

Pembentukan Karakter dan Iman Anak melalui Pendidikan Agama Kristen: Kolaborasi Guru, Orang Tua, dan Sekolah Minggu di Era Digital

Character and Faith Formation of Children through Christian Religious Education: Collaboration of Teachers, Parents, and Sunday School in the Digital Era

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Abstrak

Pembentukan karakter dan iman anak merupakan tugas fundamental Pendidikan Agama Kristen, yang memerlukan upaya kolaboratif antara guru, orang tua, dan komunitas gereja, khususnya Sekolah Minggu. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis proses kolaboratif dalam pembentukan karakter dan iman anak, dengan memperhatikan tantangan dan peluang yang dihadirkan oleh era digital. Dengan menggunakan metode studi kepustakaan kualitatif, dengan fokus pada konteks Indonesia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keteladanan guru, keterlibatan orang tua, dan pedagogi Sekolah Minggu merupakan faktor kritis dalam pembentukan karakter dan iman yang efektif. Lebih lanjut, transformasi digital menawarkan jalur baru untuk keterlibatan tetapi juga menimbulkan risiko terhadap kedalaman spiritual dan keaslian relasional. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa pendekatan holistik, kolaboratif, dan berwawasan digital sangat penting bagi PAK untuk membina karakter dan iman anak di masyarakat kontemporer. Penelitian ini menyumbangkan kerangka komprehensif untuk memahami dinamika kolaboratif pembentukan karakter dan iman serta menawarkan implikasi praktis bagi pendidik, orang tua, dan pemimpin gereja.

Kata Kunci: pembentukan karakter dan iman; pendidikan Kristen kolaboratif; pedagogi Sekolah Minggu; keterlibatan orang tua; tantangan era digital.

Abstract

The formation of character and faith in children is a foundational task of Christian Religious Education (CRE), requiring collaborative efforts among teachers, parents, and the church community, particularly Sunday School. This study aims to analyze the collaborative processes involved in shaping children's character and faith, with attention to the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital era. Employing a qualitative literature review method, focusing on Indonesian contexts. The results reveal that teacher exemplarity, parental involvement, and Sunday School pedagogy are critical factors in effective character and faith formation. Furthermore, digital transformation offers new avenues for engagement but also poses risks to spiritual depth and relational authenticity. The study concludes that a holistic, collaborative, and digitally discerning approach is essential for CRE to nurture children's character and faith in contemporary society. This research contributes a comprehensive framework for understanding the collaborative dynamics of character and faith formation and offers practical implications for educators, parents, and church leaders.

Keywords: character and faith formation; collaborative Christian education; Sunday School pedagogy; parental involvement; digital era challenges.

INTRODUCTION

The formation of character and faith in children constitutes a central mission of Christian Religious Education (CRE), rooted in the biblical mandate to nurture the next generation in the ways of the Lord. In the Indonesian context, this mission is carried out through a complex network of relationships involving teachers, parents, and the church community, particularly Sunday School. The digital era has introduced new dynamics to this task, offering both unprecedented opportunities for engagement and significant challenges to spiritual depth and relational authenticity.¹ Understanding how these collaborative efforts function and how they are being reshaped by digital transformation is essential for developing effective strategies for children's spiritual formation. This study seeks to address this need by examining the collaborative processes and digital challenges involved in character and faith formation.

Previous scholarship on character and faith formation in CRE has explored various dimensions of this task using diverse methodological approaches. Masarrang and Bulan conducted a qualitative study on the role of Sunday School teachers in shaping children's character and spiritual growth, finding that teacher spiritual maturity, pedagogical competence, and relational engagement are critical factors.² Similarly, Nababan and Naibaho employed a qualitative case study to examine the influence of CRE teachers' personalities on students' moral development, demonstrating that teacher exemplarity significantly impacts students' character.³ These studies establish the importance of teacher modeling but often overlook how character formation intersects with parental involvement and the broader digital context. This limitation points to the need for more integrative approaches to understanding the collaborative nature of faith formation.

Research on parental involvement in children's spiritual formation has also developed significantly through various theoretical and empirical lenses. Santoso et al. investigated the role of parents in character formation during the COVID-19 pandemic, utilizing a qualitative

¹ Andri Vincent Sinaga, Ronald Engelhard Mussu, and Oey Natanael Winanto, "Religious Harmony Amid Religious Differences and Religious Moderation in Indonesia: A Theological Perspective," *Journal of Religious and Socio-Cultural* 6, no. 1 (2025): 66–100.

