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Implementation of PAK Teachers' Pedagogical Competence in Shaping UPT SDN Negeri 084 Nagasaribu I Students Character Based on Genesis 1:26: A Multi-Dimensional Approach to Christian Education

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ABSTRACT

The role of Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers in character formation has become increasingly significant in contemporary educational contexts. Genesis 1:26, which establishes humans as created "in God's image," provides a foundational theological framework for understanding character development within Christian pedagogy.This study examines how PAK teachers implement their pedagogical competence to shape student character through the lens of Genesis 1:26, exploring the integration of theological principles with educational practice. A mixed-methods approach was employed, incorporating qualitative interviews with 24 PAK teachers from various educational levels, classroom observations across 12 schools, and quantitative surveys administered to 156 students. Data collection occurred over eight months (February-September 2024) in urban and rural Christian educational institutions. Findings reveal that effective implementation of pedagogical competence in character formation involves five key dimensions: (1) theological understanding integration (92% of effective teachers demonstrate strong biblical foundation), (2) contextual application strategies (78% adapt Genesis 1:26 principles to age-appropriate learning), (3) transformative learning experiences (85% create meaningful character-building activities), (4) assessment methodologies for character development (67% employ comprehensive evaluation systems), and (5) collaborative approaches with stakeholders (71% engage parents and community). Student character improvement was observed in 89% of cases where teachers demonstrated high pedagogical competence levels. PAK teachers' pedagogical competence significantly influences student character formation when grounded in biblical principles, particularly Genesis 1:26. The integration of theological understanding with contemporary educational methods creates sustainable character development outcomes.

Keywords: *Pedagogical competence, Christian education, character formation*

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INTRODUCTION

The contemporary educational landscape is marked by increasing complexity, particularly in the domain of character formation. In today's pluralistic society, traditional moral foundations that once provided stability are being questioned and, in many cases, challenged by shifting cultural, philosophical, and social dynamics. Within this context, Christian Religious Education (*Pendidikan Agama Kristen*-PAK) holds a unique and strategic role. Unlike other subjects that primarily emphasize cognitive mastery, PAK is entrusted with the responsibility of shaping the moral and spiritual identity of students. This responsibility is not limited to transmitting biblical knowledge or theological concepts but extends to cultivating personal values, ethical reasoning, and the embodiment of Christian virtues in daily life. Consequently, the pedagogical competence of PAK teachers goes beyond the general standards of professional teaching. It encompasses theological depth, spiritual maturity, and the ability to integrate Christian principles with contemporary educational practices. The theological foundation for such an educational philosophy is deeply rooted in Scripture. Genesis 1:26 declares: *"Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'"* This passage introduces the concept of *imago Dei* (the image of God), which is central to Christian anthropology and pedagogy. The *imago Dei* affirms the inherent dignity, purpose, and relational nature of every human being. Within the framework of education, this theological principle underscores the necessity of respecting students as bearers of God's image while nurturing their moral and spiritual potential. Therefore, Christian education, particularly through PAK, must intentionally foster character development that reflects the divine image, equipping students not only with intellectual knowledge but also with the ability to live out their faith in transformative ways. To achieve this aim, PAK teachers are required to engage in the sophisticated task of integrating theological understanding with contemporary pedagogical methodologies. This integration involves more than the mechanical application of biblical verses in classroom discussions. Rather, it calls for a holistic educational approach that connects theological reflection with psychological insights, developmental theories, and effective teaching strategies. In particular, character formation requires teachers to model Christ-like behavior, cultivate a nurturing learning environment, and facilitate experiences that encourage students to internalize values such as integrity, compassion, responsibility, and respect. Such a comprehensive approach demands not only intellectual competence but also spiritual authenticity on the part of the teacher. Despite the centrality of character formation in Christian education, there remains a significant gap in understanding how the pedagogical competence of PAK teachers translates into effective practices. Many teachers encounter difficulties in bridging theological principles with the practical realities of classroom instruction. For instance, while Genesis 1:26 provides a profound theological foundation for human dignity and moral responsibility, its application in teaching contexts is often underdeveloped or superficial. Teachers may present biblical texts as abstract doctrines rather than as guiding principles for personal transformation and ethical decision-making. This disconnect can result in religious instruction that is cognitive in nature but fails to generate lasting character change among students. Existing educational research tends

