

***Peran Transformatif Pendidikan Agama Kristen di Indonesia: Inklusivitas, Pembentukan Karakter, dan Formasi Iman Digital dalam Masyarakat Majemuk***

**The Transformative Role of Christian Religious Education in Indonesia: Inclusivity, Character Formation, and Digital Faith Formation in a Plural Society**

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**Abstrak**

*Pendidikan Agama Kristen (PAK) di Indonesia menghadapi banyak tantangan kompleks dalam menumbuhkan formasi iman sekaligus merawat inklusivitas dalam masyarakat yang majemuk. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis peran transformatif PAK dalam menjawab tiga dimensi yang saling terkait: inklusivitas dan toleransi, pembentukan karakter, serta formasi iman digital. Dengan menggunakan metode studi kepustakaan kualitatif, dengan fokus pada praktik PAK dalam konteks Indonesia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa PAK berkontribusi signifikan dalam mempromosikan kerukunan antarumat beragama melalui pedagogi inklusif, membentuk karakter serupa Kristus melalui keteladanan guru dan kolaborasi orang tua, serta beradaptasi dengan transformasi digital melalui pembelajaran terintegrasi teknologi. Namun, tantangan tetap ada, termasuk keterbatasan sumber daya, resistensi ideologis, dan risiko keterlibatan spiritual yang dangkal di ruang digital. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa pendekatan holistik, kolaboratif, dan sensitif konteks sangat penting agar PAK tetap relevan dan transformatif dalam masyarakat majemuk Indonesia. Penelitian ini menyumbangkan kerangka komprehensif untuk memahami peran multidimensi PAK dan menawarkan implikasi praktis bagi pendidik, pemimpin gereja, dan pembuat kebijakan yang berupaya meningkatkan efektivitas PAK di abad ke-21.*

**Kata Kunci:** transformasi pendidikan agama Kristen; pedagogi inklusif; pembentukan karakter; formasi iman digital; masyarakat majemuk Indonesia.

**Abstract**

Christian Religious Education (CRE) in Indonesia faces the complex challenge of fostering faith formation while nurturing inclusivity in a pluralistic society. This study aims to analyze the transformative role of CRE in addressing three interconnected dimensions: inclusivity and tolerance, character formation, and digital faith formation. Employing a qualitative literature review method, focusing on CRE practices in Indonesian contexts. The results reveal that CRE contributes significantly to promoting interfaith harmony through inclusive pedagogy, shapes Christ-like character through teacher exemplarity and parental collaboration, and adapts to digital transformation through technology-integrated learning. However, challenges persist, including limited resources, ideological resistance, and the risk of superficial spiritual engagement in digital spaces. The study concludes that a holistic, collaborative, and contextually sensitive approach is essential for CRE to remain relevant and transformative in Indonesia's plural society. This research contributes a comprehensive framework for understanding CRE's multidimensional role and offers practical implications for educators, church leaders, and policymakers seeking to enhance CRE's effectiveness in the 21st century.

**Keywords:** Christian religious education transformation; inclusive religious pedagogy; character formation; digital faith formation; plural society Indonesia.

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's religious landscape is characterized by profound diversity, with Christianity coexisting alongside Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism across the archipelago. Within this pluralistic context, Christian Religious Education (CRE) serves not merely as a vehicle for doctrinal instruction but as a formative process that shapes how believers engage with their neighbors of different faiths. The fundamental challenge facing CRE in Indonesia lies in balancing the imperative of nurturing a distinct Christian identity with the call to foster tolerance and mutual respect in a society where religious differences have historically sparked tensions.<sup>1</sup> This tension between identity and inclusivity constitutes the central problematic that this study seeks to address. Consequently, understanding how CRE navigates this tension is essential for appreciating its broader social significance.