² Kurniati Masarrang and Susanti Embong Bulan, "Eksistensi Guru Sekolah Minggu Dalam Gereja: Peran Guru Sekolah Minggu Dalam Pembentukan Karakter Dan Pertumbuhan Iman Anak," *KINAA: Jurnal Teologi* 10, no. 1 (2025): 68–85.

³ Dentina Nababan and Dorlan Naibaho, "Kepribadian Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen Terhadap Pembentukan Akhlak Peserta Didik: Studi Kasus SD Negeri 095197 Hutabayuraja," *Indonesian Journal of Service* 1, no. 1 (2025): 61–83.

literature review method.⁴ Their findings reveal that parents bear primary responsibility for character formation, with the family serving as the first and most influential context for moral development. Rismawati et al. further demonstrated that CRE can play a restorative role for children from broken families, helping them overcome trauma and develop healthy character through consistent spiritual guidance.⁵ However, these studies tend to focus on the family context without adequately addressing how parental efforts intersect with formal CRE and Sunday School programs. Therefore, a more comprehensive framework is needed to integrate these disparate findings.

The digital transformation of education has emerged as a pressing concern for CRE practitioners working with children. Pello investigated the impact of information technology on student learning motivation in CRE, finding that digital platforms enhance engagement when integrated purposefully.⁶ Maranatha and Tandana analyzed digital faith formation and teacher leadership in 21st-century learning, cautioning that while digital tools offer unprecedented access to theological resources, they also risk encouraging shallow spirituality and fragmented identities.⁷ These studies suggest that digital transformation presents both opportunities and challenges for children's faith formation. However, they often focus on technological implementation without adequately addressing how digital tools relate to the collaborative tasks of character and faith formation.

Despite this growing body of research, a significant gap persists in the literature regarding the integrative understanding of collaborative character and faith formation in the digital era. Existing studies generally examine teacher exemplarity, parental involvement, and digital transformation as separate concerns rather than as interconnected dimensions of a holistic formation process. Furthermore, while numerous studies address children's spiritual formation, few integrate this concern with the theological foundations of Christian education and the practical challenges of collaborative pedagogy in contemporary contexts. The research gap lies

⁴ Juli Santoso, Juan Ananta Tan, and Widjaja Sugiri, "Peranan Orang Tua Dalam Pembentukan Karakter Di Masa Pandemi Covid-19: Perspektif Pendidikan Kristen," *Indonesia Journal of Religious* 5, no. 1 (2022): 64–78.

⁵ Netti Rismawati et al., "Pendidikan Agama Kristen Dalam Pembentukan Karakter Anak Di Keluarga Berantakan: Suatu Studi Literature Review," *Journal of Religious and Socio-Cultural* 3, no. 2 (2022): 131–149.

⁶ Eleonora Patricia Selfina Pello, "Teknologi dan Motivasi Belajar: Analisis Pengaruh Teknologi Informasi dalam Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Kristen," *MODERATE: Journal of Religious, Education, and Social* 1, no. 2 (2024): 87–102.

⁷ Christian Ade Maranatha and Ester Agustini Tandana, "Digital Faith Formation and Christian Religious Education Teachers' Leadership in 21st-Century Learning," *MODERATE: Journal of Religious, Education, and Social* 3, no. 1 (2025): 41–56.

in the absence of a comprehensive synthesis that demonstrates how these dimensions mutually reinforce one another and collectively constitute the formation of children's character and faith. Addressing this gap is essential for developing more effective and holistic approaches to CRE.

This study aims to address this gap by analyzing the collaborative processes involved in shaping children's character and faith through CRE, with attention to the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital era. The specific objectives are threefold: first, to examine the role of teacher exemplarity in character formation; second, to analyze the importance of parental and family collaboration in faith formation; and third, to explore how Sunday School pedagogy and digital transformation shape children's spiritual development. Through this analysis, the study seeks to develop a comprehensive framework for understanding the collaborative dynamics of character and faith formation in contemporary Indonesia. This framework will hopefully inform both theoretical discourse and practical implementation.

