Christian Values as the Foundation for Character Formation in Students in the Modern Era

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Abstract

Character formation has become a central focus of education, particularly in the modern era marked by complex moral and social challenges. Christian values—such as love, integrity, responsibility, and respect for others—play a crucial role as the foundational basis for shaping students' character. This study aims to analyse the application of Christian values in character development and their impact on students' personal, social, and spiritual lives. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, data were gathered through interviews, observation, and literature review. The findings reveal that the integration of Christian values in education—through moral-based curricula, the example set by teachers, and the presence of Christian communities—contributes significantly to the formation of students who are ethical, responsible, and possess integrity. Furthermore, these values empower students to act as agents of change within society. This study affirms the importance of value-based Christian education in cultivating morally grounded individuals who remain relevant in navigating the complexities of the modern era.

Keywords: Christian values, character formation, education, modern era, students.

INTRODUCTION

Character building is one of the important aspects of education. In the modern era marked by technological development, globalisation, and rapid social change, student character is one of the main concerns. In this context, education not only aims to develop intellectual abilities but also to shape individual morality and integrity. Christian values, rooted in the teachings of the Bible, offer a solid foundation for student character building (Halawa, Hestiningrum, and Iswahyudi 2021). However, the application of these values in the modern era faces various challenges, including the influence of secular culture, technology, and the dynamics of an increasingly pluralistic society.

Christian values include love, honesty, responsibility, humility, and forgiveness. These values play an important role in shaping students who have a strong character and are able to face the challenges of the times. As affirmed in Proverbs 22:6, 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and in his old age he will not depart from it.' However, in practice, the application of these values is often hindered by outside influences that contradict Christian principles.

In the modern era, students are faced with various challenges that can affect their character formation. One of the main challenges is the influence of digital media. According to a study, excessive use of digital media can lead to a decline in students' social and moral abilities (Twenge 2017). In addition, exposure to content that is not in line with Christian values can erode the moral principles taught in the family and school environment.

Another challenge is cultural and religious pluralism. In the context of an increasingly pluralistic society, students often encounter values that are different and even contradictory to Christian values. This can lead to internal conflicts within students, especially when they are trying to balance between the values taught in Christian homes or schools and the values they encounter in their social environment (Nieburh 1956). Therefore, it is important to instill Christian values as a solid and consistent foundation of student character building, regardless of external influences.

In addition, technological advances and globalisation have also had an impact on the education system. Modern education systems tend to emphasise academic achievement and technical skills, while character education is often a neglected priority. This is contrary to the main purpose of education in a Christian perspective, which is to form individuals who are

not only intellectually intelligent but also have high moral integrity (Smith 2009). Christian values-based education provides a balance between intellectual development and character building.

Christian educators have a great responsibility to make Christian values an integral part of the educational process. As stated by Arthur F. Holmes (2018), Education for Christians is a process of character formation, a process of becoming more Christ-like. Therefore, Christian schools need to integrate Christian values into the curriculum, teaching methods, and learning environment.

On the other hand, the application of Christian values also provides solutions to various moral challenges faced by students in the modern era. Values such as love and forgiveness, for example, can help students deal with interpersonal conflicts, while the value of responsibility can encourage them to make wise decisions. The cultivation of these values not only impacts students' lives at school but also their lives in society (Nainggolan 2011).

In the Indonesian context, the application of Christian values in student character building is also a challenge. As a country with a very diverse society, it is important to teach Christian values in a way that respects that diversity. This is in line with the principle in Romans 12:18, 'As far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.' Christianity-based character education in Indonesia should emphasise universal values that are relevant and acceptable to all, without compromising the tenets of the Christian faith (Omeri 2015).

Through the application of Christian values, character education can be an effective instrument in shaping students who are not only intellectually competent but also have high morality. However, this requires commitment from all parties, including educators, parents, and educational institutions, to make Christian values the main foundation in the learning process.

This research aims to explore Christian values that can be used as a foundation in student character building in the modern era, which is full of moral and ethical challenges. In this context, values such as love, integrity, and responsibility become very relevant to overcome the negative influences of globalisation, such as individualism and materialism. As stated by Noddings (2002), 'Character education must be grounded in moral and ethical principles that transcend cultural and temporal boundaries.' Therefore, this research seeks to bridge Christian values with the needs of character education in the modern era through a holistic and relevant approach.

