This aligns closely with Paul's call for believers to imitate those who live according to a Christlike pattern, underscoring that exemplary leadership is fundamentally relational and visible. In this sense, the teacher becomes a formative presence whose life itself serves as an educational text. Integrity and consistency in professional conduct emerged as essential expressions of biblical exemplarity. Teachers' commitment to aligning their words and actions reflects an understanding of professional responsibilities as part of their spiritual calling. Faithfulness in preparation, fairness in assessment, and reliability in daily tasks were interpreted not merely as institutional expectations but as spiritual disciplines that give concrete form to Pauline ethics. This integration of faith and professionalism strengthens teacher credibility and supports the moral and spiritual aims of Christian Religious Education. Relational sensitivity and pastoral presence were also central to teacher personality formation. The findings highlight that CRE teachers at SDN 2 Timpah perceive their roles as encompassing emotional support, moral guidance, and spiritual care. Such relational practices reflect a Christlike approach to leadership that prioritizes compassion, empathy, and attentive presence. In a context where Christian teachers are limited in number, this pastoral dimension becomes especially significant, as teachers often serve as primary spiritual role models for students. The study further underscores the importance of reflective spiritual practices and personal discipline in sustaining exemplary living. Teachers' engagement in prayer, Scripture reading, and personal reflection provides the spiritual resources necessary to maintain patience, humility, and emotional resilience. These practices function as the internal foundations that enable consistent external expression of Christian character. Personality formation is therefore revealed as an ongoing spiritual journey, marked by continual growth, reflection, and dependence on God's grace. At the same time, the findings acknowledge the real challenges faced by teachers in embodying biblical exemplarity. Workload pressures, emotional fatigue, and the complexities of operating within a public school environment create tensions between theological ideals and practical realities. However, these challenges do not negate the commitment to exemplary leadership; rather, they highlight the need for institutional and communal support systems that nurture teachers' spiritual and emotional well-being. Such support is essential for sustaining long-term faithfulness and preventing burnout. This study contributes to Christian education scholarship by demonstrating how Pauline theology can be meaningfully integrated into empirical research on teacher personality. By linking Philippians 3:17 with lived educational practice, the study bridges biblical reflection and contemporary educational theory, offering a holistic framework for understanding teacher identity and professionalism. The findings challenge reductionist models of teacher competence that focus solely on technical skills, emphasizing instead the inseparability of personal character, spirituality, and professional practice. In conclusion, this study affirms that the personality formation of CRE teachers at SDN 2 Timpah is deeply shaped by Paul's vision of exemplary leadership. Through Christ-centered modeling, integrity, relational care, and spiritual discipline, teachers seek to live out a theology of imitation that gives visible form to Christian faith in the educational setting. These findings underscore the enduring relevance of Pauline exemplarity for Christian education and highlight the critical role of teacher personality in fostering holistic, transformative, and faith-integrated learning

environments. Future research is encouraged to expand this inquiry through longitudinal and multi-site studies to further explore how biblical models of leadership continue to shape teacher identity and student formation in diverse educational contexts.

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