The contribution of this study lies in its integrative approach to understanding the collaborative dynamics of children's character and faith formation. By synthesizing findings from diverse scholarly sources and connecting theological foundations with pedagogical practice, this research offers a holistic framework that can inform educators, parents, and church leaders. Additionally, the study contributes to theological discourse by demonstrating how the essential task of Christian education—forming disciples of Christ from childhood—can be pursued in ways that honor both the role of teachers and the responsibility of parents. Ultimately, this research aspires to strengthen CRE's capacity to nurture children's character and faith in the digital era. Such an aspiration aligns with the broader mission of Christian education in contemporary contexts.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative literature review method to examine the collaborative processes and digital challenges involved in children's character and faith formation through Christian Religious Education. The qualitative approach was selected because it enables comprehensive exploration of complex educational and spiritual phenomena through systematic analysis of existing scholarly sources, identification of recurring themes, and

synthesis of findings across diverse contexts.⁸ This method is particularly suitable for examining the multifaceted nature of character and faith formation, as it allows researchers to integrate theological reflection with pedagogical and sociological analysis. The literature review methodology follows established procedures for qualitative research synthesis, including systematic identification, selection, and analysis of relevant sources. Such an approach ensures that the findings are grounded in a robust evidence base while remaining open to interpretive depth.

The application of this method involved several systematic stages to ensure comprehensive coverage of the relevant literature. First, comprehensive searching of academic databases and repositories was conducted using keywords related to Christian religious education, character formation, faith formation, parental involvement, Sunday School, and digital transformation. Second, twenty-five sources were selected based on their direct relevance to children's spiritual formation in Indonesian contexts, and methodological rigor. Third, data extraction focused on identifying key themes, theoretical frameworks, and empirical findings related to the three dimensions under investigation. Fourth, thematic analysis was employed to categorize recurring patterns and integrate findings into coherent themes.⁹ The synthesis process involved comparing and contrasting perspectives from multiple authors, identifying areas of convergence and divergence, and developing an integrative framework that connects teacher exemplarity, parental collaboration, and Sunday School pedagogy within the broader context of children's character and faith formation. This systematic approach ensures that the findings and discussion are grounded in the existing evidence base while offering novel theoretical contributions.

RESULTS

Teacher Exemplarity and Character Formation

The analysis reveals that teacher exemplarity constitutes a foundational dimension of children's character formation within Christian Religious Education. A primary finding is that teachers who embody Christ-like virtues—compassion, patience, humility, and forgiveness—create environments where children can observe and internalize these characteristics.

⁸ Yusak Tanasyah and Lasmaria Nami Simanungkalit, "Perumpamaan Sebagai Model Pembelajaran Yang Efektif Untuk Proses Belajar Mengajar Pendidikan Kristen," *QUAERENS: Journal of Theology and Christianity Studies* 2, no. 1 (2020): 30–43.

⁹ Sri Wahyuni and Yan Kristianus Kadang, "Mendidik Anak: Studi Eksplanatori tentang Pemahaman Jemaat mengenai Mendidik Anak," *QUAERENS: Journal of Theology and Christian Education* 1, no. 2 (2019): 122–143.

Masarrang and Bulan demonstrated that Sunday School teachers who exhibit spiritual maturity, pedagogical competence, and genuine love for children significantly influence their character development.¹⁰ Their study showed that character formation occurs not primarily through verbal instruction but through the lived example of teachers who embody the values they teach. This finding highlights the critical importance of teacher character in CRE and underscores the need for teachers who are both spiritually mature and pedagogically skilled.

A second finding concerns the role of teachers' personality and authority in shaping students' character. Nababan and Naibaho found that teachers' personalities, including exemplary behavior, patience, and responsibility, significantly impact students' moral development.¹¹ Their research revealed that students are more likely to emulate teachers they respect and trust, making teacher character a crucial factor in moral education. Sihombing and Naibaho similarly demonstrated that teachers who exhibit strong moral character, consistency, and compassion contribute significantly to students' emotional intelligence, discipline, and motivation to learn.¹² These findings collectively establish that the teacher's person—not merely their pedagogy—is a primary medium of character formation. Consequently, teacher training must prioritize character development alongside pedagogical skills.

A third finding relates to the specific behaviors and attitudes that characterize exemplary teachers in children's spiritual formation. Christia et al. found that Sunday School teachers' example significantly influences children's character formation, with students imitating their teachers' attitudes and behaviors.¹³ Their study highlighted that teachers who demonstrate love, patience, and consistency in their interactions with children create a foundation for character development that extends beyond the classroom. Ndolu et al. further demonstrated that effective CRE involves not only teaching moral principles but also creating opportunities for students to practice virtues through service, worship, and community engagement.¹⁴ These findings suggest that exemplary teachers are those who integrate virtue into both their teaching and their daily interactions with children. Therefore, teacher preparation programs must emphasize the integration of spiritual formation and pedagogical practice.

