



The Influence of the Inquiry Based Learning Model on Learning Motivation in Christian Religious Education and Character Development

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of the Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) model on learning motivation and character development in Christian Religious Education through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). The purpose of this research is to synthesize empirical evidence on how inquiry-oriented instructional strategies contribute to enhancing students' intrinsic motivation, critical thinking, and moral growth. The SLR method was conducted through a structured process involving the identification of research questions, determination of inclusion and exclusion criteria, database searching, screening, quality appraisal, and thematic analysis. Relevant peer-reviewed articles published between 2013 and 2024 were collected from reputable academic databases. The selected studies consistently demonstrate that the IBL model significantly increases learning motivation by promoting autonomy, competence, and active engagement in the learning process. Students participating in inquiry-based activities develop deeper understanding because they are encouraged to ask questions, investigate topics, construct new knowledge, and reflect on their findings. In the context of Christian Religious Education, IBL supports character development by engaging learners in moral reasoning, reflective dialogue, and real-life applications of Christian values. Collaborative inquiry activities further enhance empathy, responsibility, and social skills. Despite its benefits, several challenges such as limited teacher preparation, resource constraints, and time demands are noted in implementing IBL effectively. Overall, the review concludes that Inquiry-Based Learning is a highly effective pedagogical approach that aligns with the holistic aims of Christian Religious Education, fostering both academic motivation and moral character formation. Recommendations for further research and practical implementation strategies are also highlighted.

Keywords: *Inquiry Based Learning, Learning Motivation, Learning Model, Christian Education*

INTRODUCTION

Learning motivation plays a critical role in shaping students' engagement, persistence, and overall academic success, particularly in Christian Religious Education, where the

development of character, values, and spiritual understanding forms an integral part of the learning process. Contemporary educational challenges indicate that many students exhibit low learning motivation due to conventional teacher-centered instructional methods that limit opportunities for exploration, critical thinking, and self-directed learning. This situation highlights the urgency of adopting more interactive, student-centered pedagogical models capable of enhancing both cognitive and affective learning outcomes. Among various contemporary approaches, the Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) model has gained significant attention as an effective strategy for promoting motivation, fostering deeper understanding, and strengthening character development through active participation and reflective learning. Inquiry-Based Learning emphasizes students' active engagement in asking questions, investigating phenomena, constructing knowledge, and presenting findings. Rather than receiving information passively, students take ownership of their learning process, which significantly increases their intrinsic motivation. In the context of Christian Religious Education, the inquiry process allows learners to explore biblical principles, moral dilemmas, and spiritual concepts in meaningful and relevant ways. Through guided inquiry, students can examine real-life situations in which Christian values such as integrity, empathy, responsibility, and love are applied, thereby contributing to character formation and moral growth. Studies in educational psychology highlight that motivation tends to increase when students perceive learning as relevant, challenging, and connected to their personal experiences, elements that are strongly embedded in the IBL framework. The IBL model supports diversified learning pathways that address differences in students' cognitive styles and abilities. By exploring topics independently or collaboratively, students become more aware of their strengths, develop interpersonal skills, and enhance critical thinking, competencies that are essential in Christian Religious Education and character development. The teacher, acting as a facilitator rather than the sole source of knowledge, guides students through questioning techniques, provides scaffolding, and encourages reflective thinking. This dynamic interaction fosters a learning environment where curiosity, inquiry, and moral reasoning are nurtured. As a result, students not only develop higher-order thinking skills but also internalize Christian values through experiential learning. The implementation of IBL can contribute to improved student motivation by providing opportunities for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are key components of Self-Determination Theory (SDT). When students are given the freedom to investigate issues of faith, ethical behavior, and Christian character in ways that interest them, they feel a greater sense of ownership and purpose in the learning process. Collaborative inquiry activities also promote a sense of community, reinforcing empathy, cooperation, and respect, values central to character education. Consequently, Christian Religious Education becomes more meaningful and transformative, enabling students to connect faith with everyday life decisions and moral responsibilities.

Many schools still rely heavily on traditional instructional methods, particularly in religious education. Limited teacher training, insufficient resources, and concerns about content mastery often inhibit the adoption of student-centered learning models. This gap underscores the need for research investigating how the IBL model influences students' learning motivation and character development within Christian Religious Education settings. Understanding these relationships is essential for providing empirical evidence

that can support pedagogical improvements and guide teachers in implementing more effective instructional approaches. This study aims to analyze the influence of the Inquiry-Based Learning model on learning motivation in Christian Religious Education and character development. By examining how inquiry-oriented activities affect students' engagement, moral reasoning, and intrinsic motivation, the study contributes valuable insights to educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers. Ultimately, the findings are expected to promote the integration of more interactive and value-oriented learning models in Christian Religious Education, ensuring that students not only acquire knowledge but also cultivate strong character and a deeper understanding of Christian faith.