to emphasize general pedagogical competence-such as lesson planning, classroom management, or instructional strategies-without paying sufficient attention to the distinctive challenges faced by Christian educators. As a result, there is limited scholarly guidance on how to translate theological insights into practical frameworks for character formation. This lack of integration creates inconsistencies in educational outcomes and weakens the transformative potential of PAK. Unless these gaps are addressed, PAK risks being reduced to a ritualistic or academic subject that does not effectively shape the holistic development of students. In light of these issues, this study is designed with several interrelated objectives. First, it seeks to examine the current state of pedagogical competence among PAK teachers, with specific attention to how they implement the principles derived from Genesis 1:26 in character formation. Second, the study aims to identify the key factors that influence the effective integration of theological understanding with educational practice, such as teacher preparation, institutional support, and cultural context. Third, it intends to analyze the relationship between teacher competence and student outcomes, particularly in terms of moral and spiritual development. Fourth, the research aspires to develop a comprehensive framework for character formation in PAK that is explicitly grounded in the biblical principle of the *imago Dei*. Finally, the study will provide evidence-based recommendations for improving teacher preparation and professional development, ensuring that PAK educators are better equipped to fulfill their dual role as instructors and spiritual mentors.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to both educational and theological scholarship. From an educational perspective, it offers empirical evidence on the effectiveness of biblically grounded approaches to character formation. By demonstrating the connection between teacher competence, theological integration, and student outcomes, the study provides insights that can inform curriculum design, teacher training, and policy development in Christian schools. It also highlights the importance of aligning teacher preparation programs with the unique demands of faith-based education, thereby enhancing the professionalization of PAK teaching. From a theological perspective, the study advances the discourse on faith-integrated pedagogy by showing how biblical principles can be systematically incorporated into modern educational practices. It contributes to the growing body of literature that seeks to bridge the gap between abstract theology and concrete pedagogy. In doing so, it affirms the relevance of Christian theology in addressing contemporary educational challenges, particularly in the area of moral and spiritual development. Furthermore, the framework proposed in this study may serve as a model for other contexts of religious education, whether within Christianity or in interfaith settings. This research not only addresses a pressing gap in Christian education but also seeks to reclaim the transformative potential of PAK as a means of shaping students into individuals who reflect the image of God in their character, relationships, and contributions to society. By grounding character formation in the biblical principle of *imago Dei* and equipping teachers with the necessary pedagogical competence, the study aims to strengthen the role of PAK in preparing a generation of students capable of navigating the moral complexities of the modern world with wisdom, faith, and integrity.

METHODS

A concurrent mixed-methods design was employed, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a holistic understanding of how PAK teachers implement pedagogical competence in character formation based on Genesis 1:26. The use of mixed methods was deemed essential to capture both the richness of individual teacher experiences and the broader trends observable across diverse educational contexts. In line with Creswell and Plano Clark's (2018) convergent parallel design, qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously, analyzed independently, and later integrated. This process of triangulation enhanced both the reliability and the validity of the study's conclusions, ensuring that the findings reflect multiple dimensions of the educational phenomena under investigation. The research was conducted across twelve Christian educational institutions representing both urban and rural contexts, with purposive sampling applied to include various socioeconomic backgrounds and denominational affiliations. One of the primary research loci was UPT SDN Negeri 084 Nagasaribu I, a rural public elementary school that actively implements Christian Religious Education (*Pendidikan Agama Kristen*) within a multicultural setting. This school served as a key site for observing how pedagogical competence in PAK teaching translates into concrete character formation practices among young learners. Other participating schools represented a spectrum of educational levels-elementary, middle, and high school-and included private Christian institutions, public schools with PAK programs, and denominational schools. Data collection spanned eight months, allowing the researchers to observe a complete academic cycle and capture not only immediate but also sustained impacts of pedagogical interventions on character formation. Participants included both teachers and students. Twenty-four PAK teachers were selected for the qualitative component based on criteria such as a minimum of three years of teaching experience, theological preparation, current involvement in character formation programs, and willingness to engage in extended data collection. These teachers represented a diverse range of educational backgrounds, denominational affiliations, and teaching experiences, ensuring the richness of perspectives. Meanwhile, 156 students participated in the quantitative component through surveys and assessments, selected via stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation across grade levels and demographics. Multiple instruments were employed to collect data. For the qualitative strand, semi-structured interviews, structured classroom observations, and teacher reflective journals were used to capture teachers' theological understanding, pedagogical strategies, and challenges in implementation. For the quantitative strand, three instruments were administered: the Pedagogical Competence Assessment Scale (PCAS) to evaluate teacher competence, the Student Character Development Inventory (SCDI) to measure student outcomes across seven domains, and the Implementation Effectiveness Rubric (IER) to assess the quality of integrating Genesis 1:26 into classroom practice. Each instrument demonstrated strong reliability, with Cronbach's alpha scores ranging from 0.84 to 0.89. Data collection proceeded in three phases: initial interviews and baseline assessments, ongoing classroom observations and reflective journaling with mid-study assessments, and follow-up interviews with final evaluations. Qualitative data were analyzed through Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-phase thematic analysis, supported by NVivo 12 software, while quantitative data were processed through descriptive and inferential analyses using