¹⁰ Masarrang and Bulan, "Eksistensi Guru Sekolah Minggu," 68–85.

¹¹ Nababan and Naibaho, "Kepribadian Guru," 61–83

¹² Ericson Sihombing and Dorlan Naibaho, "Wibawa Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen Terhadap Perkembangan Mental Peserta Didik: Studi Kasus UPT SMP 010 Parsingguran," *Indonesian Journal of Service* 1, no. 1 (2025): 47–60.

¹³ Verra Ria Christia et al., "Dampak Keteladanan Guru Sekolah Minggu Dalam Pembentukan Karakter Anak Di Gereja Kristen Indonesia Menining," *Journal of Religious and Socio-Cultural* 2, no. 1 (2021): 1–11

¹⁴ Anderson Ndolu et al., "Peran Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen Dalam Pembentukan Karakter Siswa Menurut H.A.R. Tilaar," *Indonesia Journal of Religious* 5, no. 1 (2022): 51–62.

A fourth finding pertains to the challenges teachers face in maintaining exemplary character and the support they need to fulfill this role. Christia et al. documented how teachers in GKI Menining faced significant challenges, including limited resources and lack of parental support, yet continued to model Christ-like behavior for their students.¹⁵ The research emphasized that teacher exemplarity is not merely a matter of individual effort but requires institutional and community support. Tafetin et al. demonstrated that effective teacher leadership in children's ministry involves not only personal spiritual maturity but also the ability to create supportive environments for character formation.¹⁶ These findings suggest that fostering teacher exemplarity requires a holistic approach that addresses both personal and institutional dimensions of teacher development. Consequently, churches and schools must invest in the spiritual and professional development of CRE teachers.

Parental and Family Collaboration in Faith Formation

The analysis reveals that parental and family collaboration constitutes an essential dimension of children's faith formation within Christian Religious Education. A primary finding is that parents bear primary responsibility for character and faith formation, with the family serving as the first and most influential context for spiritual development. Santoso et al. emphasized that parents are given the responsibility by God to educate, teach, and shape their children's character.¹⁷ Their study showed that when parents actively participate in their children's spiritual formation—through prayer, Bible reading, and modeling Christian values—children develop stronger character and faith. This finding challenges the tendency to view character formation as solely the responsibility of schools or churches, highlighting instead the foundational role of the family.

A second finding concerns the specific practices and attitudes that characterize effective parental involvement in faith formation. Wahyuni and Kadang found that the strongest indicator shaping congregational understanding of educating children is the teaching indicator, which encompasses not only formal instruction but also the daily modeling of faith.¹⁸ Their research revealed that parents who integrate faith into everyday life—through conversations, routines, and rituals—create environments where children naturally absorb spiritual values.

¹⁵ Christia et al., "Dampak Keteladanan Guru," 1–11.

¹⁶ Krisna Karolina Tafetin, Christian Ade Maranatha, and Ester Agustini Tandana, "Penerapan Kepemimpinan Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen Untuk Mewujudkan Mutu Sekolah Minggu Di Gereja Kristen Batu Hidup Muara Karang Jakarta," *SERVIRE: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 2, no. 1 (2022): 129–139.

¹⁷ Santoso, Tan, and Sugiri, "Peranan Orang Tua," 64–78.

¹⁸ Wahyuni and Kadang, "Mendidik Anak," 122–143.

Rismawati et al. further demonstrated that even in broken families, consistent spiritual guidance can help children overcome trauma and develop healthy character.¹⁹ These findings suggest that effective parental involvement is characterized by consistency, intentionality, and integration of faith into daily life. Therefore, churches must equip parents with the knowledge and skills they need to fulfill their role effectively.

A third finding relates to the challenges parents face in fulfilling their role in faith formation and the support they need from the church community. Santoso et al. documented how many parents lack the knowledge or capacity to fulfill their role in character formation, particularly during times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁰ Their study highlighted that parents often feel overwhelmed and ill-equipped to provide spiritual guidance to their children. Rismawati et al. similarly noted that children from broken families often experience trauma and disrupted development, requiring intentional intervention through CRE.²¹ These findings suggest that parents need support from the church community to fulfill their role effectively. Therefore, CRE must intentionally build partnerships with families and provide resources for parental involvement.