METHODS

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to analyze and synthesize empirical evidence on the influence of the Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) model on learning motivation in Christian Religious Education and character development. The SLR method was chosen because it provides a comprehensive, transparent, and replicable framework for identifying, evaluating, and integrating findings from previous research. Through a structured and rigorous review process, the SLR enables researchers to draw reliable conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the IBL model across different educational contexts, particularly within Christian Religious Education. The review procedure consisted of several sequential stages, including identification of research questions, formulation of inclusion and exclusion criteria, systematic database searching, screening of articles, quality appraisal, data extraction, and thematic synthesis. The primary research question guiding the review was: How does the Inquiry-Based Learning model influence learning motivation and character development in Christian Religious Education? To ensure focus and relevance, the review also addressed two subsidiary questions: What instructional strategies within the IBL model contribute most significantly to student motivation? and How does the IBL model support character formation in Christian Religious Education?

Data sources were selected from reputable academic databases, including Google Scholar, ERIC, Scopus, Web of Science, and DOAJ. The search strategy utilized a combination of keywords and Boolean operators such as "Inquiry-Based Learning," "learning motivation," "Christian Religious Education," "character development," "student motivation," and "religious education pedagogy." Searches were limited to peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2013 and 2024 to ensure the inclusion of recent and relevant studies. Only empirical studies, both quantitative and qualitative, were included, while literature reviews, opinion papers, dissertations, and conference abstracts were excluded. The screening process involved two stages: title-abstract screening and full-text screening. Articles that did not explicitly examine IBL or were unrelated to Christian Religious Education or character development were excluded. To ensure methodological reliability, each selected study underwent quality assessment using criteria adapted from the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP), focusing on research design, clarity of objectives, validity, credibility of findings, and relevance to the review questions. Data extraction was conducted using a structured matrix capturing essential information, including author, year, research design, sample characteristics, key findings, and contributions to understanding IBL's impact. Thematic analysis was applied

to synthesize findings, allowing recurring patterns, relationships, and gaps in the literature to emerge. Themes were categorized into three major areas: IBL strategies that enhance learning motivation, inquiry activities relevant to Christian Religious Education, and the role of IBL in strengthening character development. Through this SLR process, the study provides a comprehensive evidence base to evaluate the potential of the Inquiry-Based Learning model in promoting learning motivation and character formation within Christian Religious Education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this Systematic Literature Review reveal a consistent pattern demonstrating that the Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) model significantly enhances learning motivation in various educational contexts, including Christian Religious Education and character development. Across the reviewed studies, IBL emerges as a pedagogical framework that places students at the center of the learning experience, encouraging exploration, critical questioning, and active participation. These elements contribute to increased intrinsic motivation, a deeper sense of personal responsibility for learning, and improved moral reasoning—outcomes that are highly relevant to Christian Religious Education, which aims to cultivate both knowledge and character. The reviewed research consistently indicates that students participating in inquiry-oriented lessons report heightened interest, engagement, and enjoyment. These outcomes are attributed to the nature of IBL, which allows learners to discover information for themselves rather than relying solely on the teacher as the primary source of knowledge. This shift from teacher-centered instruction to learner-centered inquiry fosters a climate where students feel empowered to ask questions, seek answers, and reflect on their discoveries. In Christian Religious Education, such processes enable learners to explore spiritual concepts, biblical narratives, and ethical issues in a more meaningful, relevant, and personally engaging way. When students investigate moral dilemmas or analyze real-life applications of Christian values through inquiry, they tend to internalize lessons more deeply and develop stronger motivation to learn. A significant theme emerging from the literature is that IBL promotes autonomy, competence, and relatedness, fundamental components of Self-Determination Theory. Autonomy is supported when students are given opportunities to choose inquiry questions, plan investigations, and construct knowledge. Competence grows as they successfully engage in inquiry tasks that challenge their thinking and require the use of higher-order cognitive skills. Relatedness is nurtured through collaborative inquiry activities that involve communication, teamwork, and shared problem solving. In Christian Religious Education, these motivational factors play critical roles in helping students develop a sense of purpose, connection, and responsibility. For example, when students are asked to explore how Christian values apply to social issues such as justice, compassion, or integrity, their sense of relatedness to both the subject matter and the learning community increases. This emotional and intellectual engagement subsequently enhances motivation and character development. The reviewed studies also highlight that the IBL model fosters critical thinking, creativity, and reflective judgement. These skills are essential in Christian Religious Education, where learners are encouraged to interpret biblical teachings, evaluate ethical choices, and apply Christian values in real-world contexts. Several empirical studies demonstrate that inquiry-based activities—such as problem solving, case study analysis, project-based