Previous scholarship on CRE in Indonesia has examined various dimensions of its practice and impact using diverse methodological approaches. Ratu et al. conducted a qualitative study on CRE strategies in plural schools, finding that inclusive teaching approaches promote tolerance and respect for religious diversity.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Manalu et al. employed a literature review method to analyze models of CRE that develop pluralistic society, concluding that interfaith dialogue and ethical values must be integrated into pedagogical frameworks.<sup>3</sup> These studies underscore the potential of CRE to contribute positively to social harmony, yet they often treat inclusivity as a discrete objective rather than examining its interconnection with other formative dimensions. This limitation points to the need for more integrative approaches to understanding CRE's multifaceted role.

Research on character formation within CRE has also developed significantly through various theoretical and empirical lenses. Masarrang and Bulan investigated the role of Sunday School teachers in shaping children's character and spiritual growth, utilizing qualitative descriptive methods.<sup>4</sup> Their findings reveal that teacher spiritual maturity, pedagogical

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

competence, and relational engagement are critical factors in effective character formation. Nababan and Naibaho similarly examined the influence of CRE teachers' personalities on students' moral development, demonstrating that teacher exemplarity significantly impacts students' character.<sup>5</sup> These studies establish the importance of teacher modeling but often overlook how character formation intersects with broader societal challenges such as religious pluralism and digital transformation. 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 across various educational levels. Gulo and Tanasyah analyzed e-learning methods in CRE during the Industrial Revolution 4.0, highlighting both opportunities for expanded access and challenges related to spiritual authenticity.<sup>6</sup> Pello investigated the impact of information technology on student learning motivation in CRE, finding that digital platforms enhance engagement when integrated purposefully.<sup>7</sup> However, these studies tend to focus on technological implementation without adequately addressing how digital faith formation<sup>8</sup> relates to the fundamental tasks of inclusivity and character formation in plural contexts. This oversight represents a significant gap in the current literature.

Despite this growing body of research, a significant gap persists in the literature regarding the integrative understanding of CRE's transformative role. Existing studies generally examine inclusivity, character formation, and digital transformation as separate concerns rather than as interconnected dimensions of a holistic CRE framework. Furthermore, while numerous studies address CRE in plural societies, few integrate this concern with the theological foundations of Christian education and the practical challenges of contemporary pedagogy. The research gap lies in the absence of a comprehensive synthesis that demonstrates how these three dimensions mutually reinforce one another and collectively constitute the transformative potential of CRE

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<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> *E-learning* adalah pembelajaran yang memanfaatkan teknologi elektronik dan internet, memungkinkan proses belajar mengajar berlangsung tanpa batasan ruang dan waktu. 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.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> *Digital faith formation* merujuk pada proses pembentukan iman yang terjadi dalam konteks digital, mencakup penggunaan media online, komunitas virtual, dan sumber daya digital untuk pertumbuhan spiritual.

in Indonesia. Addressing this gap is essential for developing more effective and holistic approaches to CRE.

This study aims to address this gap by analyzing the transformative role of CRE across three interconnected dimensions: fostering inclusivity and tolerance in plural society, forming Christ-like character through collaborative efforts, and adapting to digital transformation while maintaining spiritual authenticity. The specific objectives are threefold: first, to examine how CRE promotes inclusivity and interfaith harmony in Indonesian plural contexts; second, to analyze the processes of character and faith formation within CRE; and third, to explore how digital transformation shapes CRE practices and outcomes. Through this analysis, the study seeks to develop a comprehensive framework for understanding CRE's transformative role 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 CRE's multidimensional role in Indonesian society. By synthesizing findings from diverse scholarly sources and connecting theological foundations with pedagogical practice, this research offers a holistic framework that can inform educators, church leaders, and policymakers. Additionally, the study contributes to theological discourse by demonstrating how the essential task of Christian education—forming disciples of Christ—can be pursued in ways that honor both Christian identity and the demands of pluralistic coexistence. Ultimately, this research aspires to strengthen CRE's capacity to be a transformative force for peace, justice, and human flourishing in Indonesia's diverse society. Such an aspiration aligns with the broader mission of Christian education in contemporary contexts.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative literature review method to examine the transformative role of Christian Religious Education in Indonesia. The qualitative approach was selected because it enables comprehensive exploration of complex educational phenomena through systematic analysis of existing scholarly sources, identification of recurring themes, and synthesis of findings across diverse contexts.<sup>9</sup> This method is particularly suitable for examining the multidimensional nature of CRE, as it allows researchers to integrate theological