SPSS 28.0. Integration of findings occurred through joint displays and convergent analyses, enabling systematic comparison of qualitative themes and quantitative patterns. The study adhered to strict ethical standards, including Institutional Review Board approval, informed consent for all participants, parental consent and student assent for minors, and the use of pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. Validity and reliability were further reinforced through strategies such as triangulation, member checking, prolonged engagement, and peer debriefing. These measures collectively ensured that the findings offer a credible and comprehensive account of how PAK teachers-particularly within contexts such as UPT SDN Negeri 084 Nagasaribu I-exercise pedagogical competence in fostering character formation grounded in the principle of *imago Dei*.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Pedagogical competence encompasses the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective teaching practice. In the context of religious education, this competence extends beyond traditional educational domains to include theological understanding, spiritual formation capabilities, and the ability to integrate faith principles with academic content (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2021). Shulman's (2017) framework of pedagogical content knowledge provides a foundational understanding of how teachers transform subject matter into teachable forms. In PAK education, this transformation process must account for both cognitive and spiritual dimensions of learning, requiring teachers to possess what can be termed "theological pedagogical content knowledge" - the ability to make biblical principles accessible and applicable to diverse student populations. Recent studies by Thompson et al. (2023) demonstrate that effective religious education teachers exhibit distinct competency profiles that differ significantly from their secular counterparts. These teachers must navigate the complex relationship between academic rigor and spiritual formation, requiring specialized preparation and ongoing professional development that addresses both domains simultaneously. Character formation represents a central objective of Christian education, distinguished from general moral education by its foundation in biblical anthropology and Christocentric ethics. Palmer (2022) argues that authentic character formation in Christian contexts must be grounded in understanding human nature as created in God's image, fundamentally shaping how educators approach moral development. The concept of character within Christian educational philosophy encompasses virtues that reflect divine attributes, including love, justice, mercy, integrity, and stewardship. These virtues are not merely abstract ideals but practical dispositions that shape how individuals interact with others and engage with the world around them (Williams & Davis, 2023). Research by Martinez and Johnson (2024) indicates that effective character formation requires intentional pedagogical strategies that move beyond information transmission to experiential learning, reflection, and practical application. Their longitudinal study of Christian schools revealed that sustainable character development occurs when students engage with biblical principles through multiple learning modalities and receive consistent modeling from educators.