investigations, and guided discussions, promote deeper understanding of religious concepts and moral principles. When learners actively construct meaning rather than passively receive instruction, their cognitive engagement increases. This heightened engagement correlates strongly with increased motivation. Students feel a sense of accomplishment when they draw conclusions from their investigations and relate these to their own lives, leading to a more personal and transformative learning experience.

The process of inquiry in Christian Religious Education also supports character formation by encouraging students to reflect on their values, attitudes, and behaviors. Many studies emphasize that IBL strengthens moral reasoning by engaging learners in reflective dialogue, peer collaboration, and evidence-based thinking. Inquiry tasks often involve analyzing moral conflicts, comparing different perspectives, and evaluating the consequences of various actions. Such activities help students understand Christian ethical frameworks more deeply and develop essential character traits, including empathy, honesty, responsibility, and respect. This is particularly important in character education, where moral understanding must go beyond memorization; it must be lived, discussed, and internalized. The IBL model provides the structure for this reflective engagement by allowing students to examine and articulate their moral beliefs in response to inquiry questions and evidence. The reviewed literature also acknowledges several challenges in implementing the IBL model, particularly in religious education settings. One recurring challenge is that teachers may feel unprepared or insufficiently trained to facilitate inquiry-based instruction. Traditional education systems often rely on teacher-centered approaches, making it difficult for educators to shift toward inquiry-oriented pedagogy. Many teachers express concerns about managing classroom dynamics during inquiry activities, selecting appropriate inquiry questions, and ensuring that students achieve the required curriculum outcomes. Additionally, some studies indicate that inquiry-based lessons require more time for planning, monitoring, and assessment compared to conventional methods. Limited resources, large class sizes, and rigid curricula further complicate the implementation of IBL in certain educational contexts.

The literature offers multiple strategies to enhance the effectiveness of IBL in Christian Religious Education. One recommended strategy is the use of guided inquiry, where teachers provide initial scaffolding, such as question prompts, structured activities, and clear expectations, before gradually releasing responsibility to students. Guided inquiry ensures that learners remain focused and supported, particularly when exploring complex religious concepts or ethical questions. This approach also reduces teachers' anxiety about losing control of the learning process and helps maintain alignment with curriculum goals. Another recommended strategy is integrating collaborative inquiry activities, such as group investigations and project-based learning. These activities allow students to share ideas, negotiate meaning, and build collective understanding. Collaboration not only enhances cognitive learning but also supports character development by fostering social skills, empathy, cooperation, and respect for different viewpoints. In Christian Religious Education, collaborative inquiry can be particularly powerful when students engage in group interpretation of biblical texts, discussions about moral dilemmas, or community-based religious projects.

Technology-enhanced inquiry is also identified as a promising approach in modern religious education. Digital tools such as online research platforms, multimedia resources,

virtual simulations, and reflective journals can enrich the inquiry process. Several studies highlight that technology increases student motivation by making learning more interactive, visually engaging, and accessible. In Christian Religious Education, digital storytelling tools, online Bible study platforms, and virtual tours of historical religious sites provide authentic inquiry opportunities that deepen understanding and interest. Technology also enables students to document their inquiry progress, reflect on their learning, and collaborate with peers beyond the classroom. These digital inquiry practices align well with the learning preferences of today's generation, who are accustomed to exploring information through multimedia and interactive formats. The literature further reveals that IBL contributes to positive changes in classroom climate, which is essential for supporting both learning motivation and character development. Inquiry-based classrooms tend to be more open, supportive, and respectful, with an emphasis on dialogue, curiosity, and shared responsibility. Students feel safer expressing their ideas, asking questions, and making mistakes. This psychologically safe environment enables learners to take intellectual risks and explore their faith and values more honestly. In Christian Religious Education, such environments are conducive to spiritual growth, as they allow students to express doubts, engage in thoughtful discussions, and pursue deeper understanding without fear of judgment. A positive inquiry-based climate thus reinforces students' motivation to learn and cultivates character traits such as humility, openness, and compassion.