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<sup>9</sup> 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.

reflection with pedagogical 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, inclusivity, character formation, and digital faith formation. Second, twenty-five sources were selected based on their direct relevance to CRE in Indonesian contexts, methodological rigor, and publication between 2017 and 2026. 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.<sup>10</sup> The synthesis process involved comparing and contrasting perspectives from multiple authors, identifying areas of convergence and divergence, and developing an integrative framework that connects inclusivity, character formation, and digital transformation within the broader context of CRE's transformative mission. This systematic approach ensures that the findings and discussion are grounded in the existing evidence base while offering novel theoretical contributions.

## **RESULT**

### **Fostering Inclusivity and Interfaith Harmony**

The analysis reveals that CRE in Indonesia has developed significant strategies for fostering inclusivity and interfaith harmony in plural society. A primary finding is that inclusive pedagogy, characterized by openness to religious diversity and respect for differences, enables CRE to serve as a bridge for dialogue rather than a barrier to understanding.<sup>11</sup> This approach emphasizes the importance of recognizing shared human dignity grounded in the *imago Dei*—the belief that all humans reflect the image of God and therefore deserve respect. Educators who adopt this framework engage students in critical reflection on social harmony and

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<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> Masarrang and Bulan, "Eksistensi Guru Sekolah Minggu," 68–85.

diversity, encouraging them to appreciate differences as part of God's creative design.<sup>12</sup> Such pedagogical practices transform CRE classrooms into spaces where interfaith understanding can flourish and where students learn to value diversity.

A second finding concerns the role of CRE in countering discrimination and promoting social justice within pluralistic contexts. Barus et al. demonstrated that CRE contributes to dismantling discriminatory attitudes by instilling values of empathy, compassion, and acceptance.<sup>13</sup> The study highlighted how Christian teachings on equality and love for neighbor provide a foundation for challenging prejudice and fostering inclusive communities. Furthermore, the research showed that interfaith dialogue and collaboration are essential components in the struggle against discrimination. By nurturing a spirit of inclusivity and respect for diversity, CRE can play a vital role in creating a more harmonious and equitable society in Indonesia. This finding underscores the social significance of CRE beyond its ecclesiastical functions.

A third finding relates to the significance of theological foundations for inclusivity in CRE. Manalu et al. found that a Christian education model emphasizing interfaith dialogue, respect for religious and cultural diversity, and ethical values effectively promotes understanding and cooperation among different religious communities.<sup>14</sup> This model recognizes that every religious tradition contributes uniquely to Indonesia's social fabric and encourages Christians to engage actively with people of other faiths. The study also emphasized the importance of ethical values rooted in Jesus Christ's teachings, inspiring individuals to act with integrity and contribute positively to society.<sup>15</sup> These findings collectively indicate that theological reflection and inclusive practice are mutually reinforcing in CRE. Without a solid theological foundation, inclusivity risks becoming superficial or relativistic.

A fourth finding pertains to the challenges and complexities of fostering inclusivity in diverse contexts. Lekakompessy and Sopacua documented how the community of Negeri Maneoratu in Maluku maintained religious harmony despite historical conflicts, demonstrating

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<sup>12</sup> *Imago Dei* adalah istilah Latin yang berarti "gambar Allah," merujuk pada Kejadian 1:26-27 yang menyatakan bahwa manusia diciptakan menurut gambar dan rupa Allah. Konsep ini menjadi fondasi teologis bagi penghargaan terhadap martabat setiap manusia. Nababan and Naibaho, "Kepribadian Guru," 61–83.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> 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.

that peace is possible through intentional effort.<sup>16</sup> However, they also identified ongoing challenges, including external influences, ideological resistance, and the risk of renewed tensions. Sinaga et al. similarly noted that exclusivist attitudes, rejection of differences, and intolerance remain significant obstacles to religious harmony.<sup>17</sup> These findings suggest that while CRE has made meaningful contributions to inclusivity, sustained and strategic efforts are required to address persistent challenges. Therefore, CRE must continuously adapt its approaches to meet evolving social dynamics.