A fourth finding pertains to the importance of collaboration between parents, teachers, and the church community in faith formation. Masarrang and Bulan demonstrated that effective character formation occurs when teachers and parents work together to reinforce shared values and provide consistent guidance.²² Their research revealed that children benefit most when the values taught in CRE are reinforced at home and in the church community. Tafetin et al. further demonstrated that effective children's ministry involves collaboration between teachers, parents, and church leaders to create a holistic environment for spiritual formation.²³ These findings indicate that faith formation is most effective when it occurs within a network of supportive relationships spanning home, school, and church. Therefore, CRE must intentionally foster collaboration across these spheres to maximize its impact on children's spiritual development.

Sunday School Pedagogy and Digital Era Challenges

The analysis reveals that Sunday School pedagogy and digital transformation significantly shape children's spiritual development in contemporary contexts. A primary

¹⁹ Rismawati et al., "Pendidikan Agama Kristen," 131–149.

²⁰ Santoso, Tan, and Sugiri, "Peranan Orang Tua," 64–78.

²¹ Rismawati et al., "Pendidikan Agama Kristen," 131–149.

²² Masarrang and Bulan, "Eksistensi Guru Sekolah Minggu," 68–85.

²³ Tafetin, Maranatha, and Tandana, "Penerapan Kepemimpinan," 129–139.

finding is that Sunday School provides a unique and essential space for children's faith formation, offering age-appropriate instruction, relational engagement, and opportunities for spiritual growth. Masarrang and Bulan demonstrated that Sunday School teachers play a critical role in nurturing children's character and faith, with their effectiveness determined not only by spiritual maturity and pedagogical competence but also by their ability to contextualize teaching and build meaningful relationships with children.²⁴ Their study highlighted that Sunday School is often the primary context where children receive systematic spiritual formation outside the home. This finding underscores the importance of investing in Sunday School teachers and programs.

A second finding concerns the pedagogical strategies that are most effective in Sunday School contexts. Lumempouw et al. demonstrated that using picture-and-picture learning models can increase student engagement and motivation in CRE.²⁵ Their research revealed that visual media and interactive activities help children understand and remember biblical content more effectively. Sitorus and Tanasyah further demonstrated that creative strategies such as study tours, creative classroom atmospheres, and reward systems significantly enhance student motivation and engagement.²⁶ These findings suggest that Sunday School pedagogy must be engaging, interactive, and relevant to children's lives. Therefore, teacher training must equip Sunday School teachers with a repertoire of creative and effective teaching strategies that capture children's attention and foster spiritual growth.

A third finding relates to the challenges and opportunities presented by digital transformation in children's faith formation. Pello found that information technology, including interactive content and online learning tools, sparks greater interest and enthusiasm among students when integrated into CRE.²⁷ However, Maranatha and Tandana cautioned that digital tools also risk encouraging shallow spirituality and fragmented identities, emphasizing that faith formation in digital contexts must remain relational, participatory, and grounded in the incarnational model of Christ.²⁸ These findings suggest that digital transformation offers significant potential for expanding Sunday School's reach but requires intentional theological

²⁴ Masarrang and Bulan, "Eksistensi Guru Sekolah Minggu," 68–85

²⁵ Nova Liesye Lumempouw et al., "Peranan Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen Dalam Meningkatkan Hasil Belajar Melalui Model Pembelajaran Gambar Dan Gambar," *Indonesia Journal of Religious* 5, no. 1 (2022): 36–46.

²⁶ Ricky Ivan Kristian Sitorus and Yusak Tanasyah, "Pendampingan Peserta Didik Dalam Pendidikan Agama Kristen Untuk Meningkatkan Motivasi Belajar Di Sekolah Dasar Benih Pengharapan Lembang Jawa Barat," *SERVIRE: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 3, no. 1 (2023): 47–58.

²⁷ Pello, "Teknologi dan Motivasi Belajar," 87–102.

²⁸ Maranatha and Tandana, "Digital Faith Formation," 41–56.

and pedagogical discernment. Consequently, educators must critically evaluate digital tools before integrating them into children's spiritual formation.

A fourth finding pertains to the specific digital tools and strategies that can enhance children's spiritual formation. Simanungkali et al. demonstrated that ice breaking strategies significantly increase student learning interest in CRE, with a correlation coefficient of 0.587 and a determination coefficient of 34.4%.²⁹ Their research revealed that digital and interactive activities, such as clapping patterns, singing songs, and playing games, effectively address student boredom and fatigue. Anggreni et al. further demonstrated that problem-based learning supported by digital resources effectively improves student learning interest in CRE.³⁰ These findings indicate that when thoughtfully integrated, digital tools can support rather than undermine the holistic goals of children's spiritual formation. Therefore, digital integration should be guided by pedagogical and theological intentionality rather than technological novelty alone.