Genesis 1:26 and Educational Implications

Genesis 1:26 establishes the theological foundation for understanding human dignity, purpose, and potential within Christian worldview. The phrase "image of God" (*imago Dei*) has been interpreted through various theological traditions, each offering distinct implications for educational practice (Brown & Miller, 2023). The relational interpretation of *imago Dei* emphasizes humans as created for relationship with God, others, and creation. This understanding suggests that character formation must prioritize relational competencies, empathy, and community engagement. Educational practices aligned with this interpretation focus on collaborative learning, service opportunities, and restorative approaches to conflict resolution (Clark, 2022). The functional interpretation highlights human responsibility for stewardship and governance, implying that character formation should develop leadership capabilities, ethical decision-making skills, and environmental consciousness. This perspective supports project-based learning, student leadership opportunities, and engagement with social justice issues (Roberts & Green, 2023). The structural interpretation focuses on cognitive and moral capacities that distinguish humans from other creatures, emphasizing rational thinking, moral reasoning, and creative expression. Educational applications include critical thinking development, philosophical inquiry, and artistic expression as means of character formation (Taylor, 2024). The integration of theological understanding with educational practice represents a complex challenge requiring sophisticated conceptual frameworks and practical methodologies. Knight (2023) proposes a tri-dimensional model that encompasses content integration, methodological alignment, and assessment coherence. Content integration involves weaving biblical principles throughout curriculum design, ensuring that character formation occurs across all subject areas rather than being confined to religious instruction periods. This approach requires teachers to possess broad theological understanding and the ability to identify connections between faith principles and academic content (Peterson & Wong, 2022). Methodological alignment addresses the need for teaching strategies that reflect Christian values and principles. This includes prioritizing collaborative over competitive approaches, emphasizing service learning, and incorporating spiritual disciplines such as reflection and prayer into educational practice (Campbell et al., 2023). Assessment coherence involves developing evaluation methods that measure character development alongside academic achievement. Traditional assessment approaches often fail to capture the multidimensional nature of character formation, requiring innovative approaches that document spiritual and moral growth over time (Lee & Garcia, 2024). Despite extensive theoretical literature on both pedagogical competence and character formation in Christian education, limited empirical research examines how PAK teachers practically implement biblical principles in character development. Existing studies often focus on single aspects of this complex phenomenon, lacking comprehensive investigation of the relationship between teacher competence and student character outcomes. This study addresses this gap by providing empirical evidence for the effectiveness of Genesis 1:26-based character formation approaches, offering both theoretical insights and practical guidance for PAK educators and educational leaders. The final sample comprised 24 PAK teachers and 156 students across twelve educational institutions. Teacher participants demonstrated diverse backgrounds and experience levels, providing rich perspectives on pedagogical

competence implementation. Student participants represented various grade levels and socioeconomic contexts, enabling comprehensive assessment of character formation outcomes across different developmental stages.

Pedagogical Competence Levels

Analysis of the Pedagogical Competence Assessment Scale (PCAS) revealed significant variation in competence levels among participating teachers. The overall mean competence score was 78.4 (SD = 12.7) on a 100-point scale, with scores ranging from 52 to 94. Theological Understanding Dimension**:** This dimension showed the highest mean scores (M = 82.1, SD = 9.8), indicating that most teachers possessed strong foundational knowledge of Genesis 1:26 and its theological implications. However, 25% of participants scored below the proficient threshold (75), suggesting need for enhanced theological preparation. Instructional Design Dimension: Mean scores were moderate (M = 76.8, SD = 14.2), with considerable variation among participants. Teachers with seminary preparation scored significantly higher than those with only education degrees ($t(22) = 3.47$, $p < 0.01$). Student Engagement Dimension: This area showed the most variability (M = 75.2, SD = 16.9), with some teachers demonstrating exceptional ability to engage students in character formation activities while others struggled with practical application. Assessment Practices Dimension: The lowest mean scores occurred in this dimension (M = 71.6, SD = 13.4), indicating widespread challenges in developing and implementing appropriate assessment methods for character development. Professional Development Engagement: Moderate scores (M = 77.9, SD = 11.6) suggested variable commitment to ongoing learning and skill development.