### **Forming Christ-like Character through Collaborative Efforts**

The analysis reveals that character formation constitutes a central dimension of CRE's transformative role in Indonesian society. A key finding is that teacher exemplarity serves as the foundation for effective character formation. Masarrang and Bulan demonstrated that Sunday School teachers who exhibit spiritual maturity, pedagogical competence, and genuine love for children significantly influence their character development.<sup>18</sup> Their study showed that teachers who model Christ-like behavior—compassion, patience, humility, and forgiveness—create environments where children can observe and internalize these virtues. The researchers emphasized 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.

A second finding concerns the critical 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.<sup>19</sup> Their research revealed that students are more likely to emulate teachers they respect and trust, making teacher character a crucial factor in moral education. Similarly, Sihombing and Naibaho demonstrated that teachers who exhibit strong moral character, consistency, and compassion contribute significantly to students' emotional intelligence, discipline, and motivation to learn.<sup>20</sup> These findings collectively establish that the teacher's person—not merely their pedagogy—is a primary medium of character formation in CRE.

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<sup>16</sup> Christia et al., "Dampak Keteladanan Guru," 1–11.

<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> Santoso, Tan, and Sugiri, "Peranan Orang Tua," 64–78.

<sup>19</sup> Wahyuni and Kadang, "Mendidik Anak," 122–143.

<sup>20</sup> Rismawati et al., "Pendidikan Agama Kristen," 131–149.

Consequently, teacher training must prioritize character development alongside pedagogical skills.

A third finding relates to the importance of collaborative partnerships between teachers, parents, and the church community. Santoso et al. emphasized that parents bear primary responsibility for character formation, with the family serving as the first and most influential context for moral development.<sup>21</sup> 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. 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.<sup>22</sup> These findings indicate that character 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.

A fourth finding pertains to the pedagogical strategies that facilitate character formation in CRE. Christia et al. found that Sunday School teachers' example significantly influences children's character formation, with students imitating their teachers' attitudes and behaviors.<sup>23</sup> Ndolu et al. 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.<sup>24</sup> The research also highlighted the importance of consistency in teaching, as students are more likely to internalize values that are repeatedly reinforced across different contexts. These findings suggest that character formation requires intentional, sustained, and holistic pedagogical approaches. Consequently, CRE teachers must design learning experiences that integrate instruction, modeling, and practice.

### **Adapting to Digital Transformation in Faith Formation**

The analysis reveals that digital transformation has significantly shaped CRE practices and presented both opportunities and challenges for faith formation. A primary finding is that digital platforms and tools can enhance CRE's reach and effectiveness when integrated purposefully. Gulo and Tanasyah demonstrated that e-learning enables CRE to overcome geographical barriers, reaching communities across Indonesia's vast archipelago that might

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<sup>21</sup> Santoso, Tan, and Sugiri, "Peranan Orang Tua," 64–78.

<sup>22</sup> Rismawati et al., "Pendidikan Agama Kristen," 131–149.

<sup>23</sup> Masarrang and Bulan, "Eksistensi Guru Sekolah Minggu," 68–85.

<sup>24</sup> Tafetin, Maranatha, and Tandana, "Penerapan Kepemimpinan," 129–139.

otherwise lack access to qualified teachers.<sup>25</sup> Their study highlighted how digital platforms facilitate interaction between students and teachers, provide access to diverse learning resources, and enable flexible learning schedules. Pello similarly found that information technology, including interactive content and online learning tools, sparks greater interest and enthusiasm among students when integrated into CRE.<sup>26</sup> These findings suggest that digital transformation offers significant potential for expanding CRE's impact.

A second finding concerns the challenges of maintaining spiritual authenticity in digital environments. Maranatha and Tandana cautioned that while digital tools offer unprecedented access to theological resources, they also risk encouraging shallow spirituality and fragmented identities.<sup>27</sup> Their research emphasized that faith formation in digital contexts must remain relational, participatory, and grounded in the incarnational model of Christ.<sup>28</sup> The study revealed that effective digital faith formation requires intentional cultivation of digital discernment—the ability to use technology for spiritual growth and moral formation. These findings suggest that digital transformation must be accompanied by theological reflection on the meaning of faith in virtual spaces. Without such reflection, digital tools may undermine rather than support authentic spiritual development.