DISCUSSION

Teacher Exemplarity as the Foundation of Character Formation

The findings on teacher exemplarity align with broader scholarship on the role of modeling in character formation. Masarrang and Bulan argue that teachers who embody Christ-like virtues create environments where character formation can occur naturally.³¹ This finding aligns with social learning theory, which emphasizes that individuals learn by observing and imitating models.³² However, the study also reveals that effective character formation requires more than mere imitation; it involves intentional pedagogical strategies that create opportunities for practice, reflection, and internalization. This suggests that CRE teachers must be both models of virtue and skilled educators who can design learning experiences that facilitate character development. Thus, teacher training must integrate both spiritual formation and pedagogical competence.

However, some scholars raise concerns about the potential limitations of relying solely on teacher exemplarity. Nababan and Naibaho caution that while teacher modeling is

²⁹ Siltuanus Simanungkali et al., "The Influence of Ice Breaking Strategy on Student Learning Interest in Christian Religious Education," *Journal of Religious and Socio-Cultural* 7, no. 1 (2026): 21–48.

³⁰ Intan Anggreni et al., "Upaya Meningkatkan Minat Belajar Siswa Kelas 8C Dalam Pendidikan Agama Kristen Melalui Strategi Pembelajaran Berbasis Masalah Di Sekolah Menengah Pertama BOPKRI 3 Yogyakarta," *SERVIRE: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 4, no. 1 (2024): 49–62.

³¹ Masarrang and Bulan, "Eksistensi Guru Sekolah Minggu," 68–85.

³² Nababan and Naibaho, "Kepribadian Guru," 61–83.

important, it is not sufficient for character formation; students also need opportunities to practice virtues and receive feedback on their behavior.³³ Their research revealed that students who are taught moral principles without opportunities for practice are less likely to internalize these values. This finding suggests that character formation requires a balanced approach that combines modeling, instruction, and practice. Therefore, CRE teachers must design learning experiences that incorporate all three elements to promote lasting character change.

The findings also underscore the importance of teacher authority and its role in character formation. Sihombing and Naibaho demonstrate that teachers who exhibit strong moral character, consistency, and compassion contribute significantly to students' emotional intelligence, discipline, and motivation to learn.³⁴ Their research revealed that teacher authority, when exercised with love and respect, creates a positive learning environment that supports character formation. This finding suggests that teacher authority is not about control but about creating conditions where students feel safe, valued, and motivated to grow. Therefore, teacher training must address the development of healthy authority and relational skills that foster trust and respect.

The study's findings on the challenges teachers face in maintaining exemplary character also merit attention. Christia et al. document how teachers in GKI Menining faced significant challenges, including limited resources and lack of parental support, yet continued to model Christ-like behavior for their students.³⁵ The research emphasized that teacher exemplarity is not merely a matter of individual effort but requires institutional and community support. Tafetin et al. further demonstrate that effective teacher leadership in children's ministry involves not only personal spiritual maturity but also the ability to create supportive environments for character formation.³⁶ These findings suggest that fostering teacher exemplarity requires a holistic approach that addresses both personal and institutional dimensions of teacher development. Therefore, churches and schools must invest in the spiritual and professional development of CRE teachers.

The synthesis of these findings points toward a comprehensive model of teacher exemplarity that integrates personal spiritual maturity, pedagogical competence, and institutional support. This model recognizes that character formation is a holistic process that engages cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of learning. It also acknowledges that

³³ Nababan and Naibaho, "Kepribadian Guru," 61–83

³⁴ Sihombing and Naibaho, "Wibawa Guru," 47–60.

³⁵ Christia et al., "Dampak Keteladanan Guru," 1–11.

³⁶ Tafetin, Maranatha, and Tandana, "Penerapan Kepemimpinan," 129–139.

teacher exemplarity occurs within a network of relationships and contexts, requiring intentional coordination and collaboration. By adopting this holistic model, CRE can more effectively fulfill its mission of forming children who embody the character of Christ in their daily lives. This model also provides a framework for evaluating and improving teacher development programs in diverse contexts. Ultimately, such an approach aligns with the biblical mandate to "train up a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6).