In addition, this research also aims to analyse how Christian values can be practically applied in the education system to shape students' character with integrity and contribute positively to society. This research is based on the belief that Christian education serves not only to impart knowledge, but also to mould students' moral character. As stated by Palmer (2013), 'Education that fails to nurture the soul is incomplete and ineffective.' Thus, this study not only emphasises the importance of integrating Christian values in education but also provides recommendations for effective implementation in students' daily lives.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach to analyse Christian values as a foundation for student character building in the modern era. This approach aims to deeply understand how Christian values, such as love, integrity, and responsibility, can be applied in the education process to shape student character (Moleong 2014). Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with teachers, students, and Christian school leaders, as well as document analysis, such as curriculum and learning materials related to Christianity-based character education. In addition, observations of educational practices in

Christian schools were also made to obtain empirical data. The collected data were analysed thematically to identify patterns of applying Christian values in student character building (Sugyono 2019). This approach provides flexibility to explore participants' perspectives holistically, so that the research results are expected to provide comprehensive insights into the relevance and effectiveness of Christian values in the modern educational context (Raco and Semiawan 2010).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Christian values are moral and spiritual principles derived from the teachings of the Bible, aiming to guide humans in living a life in accordance with God's will. These values not only serve as personal guidelines but also have a significant impact on shaping the character of individuals, including students in the modern era.

1. Definition of Christian Values

Christian values can be defined as moral standards taken from the word of God and applied in daily life. Some of the main values taught in Christianity are love, truth, and humility. Firstly, love. In 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, love is described as being patient, generous, not envious, not proud, and not self-seeking. Apostle Paul emphasised that love is the foundation of all moral actions: "Love is patient; love is kind; it is not jealous. Love does not boast and is not arrogant" (1 Corinthians 13: 4). This love is at the core of the Christian life because it reflects the nature of God himself (1Jn 4:8) (Mangentang and Salurante 2021).

Secondly, Righteousness. Ephesians 4:25 emphasises the importance of living in truth: 'Therefore put away lying and speak truthfully to one another, for we are fellow members.' The value of truth teaches each individual to live honestly and transparently, both to God and fellow human beings. Truth is the foundation that keeps relationships between individuals healthy and harmonious (Tarigan, Widiastuti, and Sihombing 2022).

Thirdly, Humility. Philippians 2:3-4 teaches, "Not seeking your own interests or vain praises. Rather, let each one humbly consider others better than himself." Humility is an attitude that puts God's will above all else and respects others sincerely. It is a value that stands in stark contrast to the egocentric nature often found in modern culture.

1. Theological Basis of Christian Values in the Bible

Christian values have a strong theological basis in the Bible. Love, for example, comes from God's primary commandment: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart ... and your neighbour as yourself' (Matthew 22:37-39). Love of God and neighbour is at the heart of the law and the message of the prophets.

Righteousness has its theological roots in God's righteous nature (Ps 31:5). God calls His people to be witnesses of His righteousness in the world. Living in righteousness reflects God's justice and faithfulness. Humility is also demonstrated by Christ Himself, who 'humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross' (Phil 2:8). Christ is the ultimate example of humility that all believers should follow. These values, as taught in the Bible, lead believers to live in accordance with God's plan and will (Heward-Mills 2017).

2. Relevance of Christian Values in Character Building

Christian values are very relevant in shaping student character in the modern era, full of moral challenges. Love, truth, and humility play an important role in shaping individuals who have integrity, empathy, and social responsibility. Love teaches students to care for others and avoid behaviours that harm others. In the school community, love can be realised through mutual respect and cooperation. Truth helps students to build honest and trustworthy characters (Suratman and Sugiono 2023). In a modern era that is often marred by fake news and deception, truth is a very important value to maintain.

Humility trains students to respect the opinions of others and to be humble in the face of both success and failure. This value also helps to overcome egoism, which is often a barrier in social relationships.

By applying these Christian values, students can become individuals who not only excel academically but also have high morality and are able to make positive contributions to society. Christian values, such as love, truth, and humility, are an important foundation in the character building of students in the modern era. Their strong theological basis in the Bible provides a solid moral foundation for individuals to face the various challenges of the times (Rantung 2019). By integrating these values into daily life, students can develop into individuals who excel spiritually and socially and become role models for the surrounding community.

Student Character Building in the Modern Era
Definition and urgency of student character building

Student character building is an educational process that aims to build a personality that is moral, ethical, and has noble values in social life. Character education not only aims to form individuals who are intellectually intelligent, but also have noble character and attitudes that are in accordance with social and religious norms. As stated by Lickona (2009), 'Character education is the deliberate effort to cultivate virtue, which means character education is a conscious effort to cultivate virtue.