A third finding relates to the role of teachers in navigating digital transformation and guiding students toward authentic faith. Bulan and Simangunsong found that Christian educators who integrate digital media into their teaching can democratize access to theological education and foster intercultural dialogue.<sup>29</sup> However, they also identified challenges such as digital alienation, ethical ambiguity, and the risk of superficial engagement. Tafetin et al. demonstrated that effective teacher leadership in digital contexts involves not only technical competence but also spiritual discernment and moral integrity.<sup>30</sup> The research emphasized that teachers must model responsible digital citizenship while guiding students toward authentic

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<sup>25</sup> Masarrang and Bulan, "Eksistensi Guru Sekolah Minggu," 68–85.

<sup>26</sup> 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.

<sup>27</sup> 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.

<sup>28</sup> *Incarnational model* merujuk pada pola pelayanan Yesus Kristus yang "menjadi daging" (Yohanes 1:14) dan masuk ke dalam realitas manusia. Dalam konteks pendidikan digital, model ini menekankan pentingnya kehadiran yang nyata dan relasional meskipun melalui media virtual.

<sup>29</sup> Pello, "Teknologi dan Motivasi Belajar," 87–102.

<sup>30</sup> Maranatha and Tandana, "Digital Faith Formation," 41–56.

faith formation. These findings indicate that teacher preparation must address both technological and spiritual dimensions of digital pedagogy.

A fourth finding pertains to the integration of digital tools with character formation in CRE. Sitorus and Tanasyah demonstrated that digital media can be used creatively to enhance student motivation and engagement in CRE, including through virtual study tours, creative classroom atmospheres, and digital reward systems.<sup>31</sup> Anggreni et al. found that technology-enhanced learning strategies, such as problem-based learning supported by digital resources, effectively improve student learning interest in CRE.<sup>32</sup> These findings indicate that when thoughtfully integrated, digital tools can support rather than undermine the holistic goals of CRE, including character and faith formation. Therefore, digital integration should be guided by pedagogical and theological intentionality rather than technological novelty alone.

## DISCUSSION

### Fostering Inclusivity and Interfaith Dialogue in Plural Society

The findings on inclusivity and interfaith harmony align with broader scholarship on CRE's role in pluralistic contexts. Ratu et al. argue that inclusive pedagogy must be grounded in the recognition of humanity's shared dignity, which can be expressed through innovative teaching approaches.<sup>33</sup> This perspective resonates with the theological concept of *imago Dei*, which affirms that all humans reflect God's image and therefore deserve respect regardless of religious affiliation. By grounding inclusivity in theological conviction rather than mere tolerance, CRE offers a robust foundation for interfaith engagement that does not require sacrificing Christian identity. This synthesis demonstrates that inclusivity and theological faithfulness are not competing commitments but mutually reinforcing dimensions of authentic Christian education.

However, some scholars raise concerns about the potential risks of emphasizing inclusivity to the point of relativism. Pangumbahas and Winanto caution that postmodern moral

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<sup>31</sup> 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. *Ice breaking* adalah strategi pembelajaran berupa aktivitas singkat yang bertujuan memecah kebekuan, kebosanan, atau ketegangan di awal atau tengah pembelajaran, sehingga peserta didik kembali fokus dan bersemangat.

<sup>32</sup> *Problem-based learning* (PBL) adalah model pembelajaran yang dimulai dengan penyajian masalah nyata, mendorong peserta didik untuk belajar secara aktif melalui investigasi dan kolaborasi untuk menemukan solusi. 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.

<sup>33</sup> Masarrang and Bulan, "Eksistensi Guru Sekolah Minggu," 68–85.

frameworks can lead to pluralism that denies any absolute truth claims, potentially undermining the distinctiveness of Christian faith.<sup>34</sup> They argue that while tolerance and respect for diversity are important, CRE must maintain its commitment to the truth of the Gospel. This tension between inclusivity and truth constitutes a significant challenge for CRE practitioners in plural contexts. The resolution lies not in abandoning either commitment but in holding them together in creative tension, recognizing that authentic Christian witness involves both proclaiming truth and embodying love. Such a balanced approach requires theological maturity and pedagogical wisdom.