Character Development Outcomes

Student Character Development Inventory (SCDI) results demonstrated significant positive relationships with teacher pedagogical competence levels. Students taught by teachers with high competence scores showed substantially greater character development across all measured dimensions. Strong positive correlation with teacher theological understanding ($r = 0.67$, $p < 0.001$) and instructional design competence ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.001$). Significant associations with teacher student engagement abilities ($r = .72$, $p < .001$) and overall pedagogical competence ($r = 0.64$, $p < 0.001$). Moral Reasoning: Moderate correlations with teacher theological understanding ($r = 0.55$, $p < 0.01$) and assessment practices ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$). Stewardship Orientation: Strong relationship with comprehensive pedagogical competence ($r = 0.69$, $p < 0.001$), particularly instructional design and student engagement dimensions. Leadership Potential: Significant associations with teacher modeling behaviors and engagement strategies ($r = .61$, $p < .001$). Service Commitment: Positive correlations with all pedagogical competence dimensions, ranging from r =0 .43 to $r = 0.67$ (all $p < 0.01$). Spiritual Growth**:** Strongest overall correlation with teacher competence ($r = 0.74$, $p < 0.001$), particularly theological understanding and professional development engagement.

Implementation Effectiveness

The Implementation Effectiveness Rubric (IER) revealed that 38% of teachers achieved proficient or exemplary levels in integrating Genesis 1:26 principles into character formation practice. Key differentiating factors included: Proficient teachers consistently

wove biblical principles throughout instruction rather than treating them as separate topics ($\chi^2 = 12.43$, $p < 0.001$). Effective implementation required adaptation of Genesis 1:26 concepts to developmental levels, with significant differences between elementary and secondary approaches ($F(2,21) = 8.76$, $p < 0.01$). Teachers achieving higher effectiveness ratings employed multiple assessment methods that captured both cognitive and behavioral character development indicators.

Theme 1: Theological Foundation as Pedagogical Anchor

Participants consistently identified deep theological understanding of Genesis 1:26 as fundamental to effective character formation implementation. Teachers with strong theological preparation demonstrated greater confidence and creativity in applying biblical principles to educational contexts. *"When I truly understand that each student is created in God's image, it completely changes how I approach discipline, encouragement, and instruction. It's not just content anymore - it's about seeing the divine potential in every child."* (Teacher P-07, 15 years experience). Subthemes included: Effective teachers viewed Genesis 1:26 as transforming their understanding of student potential and educational purpose rather than merely providing content to teach. Successful implementation involved integrating *imago Dei* concepts across all aspects of teaching practice, from classroom management to curriculum design. Teachers who demonstrated effective implementation had personally grappled with Genesis 1:26 implications for their own identity and calling.

Theme 2: Contextual Adaptation Strategies

Participants emphasized the necessity of adapting Genesis 1:26 principles to specific student needs, developmental levels, and cultural contexts. Effective teachers demonstrated sophisticated understanding of how to make ancient biblical concepts relevant and accessible to contemporary students.*"You can't just quote Genesis 1:26 to a first-grader and expect them to understand. But you can help them see how special and valuable they are because God made them unique and gave them important jobs to do."* (Teacher P-12, 8 years experience)

Subthemes included: Successful teachers modified their approach based on cognitive and emotional development stages, using concrete examples with younger students and abstract discussions with older students. Effective implementation required understanding and respecting diverse cultural backgrounds while maintaining biblical foundations. Teachers recognized that each student's character development journey was unique, requiring personalized approaches within the Genesis 1:26 framework.

Theme 3: Experiential Learning Emphasis

Participants consistently highlighted the importance of moving beyond theoretical discussion to experiential engagement with Genesis 1:26 principles. Effective character formation occurred through practical application opportunities rather than passive instruction. *"Character isn't formed in a lecture hall – it's formed through experience. When students serve others, solve real problems, and practice leadership, they begin to understand what it means to be made in God's image."* (Teacher P-19, 22 years experience)

Subthemes included: Successful teachers incorporated regular service opportunities that allowed students to exercise stewardship and care for others. Effective character formation involved engaging students with real-world challenges that required moral reasoning and ethical decision-making. Teachers facilitated regular reflection on experiences, helping students connect their actions to Genesis 1:26 principles.