The importance of student character building is increasingly relevant given the times that bring various moral and social challenges. According to Megawangi (2007), character education serves as a foundation for creating a generation that is not only competent but also has integrity. Without strong character building, students will be vulnerable to negative influences from the environment, such as immoral behaviour and a lack of empathy towards others.

Characteristic of the Modern Era
1. **Globalisation and Technology**

The modern era is characterised by technological advances and globalisation that bring significant changes in various aspects of life. Technology, especially the internet, facilitates access to information, but also opens up opportunities for students to be exposed to negative content. 'Digital technology is a double-edged sword; it can be both beneficial and harmful depending on its use,' said McQuail (2010). Therefore, character education is very important to direct students in utilising technology wisely.

2. **Hedonism and Individualism**

Modernisation often encourages hedonistic and individualistic lifestyles. These values can weaken social solidarity and responsibility towards others. According to Fromm (2018), 'Modern society has transformed humans into consumers, valuing possessions over

connections.' In this context, student character building should be able to teach the values of togetherness and social care.

3. **Moral Crisis among Students**

The moral crisis among students is a serious challenge. Phenomena such as brawls, bullying, and disrespectful behaviour towards teachers reflect the lack of internalisation of moral values. According to a study by Narvaez (2008), 'Moral education is essential to address the ethical vacuum in today's youth.'

The Role of Character Education in Facing the Challenges of the Modern Era

Character education has a strategic role in facing the challenges of the modern era. With an integrated approach in the curriculum, character education can help students develop the ability to:

1. Critical Thinking and Wise Use of Technology. Teaching digital literacy and online etiquette is an important step to ensure students are able to utilise technology for good.

2. Strengthening Social Values. Character education can instill values such as co-operation, responsibility, and caring for others.

3. Fostering Strong Morality. Through character education, students are taught to understand and apply universal values, such as honesty, discipline, and empathy (Nuhamara 2018).

In conclusion, student character building in the modern era is a necessity that cannot be ignored. By providing comprehensive character education, schools can help students become morally resilient individuals who are able to face the challenges of the times.

Integration of Christian Values in Character Education

Character education is one of the most important aspects of the education system in various countries. In Indonesia, student character is one of the main focuses in learning. Character education aims to shape students' personalities who have good morality and behaviour in accordance with social, cultural, and religious values. In Christian-based schools, character education is often integrated with Christian values. The integration of Christian values in character education can be seen as an effort to shape students' personalities who are not only intellectually intelligent but also have Christian traits, such as love, honesty, humility, and forgiveness.

1. **Implementation of Christian Values in the School Curriculum**

One effective way to integrate Christian values in character education is to incorporate these values into the school curriculum. A curriculum that integrates Christian values with subject matter not only provides academic knowledge but also introduces students to the moral values held by the Christian faith. According to a study, a curriculum that integrates moral and spiritual values can help students develop a positive attitude towards life, others, and God.

The implementation of Christian values in the curriculum can be done in various ways, one of which is by including Christianity as one of the compulsory subjects. These lessons can include Bible teachings on values such as love, forgiveness, honesty, and peace. In addition, Christian values can also be included in various general subjects, such as Bahasa

Indonesia, History, and Civics, by providing a Christian perspective on moral and social issues facing society.

A concrete example is the integration of the value of love in Indonesian lessons, which teaches the importance of speaking lovingly and respecting others. With this approach, students not only learn to achieve academic performance, but also to live out Christian moral values in their daily lives.

2. Practical Approaches in Shaping Student Character

Shaping students' character requires not only the teaching of theory, but also the practical application of these values. There are several practical approaches that can be used to shape students' character through Christianity-based education. Firstly, Teacher's Example as a Bearer of Christian Values. Teachers have a very important role in integrating Christian values in character education. As authority figures and role models, teachers are real examples of good behaviour in accordance with the teachings of Christianity. As written in the Bible, 'Be an example to those who believe, in word, behaviour, love, spirit, faith, and purity' (1 Tim 4:12). Teachers who show humility, patience, love, and care for students will find it easier to instil Christian values in students' lives (Narvaez 2008).

A study shows that teachers who live out Christian values through their daily actions can create a loving and respectful school environment, which in turn helps students to replicate those positive attitudes in their lives (Revelation, 2019).