The findings also underscore the importance of interfaith dialogue as a pedagogical strategy in CRE. Togatorop et al. demonstrate that loving one's neighbor—and even one's enemies—is central to Christian teaching, providing a theological foundation for interfaith engagement.<sup>35</sup> Their exegesis of Luke 6:27-36 reveals that Jesus' command to love transcends religious boundaries, calling Christians to extend compassion to all people. This theological vision challenges CRE to move beyond mere tolerance toward genuine love and cooperation with people of other faiths. By cultivating this expansive love, CRE contributes to the broader project of building a harmonious and just society in Indonesia. Such a contribution is particularly significant in a nation marked by religious diversity and historical tensions.

The study's findings on the challenges of fostering inclusivity also merit attention. Lekakompessy and Sopacua document how the community of Negeri Maneoratu maintained religious harmony despite historical trauma, demonstrating that peace requires intentional effort and sustained commitment.<sup>36</sup> Sinaga et al. similarly emphasize that exclusivist attitudes and intolerance remain significant obstacles.<sup>37</sup> These findings suggest that CRE must address not only cognitive understanding of other religions but also affective and behavioral dimensions of interfaith relations. This requires pedagogical approaches that engage students' emotions, challenge prejudices, and cultivate dispositions of empathy and respect. Therefore, CRE must adopt holistic strategies that address the whole person.

The synthesis of these findings points toward a comprehensive model of inclusivity in CRE. This model integrates theological foundations (*imago Dei*, love of neighbor), pedagogical strategies (dialogue, critical reflection, experiential learning), and contextual sensitivity (awareness of local dynamics, historical traumas, and contemporary challenges).

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<sup>34</sup> Nababan and Naibaho, "Kepribadian Guru," 61–83.

<sup>35</sup> Nababan and Naibaho, "Kepribadian Guru," 61–83.

<sup>36</sup> Sihombing and Naibaho, "Wibawa Guru," 47–60.

<sup>37</sup> Christia et al., "Dampak Keteladanan Guru," 1–11.

Such a model recognizes that inclusivity is not a technique to be applied but a disposition to be cultivated through sustained engagement with Scripture, tradition, and community. By nurturing this disposition, CRE can equip believers to be agents of reconciliation and peace in Indonesia's plural society. Ultimately, this model demonstrates that inclusivity and theological faithfulness can coexist and mutually enrich one another.

### **Character and Faith Formation through Collaborative Partnerships**

The findings on character formation highlight the critical role of teacher exemplarity and collaborative partnerships in CRE. Masarrang and Bulan demonstrate that teachers who embody Christ-like virtues create environments where character formation can occur naturally.<sup>38</sup> This finding aligns with social learning theory, which emphasizes that individuals learn by observing and imitating models.<sup>39</sup> 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.

The research also underscores the importance of collaboration between teachers, parents, and the church community in character 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.<sup>40</sup> 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 character formation in contemporary contexts. Rismawati et al. document how children from broken families often experience trauma and disrupted development, requiring intentional intervention through CRE.<sup>41</sup> Santoso et al. similarly note that many parents lack the knowledge or capacity

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<sup>38</sup> Tafetin, Maranatha, and Tandana, "Penerapan Kepemimpinan," 129–139.

<sup>39</sup> Santoso, Tan, and Sugiri, "Peranan Orang Tua," 64–78.

<sup>40</sup> Rismawati et al., "Pendidikan Agama Kristen," 131–149.