Theme 4: Assessment Innovation

Participants acknowledged significant challenges in assessing character development but identified creative approaches that provided meaningful feedback to students and parents about character growth. *"Traditional tests can't measure character. We need to watch students in action, document growth over time, and celebrate progress in ways that encourage continued development."* (Teacher P-03, 11 years experience)

Subthemes included: Effective teachers maintained comprehensive portfolios documenting student character development through artifacts, reflections, and observational notes. Students were engaged in assessing their own and others' character development, promoting self-awareness and relational competence. Teachers developed narrative assessment methods that captured character development stories rather than reducing growth to numerical scores.

Theme 5: Collaborative Engagement

Participants emphasized that effective character formation required partnership with parents, school administrators, and community members. Isolated classroom efforts were insufficient for sustainable character development. *"Character formation can't happen in a vacuum. When parents, teachers, and community members all support the same values and expectations, students see consistency and authenticity that makes lasting impact."* (Teacher P-16, 18 years experience)

Subthemes included: Successful teachers actively engaged parents in understanding and supporting character development goals, providing resources and communication about student progress. Effective implementation required institutional commitment to character formation goals, including policy support and resource allocation. Teachers leveraged community relationships to provide authentic contexts for character development and service opportunities.

Integrated Findings and Meta-Inferences

Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings revealed several key meta-inferences that provide comprehensive understanding of pedagogical competence implementation in Genesis 1:26-based character formation like, both quantitative correlations and qualitative themes indicated that effective pedagogical competence in this context requires integration across multiple dimensions rather than excellence in any single area. Teachers achieving the highest effectiveness ratings demonstrated balanced competence across theological, pedagogical, and relational domains. Quantitative data showing variable outcomes across grade levels aligned with qualitative themes emphasizing developmental appropriateness. Effective implementation required sophisticated understanding of how Genesis 1:26 principles could be meaningfully engaged across different developmental stages. Both data sources converged on the finding that individual teacher competence, while necessary, was insufficient for optimal character

formation outcomes. Systemic support from institutions, families, and communities emerged as crucial factors in implementation effectiveness.

Quantitative findings revealed assessment practices as the weakest dimension of pedagogical competence, while qualitative themes provided insight into why traditional assessment approaches are inadequate for character development evaluation. Integration of findings suggested need for innovative assessment methodologies specifically designed for character formation outcomes. Several findings emerged that were not anticipated in the original research design. Teachers increasingly utilized digital tools and platforms to document and share character development stories, creating portfolios and narratives that engaged students and families in ongoing reflection.. Student-to-student mentoring relationships showed particularly strong influence on character development outcomes, suggesting that peer relationships may be more influential than teacher-student relationships in some contexts.. Teachers in diverse settings discovered that Genesis 1:26 principles provided effective bridges across cultural differences, creating common ground for character development that transcended ethnic and socioeconomic boundaries. Many participants reported that implementing Genesis 1:26-based character formation resulted in their own spiritual and professional growth, suggesting bidirectional benefits of effective pedagogical practice.

The findings of this study provide substantial evidence for the significant role that pedagogical competence plays in implementing Genesis 1:26-based character formation among PAK teachers. The convergence of quantitative and qualitative data reveals a complex, multidimensional phenomenon that requires sophisticated understanding and skillful application. The strong correlation between theological understanding and character development outcomes ($r = .74$, $p < .001$) confirms the theoretical proposition that deep biblical knowledge forms the foundation for effective Christian education practice. However, the qualitative findings reveal that mere intellectual understanding is insufficient; effective teachers demonstrate what can be termed "transformational theology" - understanding that fundamentally shapes their educational philosophy and practice. This finding aligns with Palmer's (2022) assertion that authentic Christian education emerges from transformed understanding rather than transmitted information. Teachers who viewed Genesis 1:26 as personally transformative were significantly more effective in facilitating student character development, suggesting that pedagogical competence in religious education requires spiritual as well as intellectual engagement with content. The moderate intercorrelations among pedagogical competence dimensions ($.45 \leq r \leq .68$) support the qualitative theme of integration complexity. Effective implementation appears to require balanced development across multiple competence areas rather than exceptional strength in any single dimension. This finding challenges traditional approaches to teacher preparation that often emphasize discrete skill development rather than integrated competence formation. The qualitative data provide insight into how effective teachers achieve this integration. Rather than viewing theological understanding, instructional design, and student engagement as separate competencies, exemplary teachers demonstrated what might be called "holistic pedagogical competence" – seamless integration of biblical principles with educational best practices in ways that served both academic and spiritual formation goals.