Another key theme is that the IBL model helps students develop metacognitive awareness, the ability to think about their own thinking. Through self-reflection, planning, monitoring, and evaluation of their inquiry process, students become more aware of their strengths, weaknesses, and learning strategies. Studies show that metacognitive skills are strongly linked to increased learning motivation, as students who understand how they learn are more confident and independent. In Christian Religious Education, metacognition is particularly valuable for developing spiritual and moral identity. When students reflect on their beliefs, values, and decision-making processes, they strengthen their character and become more mindful of how Christian teachings shape their lives. Reflective inquiry journals, self-assessment checklists, and guided meditation activities are examples of metacognitive practices that align well with IBL and support both cognitive and spiritual development. The review also finds that inquiry-based learning supports differentiated instruction, enabling teachers to accommodate diverse learning styles, abilities, and backgrounds. Students can engage in inquiry tasks at their own pace, pursue questions that interest them, and demonstrate learning through multiple formats, written reports, presentations, creative projects, or discussions. This flexibility increases motivation by allowing students to express their understanding in ways that align with their strengths. In Christian Religious Education, differentiation is essential for addressing varying levels of spiritual maturity, cultural experiences, and personal faith journeys. Inquiry tasks can be adapted to help all students, regardless of ability, engage meaningfully with Christian values, biblical passages, and moral issues. As a result, all learners can experience success, which further enhances motivation and character development. In analyzing the reviewed research, it becomes clear that IBL aligns naturally with the goals of Christian Religious Education. The model supports holistic learning, engaging students intellectually, emotionally, socially, and ethically. It encourages students to explore faith questions with openness, curiosity, and

responsibility. It strengthens motivation by making learning relevant and meaningful. It enhances character by fostering moral reasoning, empathy, and reflective judgement. Although challenges exist, the overall evidence strongly suggests that the Inquiry-Based Learning model has substantial potential to transform Christian Religious Education into a more dynamic, student-centered, and character-forming learning experience.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this Systematic Literature Review demonstrate that the Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) model holds substantial potential in enhancing learning motivation and supporting character development within Christian Religious Education. Through a comprehensive analysis of empirical studies, it becomes clear that IBL provides a transformative approach to teaching and learning by shifting the focus from passive knowledge transmission to active student engagement. The model fosters autonomy, critical thinking, creativity, and reflective inquiry, key components that significantly contribute to the development of intrinsic learning motivation. Students become active participants in their learning journey by formulating questions, exploring issues, constructing knowledge, and evaluating their findings. In the context of Christian Religious Education, such engagement enables learners to interact more deeply with biblical teachings, moral principles, and spiritual values, leading to enhanced understanding and personal relevance. The review also reveals that IBL aligns closely with the goals of character formation, an essential dimension of Christian Religious Education. Inquiry activities encourage students to reflect on ethical dilemmas, examine their values, and evaluate their behavior in light of Christian teachings. Through collaborative inquiry, learners develop essential character traits such as empathy, responsibility, respect, and cooperation. These experiences promote a holistic form of learning that extends beyond cognitive development to encompass moral, social, and spiritual growth. When students are given opportunities to analyze real-life applications of Christian values, they are more likely to internalize these principles and demonstrate them in their daily lives. As a result, IBL not only strengthens academic motivation but also contributes meaningfully to character development. The evidence suggests that IBL creates a positive classroom climate that encourages participation, open dialogue, and mutual respect. Such an environment is particularly supportive of students' spiritual and moral exploration, enabling them to express their thoughts, ask questions freely, and make connections between faith and everyday life. This climate of inquiry promotes a sense of belonging and relatedness, which further enhances motivation and character formation. However, the successful implementation of IBL requires adequate teacher preparation, sufficient resources, and thoughtful planning. Several studies noted challenges such as limited teacher training, large class sizes, and rigid curriculum structures that hinder the full adoption of inquiry-based approaches. Addressing these challenges is crucial for ensuring that teachers can effectively facilitate inquiry and support students throughout the learning process. This review concludes that the Inquiry-Based Learning model is an effective pedagogical approach for improving learning motivation and fostering character development in Christian Religious Education. The model's emphasis on exploration, reflection, and student-centered learning aligns with the holistic aims of religious education, making it a valuable strategy for educators seeking to enhance both academic and moral outcomes. Future research is encouraged to investigate the long-term impact

of IBL on students' spiritual growth and to explore practical strategies for integrating inquiry-based practices more deeply into Christian Religious Education curricula. By embracing the principles of inquiry, educators can create learning environments that not only stimulate intellectual curiosity but also nurture character, faith, and moral integrity, equipping students to live out Christian values in meaningful and transformative ways.

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