Second, Christian Value-Based Learning Activities. Christian value-based learning activities are also very important in shaping students' character. These activities can include group discussions on Christian moral topics, Bible story-based teaching, and social projects that involve service to others. For example, students could be asked to organise a charity event to help the less fortunate, an activity that teaches love and solidarity as taught in the Bible.

These activities not only teach academic knowledge but also develop empathy and a sense of social responsibility in students. Research shows that religious values-based learning can strengthen students' character and help them to understand the importance of moral actions that are in accordance with religious teachings.

Third, the influence of the Christian community at school. The Christian community in schools also has a huge role in supporting the integration of Christian values in character education. Schools that have active Christian communities, such as prayer groups or other spiritual activities, can create an environment conducive to faith-based character development (Megawangi 2007). This community can be a place for students to share their faith experiences, learn to love one another, and pray together for guidance and strength in facing life's challenges.

Research by Hendro shows that the presence of a Christian community in schools can strengthen spiritual bonds between students and provide positive emotional support, so that students feel more motivated to develop good character and in accordance with Christian values (Wicaksono 2018).

3. Challenges in Integrating Christian Values

While the integration of Christian values in character education has many benefits, there are some challenges that need to be faced. One of them is the challenge of maintaining a balance between faith-based character education and the need to create an inclusive environment for students with different religious backgrounds.

There is also the challenge of dealing with apathy or scepticism from some students who may not understand the importance of Christian values in their lives. This is often due to

the influence of the outside world, which places more emphasis on material achievement or social status than character development rooted in the Christian faith.

As stated by Asmara (2021), the biggest challenge in integrating Christian values in character education is how to change the paradigm of students who prioritise worldly achievements and provide them with a deep understanding of Christian values that can be applied in everyday life.

The integration of Christian values in character education at school is essential to form students who are not only academically intelligent but also have good character in accordance with the teachings of the Christian faith. The implementation of Christian values in the curriculum, practical approaches to character building through teacher example, Christian value-based learning activities, and the influence of the Christian community in schools all play an important role in realising a holistic and meaningful education. However, the challenges in integrating Christian values cannot be ignored and require cooperation between the school, teachers, and the Christian community to overcome the obstacles.

Implications of Christian Values for Student Character Building

Character education is one of the main objectives in the modern education system. Education that focuses on character building not only prioritises intellectual intelligence, but also high moral and ethical qualities. In the context of Christianity-based education, students' character building is expected to include values that are in line with the teachings of Christ, such as love, honesty, forgiveness, and social responsibility. The implications of Christian values for student character building are enormous, both in individual development and in building wider social impact.

The character of students as individuals is greatly influenced by the education they receive, including the values taught and applied in daily life. Christian values play an important role in shaping students' moral, ethical, and social character, which in turn will influence their behaviour in personal, family, school, and community life. Character building based on Christian values not only focuses on personal development but also has a positive impact on society.

1. Character Building of Students as Individuals

Character is the main foundation that determines the quality of a person, including students as developing individuals. In the education process, character building becomes an important aspect that not only shapes students' behaviour and attitudes but also instills moral and ethical values that they will carry throughout life. Christian value-based education provides a strong foundation for students' character building, helping them to become ethical, moral, responsible, and respectful individuals. With a solid character, students are not only able to face personal challenges but also make positive contributions to their social environment. There are several aspects of character building of students as individuals outlined as follows:

a. Ethical and Moral

One of the most important aspects in student character building is the development of ethics and morality. Ethics refers to the principles that guide individuals in distinguishing between right and wrong actions, while morality is the application of these principles in daily life. In the teachings of Christianity, ethical and moral values are very clear, which are reflected in God's commandments, such as loving others, telling the truth, and living in peace.

Students who are moulded with Christian values tend to prioritise kindness and honesty in their actions. For example, in Matthew 5:37, Jesus taught that, 'If it is, say "Yes," and if it is not, say "No."' This teaching teaches the importance of honesty and consistency in words and deeds. Therefore, students who are influenced by Christian values will tend to behave honestly and ethically in their daily lives, both at school and in their social relationships (Revelation 2019).

In addition, Christian values also teach the importance of forgiveness and love, even to those who may have wronged us. In Colossians 3:13, Paul reminds us to 'forgive one another if anyone bears a grudge against another.' Thus, students who are moulded with Christian values will learn to have an attitude of tolerance and forgiveness of others' wrongdoings, which is very important in their social life and interpersonal relationships.

b. Responsibility and Respect for Others

Another aspect of character building is personal responsibility and respect for others. Christian values teach that each individual is responsible for himself or herself and for others. In Luke 10:27, Jesus teaches us to 'love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind,' and to 'love your neighbour as yourself.' This teaching reminds students to take responsibility not only for their own actions, but also to 'love your neighbour as yourself.' These teachings remind students to take responsibility not only for their own actions, but also to care for and respect others (Halawa, Hestiningrum, and Iswahyudi 2021).