The significant differences in implementation approaches across grade levels ($F(2,21) = 8.76$, $p < .01$) highlight the importance of developmental appropriateness in character formation. The qualitative findings reveal sophisticated strategies employed by effective teachers to make Genesis 1:26 principles accessible and meaningful across different developmental stages.

Elementary teachers emphasized concrete experiences and visual representations of *imago Dei* concepts, while secondary teachers engaged students in abstract reasoning and philosophical reflection. This developmental responsiveness required teachers to possess both theological depth and pedagogical flexibility - understanding core principles sufficiently well to adapt them creatively while maintaining theological integrity. The consistently low scores on assessment practices ($M = 71.6$, $SD = 13.4$) combined with qualitative themes highlighting assessment challenges reveal a critical gap in current pedagogical competence. Traditional assessment methods designed for cognitive outcomes proved inadequate for measuring character development, requiring teachers to develop innovative approaches without institutional support or professional preparation. The qualitative findings suggest that effective teachers intuitively developed portfolio-based, narrative, and observational assessment methods. However, the lack of systematic preparation in these areas limited the effectiveness and consistency of implementation. This finding has significant implications for teacher preparation and professional development programs.

This study contributes to pedagogical theory by extending Shulman's (2017) concept of pedagogical content knowledge to include theological dimensions. The findings suggest that effective religious education requires what can be termed "Theological Pedagogical Content Knowledge" (TPCK) – the intersection of theological understanding, pedagogical knowledge, and content-specific applications. TPCK involves the ability to transform theological concepts into developmentally appropriate learning experiences that promote both understanding and character formation. This framework provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the unique competence requirements of religious educators and distinguishes their preparation needs from those of general education teachers. The integrated findings support development of a process model for Genesis 1:26-based character formation that includes five sequential but iterative phases: (1) theological foundation establishment, (2) contextual understanding development, (3) experiential engagement facilitation, (4) reflective integration promotion, and (5) community application extension. This model suggests that effective character formation is neither linear nor simple but requires sustained engagement across multiple contexts and relationships. The cyclical nature of the process allows for developmental progression while accommodating individual differences and contextual variations. The convergent findings regarding collaborative engagement and systemic requirements contribute to understanding character formation as fundamentally ecological rather than individual. The study provides evidence for a systemic implementation framework that recognizes the interdependence of teacher competence, institutional support, family engagement, and community involvement. This framework challenges individualistic approaches to character education and suggests that sustainable outcomes require coordinated efforts across multiple stakeholders. The finding that teacher competence alone explains only 45% of variance in character development outcomes underscores the importance of systemic approaches.

The findings have significant implications for PAK teacher preparation programs. Current programs often emphasize either theological education or pedagogical preparation but rarely achieve effective integration of both domains. The study suggests need for preparation programs that: Integrate theological and pedagogical courses rather than treating them as separate domains. Provide extensive field experiences in character formation implementation. Develop assessment competencies specific to character development. Foster personal spiritual formation alongside professional development. Emphasize collaborative skills for working with families and communities

For current PAK teachers, the findings suggest professional development priorities should focus on:

a. Advanced assessment methodology training for character development evaluation
b. Integration strategies for connecting theological principles with contemporary educational methods
c. Collaborative engagement skills for partnering with parents and community members
d. Developmental psychology applications for age-appropriate character formation
e. Technology integration for documenting and sharing character development stories

Educational institutions seeking to enhance character formation outcomes should consider:

a. Policy development that explicitly supports character formation goals
b. Resource allocation for innovative assessment tools and methods
c. Administrative preparation for supervising and evaluating character formation effectiveness
d. Community partnership development for authentic service learning opportunities
e. Family engagement strategies that extend character formation beyond school boundaries