Collaborative Partnerships between Home, Church, and School

The findings on parental and family collaboration highlight the critical role of partnerships between home, church, and school in children's faith formation. Santoso et al. emphasize that parents bear primary responsibility for character formation, with the family serving as the first and most influential context for moral development.³⁷ This finding challenges the tendency to view character formation as solely the responsibility of schools or churches. Instead, effective character formation requires a coordinated approach that integrates the efforts of home, school, and church. Such collaboration ensures that the values taught in CRE are reinforced across different contexts, increasing the likelihood that they will be internalized and lived out. Therefore, CRE must intentionally build partnerships with families and congregations.

However, the findings also reveal significant challenges to collaborative faith formation in contemporary contexts. Rismawati et al. document how children from broken families often experience trauma and disrupted development, requiring intentional intervention through CRE.³⁸ Santoso et al. similarly note that many parents lack the knowledge or capacity to fulfill their role in character formation.³⁹ These findings suggest that CRE must not assume that all students come from supportive family environments. Instead, CRE must be prepared to address the effects of family breakdown, provide compensatory support, and work to strengthen families where possible. This requires CRE teachers to have skills in counseling, pastoral care, and family engagement. Without such skills, CRE's efforts at character formation may be significantly hindered.

The study's findings on the specific practices that characterize effective parental involvement also have significant implications for CRE practice. Wahyuni and Kadang

³⁷ Santoso, Tan, and Sugiri, "Peranan Orang Tua," 64–78.

³⁸ Rismawati et al., "Pendidikan Agama Kristen," 131–149.

³⁹ Santoso, Tan, and Sugiri, "Peranan Orang Tua," 64–78.

demonstrate that the strongest indicator shaping congregational understanding of educating children is the teaching indicator, which encompasses both formal instruction and daily modeling of faith.⁴⁰ Their research revealed that parents who integrate faith into everyday life create environments where children naturally absorb spiritual values. This finding suggests that CRE must equip parents with the knowledge and skills they need to fulfill their role effectively. Therefore, churches should provide resources, training, and support for parents to engage in faith formation at home, thereby reinforcing the lessons taught in Sunday School.

The research also underscores the importance of collaboration between Sunday School and families in children's spiritual formation. Masarrang and Bulan demonstrate that effective character formation occurs when teachers and parents work together to reinforce shared values and provide consistent guidance.⁴¹ Their research revealed that children benefit most when the values taught in CRE are reinforced at home and in the church community. Tafetin et al. further demonstrate that effective children's ministry involves collaboration between teachers, parents, and church leaders to create a holistic environment for spiritual formation.⁴² These findings indicate that faith formation is most effective when it occurs within a network of supportive relationships spanning home, school, and church. Therefore, CRE must intentionally foster collaboration across these spheres.

The synthesis of these findings points toward a comprehensive model of collaborative faith formation that integrates the efforts of home, church, and school. This model recognizes that character and faith formation is a holistic process that requires consistent reinforcement across multiple contexts. It also acknowledges that parents, teachers, and church leaders each have unique roles and responsibilities in this process, requiring intentional coordination and communication. By adopting this holistic model, CRE can more effectively fulfill its mission of forming children who embody the character of Christ in their daily lives. This model also provides a framework for evaluating and improving collaborative practices in diverse contexts. Ultimately, such an approach aligns with the biblical vision of the family and the church working together to nurture faith in the next generation.

Digital Transformation and the Future of Children's Faith Formation

The findings on digital transformation reveal both promising opportunities and significant challenges for children's faith formation in contemporary contexts. Pello

⁴⁰ Wahyuni and Kadang, "Mendidik Anak," 122–143.

⁴¹ Masarrang and Bulan, "Eksistensi Guru Sekolah Minggu," 68–85.

⁴² Tafetin, Maranatha, and Tandana, "Penerapan Kepemimpinan," 129–139.

demonstrates that digital tools can enhance student learning motivation and engagement in CRE when integrated purposefully.⁴³ This finding has particular significance for Indonesia, where geographical dispersion and resource constraints often limit educational access. However, the study also cautions that digital tools must be integrated with attention to pedagogical and theological considerations. This suggests that effective digital faith formation requires not merely technological competence but also theological discernment about how digital media can serve the purposes of spiritual formation. Therefore, digital integration must be guided by clear educational and spiritual goals.

The research also highlights the risk of superficial spirituality in digital environments. Maranatha and Tandana caution that digital media can encourage shallow engagement if not guided by intentional pedagogical and spiritual practices.⁴⁴ This concern aligns with broader critiques of digital culture, which warn that technology can commodify relationships and diminish spiritual depth.⁴⁵ These findings suggest that CRE must intentionally cultivate practices of contemplation, relational engagement, and ethical discernment in digital contexts. Without such intentionality, digital tools may undermine rather than support the formation of authentic faith. Consequently, digital pedagogy must be accompanied by spiritual disciplines that foster depth and authenticity.