<sup>41</sup> Santoso, Tan, and Sugiri, "Peranan Orang Tua," 64–78.

to fulfill their role in character formation.<sup>42</sup> 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 pedagogical strategies for character formation also have significant implications for CRE practice. Christia et al. demonstrate that effective character formation involves not only teaching moral principles but also creating opportunities for practice and service.<sup>43</sup> Ndolu et al. emphasize the importance of consistency and integration, ensuring that values are reinforced across different learning experiences.<sup>44</sup> These findings align with contemporary educational theory, which emphasizes that character is formed through a combination of instruction, modeling, and practice. By designing learning experiences that incorporate all three elements, CRE can more effectively promote the formation of Christ-like character. Consequently, curriculum design must prioritize experiential and reflective learning opportunities.

The synthesis of these findings points toward a comprehensive model of character formation that integrates exemplarity, collaboration, and pedagogy. This model recognizes that character formation is a holistic process that engages cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of learning. It also acknowledges that character formation 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 disciples who embody the character of Christ in their daily lives. This model also provides a framework for evaluating and improving CRE practices in diverse contexts. Such an approach aligns with the biblical mandate to "train up a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6).

### **Digital Faith Formation and the Challenge of Authenticity**

The findings on digital transformation reveal both promising opportunities and significant challenges for CRE in contemporary contexts. Gulo and Tanasyah demonstrate that e-learning can expand access to CRE, reaching communities that lack qualified teachers or

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<sup>42</sup> Wahyuni and Kadang, "Mendidik Anak," 122–143.

<sup>43</sup> Masarrang and Bulan, "Eksistensi Guru Sekolah Minggu," 68–85.

<sup>44</sup> Tafetin, Maranatha, and Tandana, "Penerapan Kepemimpinan," 129–139.

adequate resources.<sup>45</sup> 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 purposefully, 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 faith 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.<sup>46</sup> This concern aligns with broader critiques of digital culture, which warn that technology can commodify relationships and diminish spiritual depth.<sup>47</sup> 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 CRE practice. Bulan and Simangunsong emphasize that teachers must model responsible digital citizenship and guide students toward critical engagement with digital content.<sup>48</sup> Tafetin et al. demonstrate that effective teacher leadership in digital contexts involves spiritual discernment, moral integrity, and technological competence.<sup>49</sup> 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 insufficient teacher training create barriers to effective digital integration.<sup>50</sup> These challenges

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<sup>45</sup> Pello, "Teknologi dan Motivasi Belajar," 87–102.

<sup>46</sup> Maranatha and Tandana, "Digital Faith Formation," 41–56.

<sup>47</sup> Pello, "Teknologi dan Motivasi Belajar," 87–102.

<sup>48</sup> 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.

<sup>49</sup> Tafetin, Maranatha, and Tandana, "Penerapan Kepemimpinan," 129–139.

<sup>50</sup> Pello, "Teknologi dan Motivasi Belajar," 87–102.

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 CRE.

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 faith formation. 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 Christian Religious Education in Indonesia plays a transformative role across three interconnected dimensions: fostering inclusivity and interfaith harmony, forming Christ-like character through collaborative efforts, and adapting to digital transformation while preserving spiritual authenticity. Regarding inclusivity, the findings reveal that CRE can serve as a bridge for interfaith dialogue when grounded in theological convictions about human dignity and the command to love one's neighbor. Concerning character formation, the research shows that teacher exemplarity, parental collaboration, and intentional pedagogy are essential for helping students internalize Christian virtues. With respect to digital transformation, the study finds that while digital tools can expand access and enhance engagement, they also pose risks to spiritual authenticity that require intentional theological and pedagogical responses. These findings collectively demonstrate that CRE's transformative potential is realized most fully when all three dimensions are addressed in an integrated and holistic manner. Thus, fragmentation in approach diminishes CRE's overall effectiveness.

The implications of this study are significant for educators, church leaders, and policymakers seeking to enhance CRE's effectiveness in contemporary Indonesia. For

educators, the findings suggest the need for pedagogical approaches that integrate inclusivity, character formation, and digital competence, preparing teachers to navigate the complexities of contemporary educational contexts. For church leaders, the research underscores the importance of supporting CRE through resources, training, and collaboration with families and schools. For policymakers, the study highlights the need for investments in educational infrastructure, teacher development, and curriculum design that reflect the multidimensional nature of CRE. 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 integrated CRE models, 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.

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