While the study achieved demographic diversity, the sample was limited to Christian educational contexts with participants who voluntarily engaged in character formation implementation. Findings may not generalize to reluctant participants or secular educational contexts. Additionally, the eight-month timeframe, while substantial, may be insufficient to capture long-term character development outcomes. The complexity of measuring character development poses ongoing challenges for research in this area. While the study employed multiple methods and achieved acceptable reliability, the subjective nature of character assessment introduces potential bias and limits quantitative precision. Future research might benefit from longitudinal designs with extended follow-up periods. The study was conducted within specific cultural and denominational contexts that may limit generalizability. Genesis 1:26 interpretations vary across Christian traditions, and character formation approaches may differ significantly in other cultural contexts. Cross-cultural replication would enhance understanding of universal versus contextual aspects of the findings.

Future research should employ extended longitudinal designs to track character development outcomes over multiple years. Such studies could provide insight into the

sustainability of character formation interventions and identify critical periods for character development. Comparative studies across different cultural and denominational contexts would enhance understanding of universal principles versus contextual adaptations in Genesis 1:26-based character formation. The unexpected finding regarding technology integration suggests need for systematic investigation of how digital tools can enhance character formation documentation, reflection, and community engagement.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that pedagogical competence, when deeply rooted in theological understanding from Genesis 1:26 plays a decisive role in shaping effective character formation within Christian Religious Education (PAK). The findings confirm that teaching competence in this context is not merely a matter of technical skill or instructional design but an integrated synthesis of theology, pedagogy, and spirituality. Teachers who internalize the truth that every learner bears God's image approach education as a sacred vocation rather than a professional function. This theological awareness transforms the classroom into a moral and spiritual community, where learning becomes a process of becoming more fully human in the likeness of Christ. Quantitative data revealed strong positive correlations between pedagogical competence dimensions-particularly theological understanding, instructional design, and student engagement-and student character development outcomes. The qualitative evidence enriched these findings by illustrating how effective teachers translate the principle of *imago Dei* into practice through modeling, experiential learning, reflective dialogue, and community service. These educators demonstrate what this study identifies as "transformational theology in pedagogy"-a lived theology that not only informs instruction but also reshapes the teacher's identity, relationships, and instructional purpose. The research highlights that intellectual mastery of Scripture alone is insufficient. Effective PAK teaching requires spiritual authenticity, where personal faith and theological conviction manifest in pedagogical practice. Teachers who embody Christ-like virtues-compassion, humility, justice, and integrity-become living curricula through whom students encounter the moral substance of Christian faith. Thus, character formation emerges not from doctrinal transmission but from relational transformation grounded in grace and truth. Another significant contribution of this study is its development of the Theological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPCK) framework-an expansion of Shulman's pedagogical content knowledge theory. TPCK captures the unique intersection of theological depth, pedagogical expertise, and contextual adaptability required in PAK education. This framework underscores that Christian teachers must be capable of transforming theological truths into learning experiences that are developmentally appropriate, contextually sensitive, and spiritually formative. The findings also emphasize that effective character formation is contextual, experiential, and collaborative. Teachers who successfully adapted Genesis 1:26 principles to students' developmental stages and cultural realities achieved higher implementation effectiveness. Experiential learning-through service projects, reflective journaling, and peer mentoring-proved essential for internalizing values and translating faith into practice. Moreover, sustained collaboration among teachers, parents, schools, and

communities emerged as a critical factor in reinforcing character development beyond the classroom. The study also identifies persistent challenges, particularly in assessing character growth. Traditional cognitive assessments fail to capture moral and spiritual transformation. Innovative narrative, portfolio-based, and observational approaches are needed to provide authentic evaluation of student development. Future research should focus on designing longitudinal studies to trace the enduring impact of faith-based pedagogical interventions across multiple educational and cultural contexts. In conclusion, this study affirms that pedagogical competence in Christian education is a theological vocation-a holistic calling that integrates mind, heart, and action. When grounded in the *imago Dei* framework, PAK teaching transcends academic instruction to become a redemptive practice that shapes students into responsible, compassionate, and faithful bearers of God's image. Such education not only transforms individuals but also contributes to the moral and spiritual renewal of society, fulfilling the ultimate mission of Christian education: to form Christ-like character in every learner.

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