Christian-based education encourages students to take responsibility for their behaviour, whether at school, at home, or in the community. They learn to respect the feelings and rights of others and develop an empathetic attitude towards those in need. For example, students are taught not only to care about their own interests, but also to pay attention to the needs of others and try to help them.

This character of responsibility is very important in education, as it teaches students to make wise decisions and be responsible for the consequences (Omeri 2015). Thus, students who are moulded with Christian values will grow into individuals who are not only responsible for themselves but also for the wider community.

1. Social and Spiritual Impact

Education that integrates Christian values not only impacts individual character building but also contributes greatly to social and spiritual life. Values such as integrity, love, and justice become the foundation that shapes students to have a positive influence in society. Socially, students are taught to be agents of change who bring goodness and justice to their environment. Spiritually, they are directed to live in harmony with the teachings of Christ, strengthen their faith, and become role models who reflect God's love to others. This impact makes Christianity-based education an effective tool in building a society with character and morality. There are several aspects that can shape student character, from the social aspect, among others:

a. Building Students with High Integrity

Integrity is an important quality that every individual should possess, and in the context of Christianity-based education, integrity not only means acting according to moral principles but also living according to the teachings of the Christian faith. In Proverbs 12:1, it says, 'He who loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is a fool.' Living integrity means having the determination to always choose what is right despite the many temptations and challenges that come (Sukarna 2018).

Students who are moulded with Christian values will develop integrity as part of their character. This integrity is reflected in daily behaviour, such as keeping their word, acting fairly in all situations, and not being easily swayed by social or environmental pressures. They will dare to say the right thing, even when it is unpopular or painful. For example, in everyday life, a student who has high integrity will dare to say 'no' when asked to do something wrong, such as cheating in exams or lying to cover up mistakes.

In society, individuals with high integrity will set a good example for others and become a pillar in building trust and social harmony. They will inspire others to live by the same moral principles and strengthen the social order based on honesty and justice.

b. Become an Agent of Change in the Community

Christian values also teach that everyone is called to be an agent of positive change in society. In Matthew 5:14-16, Jesus said, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden." As followers of Christ, students are encouraged to be the light and salt of the world, which means making a positive impact on others through their behaviour and actions (Bangun 2022). In the context of education, students who are moulded with Christian values will have a vision to improve and strengthen society through the tangible contributions they can make.

Students who have character based on Christian values will become agents of change in society by showing care for others, striving for social justice, and providing services to people in need (Tafonao 2018). They will strive to change unjust circumstances and help create a better environment through concrete actions, such as engaging in social activities or moral movements that promote the values of kindness and love.

In this increasingly complex and challenging world, Christianity-based education can be a very effective tool to prepare students to become future leaders who are not only intellectually intelligent but also have integrity, responsibility, and are ready to become agents of change in society.

The implication of Christian values in student character building is broad and deep. The formation of students' characters as ethical, moral, responsible, and respectful individuals is an important part of Christianity-based education. In addition, Christian values also have a significant social and spiritual impact, shaping students into individuals who have high integrity and are ready to become agents of change in society (Wening 2012). Therefore, education that integrates Christian values not only has a positive impact on students' personal development but also contributes greatly to the development of a better society.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

This research is about Christian Values as the Foundation for Student Character Building in the Modern Era. The researcher hopes that every student in Indonesia can form a good character like Jesus Christ. This research can be developed by conducting a qualitative study. By looking at the level of character formation in students, every educational institution can promote good life growth through engaging in activities.

CONCLUSION

Christian values are a solid foundation in the formation of students' character in the modern era, full of challenges and changes. By instilling values such as love, integrity, honesty, responsibility, and respect for others, students are shaped into individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also have superior moral and spiritual qualities. In the midst of modernisation and diverse cultural influences, Christian values act as a compass that guides

students to live according to the principles of truth. These values enable students to face life's challenges with courage and resilience, and make a positive social impact as agents of change in society. Therefore, Christianity-based education in the modern era not only forms students with strong characters but also builds a generation that is able to make a real contribution in creating a better world, based on God's love and truth.

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