The study's findings on the role of teachers in digital faith formation are particularly significant for children's ministry. Bulan and Simangunsong emphasize that teachers must model responsible digital citizenship and guide students toward critical engagement with digital content.⁴⁶ Tafetin et al. demonstrate that effective teacher leadership in digital contexts involves spiritual discernment, moral integrity, and technological competence.⁴⁷ These findings suggest that digital transformation requires a reconceptualization of teacher roles and responsibilities. Teachers are no longer merely transmitters of knowledge but facilitators of learning, spiritual mentors, and ethical guides in digital environments. This expanded role demands ongoing professional development and spiritual formation.

However, the findings also reveal significant challenges to digital faith formation that must be addressed. Pello documents how limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and

⁴³ Pello, "Teknologi dan Motivasi Belajar," 87–102.

⁴⁴ Maranatha and Tandana, "Digital Faith Formation," 41–56.

⁴⁵ Pello, "Teknologi dan Motivasi Belajar," 87–102.

⁴⁶ Susanti Embong Bulan and Amran Simangunsong, "Click for Tolerance: The Transformation of Christian Religious Education through Digital Media in Fostering Inclusive Attitudes in Indonesia," *MODERATE: Journal of Religious, Education, and Social* 3, no. 1 (2025): 1–18.

⁴⁷ Tafetin, Maranatha, and Tandana, "Penerapan Kepemimpinan," 129–139.

insufficient teacher training create barriers to effective digital integration.⁴⁸ These challenges are particularly acute in rural and under-resourced areas, potentially exacerbating educational inequalities. Addressing these challenges requires not only technical solutions but also systemic investments in infrastructure, teacher training, and curriculum development. Without such investments, the promise of digital transformation may remain unrealized for many communities. Therefore, policymakers and church leaders must prioritize equitable access to digital resources for children's faith formation.

The synthesis of these findings points toward a model of digital faith formation that integrates technology, theology, and pedagogy. This model recognizes that digital tools are not neutral instruments but shape how faith is learned, expressed, and lived. It emphasizes the importance of intentional pedagogical design, theological reflection, and ethical discernment in digital contexts. It also acknowledges the need for ongoing support and training for teachers, as well as systemic investments in infrastructure and resources. By adopting this model, CRE can harness the potential of digital transformation while preserving the depth, authenticity, and relational character of children's faith formation. Ultimately, this model demonstrates that technology can serve as a medium of grace when guided by theological and pedagogical wisdom.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the formation of children's character and faith through Christian Religious Education involves collaborative processes across three interconnected dimensions: teacher exemplarity, parental and family collaboration, and Sunday School pedagogy in the digital era. Regarding teacher exemplarity, the findings reveal that teachers who embody Christ-like virtues and exercise healthy authority significantly influence children's character development. Concerning parental collaboration, the research shows that parents bear primary responsibility for faith formation, and their involvement is most effective when characterized by consistency, intentionality, and integration of faith into daily life. With respect to Sunday School pedagogy and digital transformation, the study finds that while digital tools can expand access and enhance engagement, they also pose risks to spiritual depth that require intentional theological and pedagogical responses. These findings collectively demonstrate that children's character and faith formation is most effective when all three

⁴⁸ Pello, "Teknologi dan Motivasi Belajar," 87–102.

dimensions are addressed in an integrated and holistic manner. Thus, fragmentation in approach diminishes the overall effectiveness of CRE for children.

The implications of this study are significant for educators, parents, and church leaders seeking to enhance children's character and faith formation in contemporary Indonesia. For educators, the findings suggest the need for pedagogical approaches that integrate exemplarity, collaboration, and digital competence, preparing teachers to navigate the complexities of contemporary children's ministry. For parents, the research underscores the importance of their active involvement in faith formation and the need for support from the church community. For church leaders, the study highlights the need for investments in teacher development, family ministry, and digital infrastructure that reflect the collaborative nature of children's spiritual formation. However, the study also acknowledges limitations, including its reliance on literature review rather than empirical data and its focus on Indonesian contexts, which may limit generalizability. Future research should include empirical studies that examine the implementation of collaborative CRE models for children, comparative studies across different contexts, and longitudinal research that tracks the long-term impact of CRE on character and faith formation. Such research would further strengthen the evidence base for CRE's transformative role in children's lives.

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