

Transforming Student Character through Christian Religious Education Based on Differentiated Learning

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to answer the issue of character crisis faced by today's students, by explaining the definition of character education and Christian Religious Education, Transformation of character education in Christian Religious Education, the urgency of differentiated learning studies on character education in Christian Religious Education, and the impact of student character transformation through Christian Religious Education based on differentiated learning. For this reason, the method used is qualitative with literature study techniques to analyze relevant literature related to character education and differentiated learning. The findings of this article show that differentiated learning studies can develop students' understanding of Christian values, strengthen spiritual self-awareness, and encourage active involvement in spiritual and social activities. The conclusion of this research makes a significant contribution to Christian Religious Education teachers as educators and students as learners, both theoretically and practically in the field of Christian Religious Education and daily life. In terms of theory, this research enriches the study of the integration of character education in Christian Religious Education with a differentiated learning approach.

Keywords:

student character, transformation, Christian Religious Education, differentiated learning.

Article history:

Submitted: 15 Jan. 2025, Revised: 25 May & 18 June. 2025, Accepted: 24 June. 2025

How to cite this article:

Doni, A., & Bilo, D. T. (2025). Transforming student character through Christian religious education based on differentiated learning. *TELEIOS: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen*, 5(1), 77–91. <https://doi.org/10.53674/teleios.v5i1.233>

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INTRODUCTION

Talking about character is fundamental. Zubaedi says that character is the gem of life that distinguishes humans from animals. Humans who do not have character are humans who are mistakenly "destroyed". People who have strong character and are good individually and socially are those who have morals, so educational institutions have the responsibility to instill them through the learning process (Zubaedi, 2015, p. 1). According to Bhaktiar Sihombing and Livia Yuliawati, human character has been damaged since Adam and Eve ignored or violated the revealed Word of God. Genesis 3:1-24, which tells the story of Adam and Eve's disobedience and subsequent expulsion from the Garden of Eden by the LORD, contains this information. In Romans 3, corrupt character is used to describe the effects of man's fall into sin. There is no fear of God, no one is wise, no one seeks God, no one is helpful, no one does good, his mouth is full of praise and cursing, his feet are ready to shed blood, and no one knows the way to peace (Bhaktiar Sihombing & Livia Yuliawati, 2022, pp. 14-15).

Furthermore, Dimayati said, admittedly or not, society is currently experiencing a very real and alarming character crisis, which has an impact on parents' most valuable treasure, namely their children. The character crisis includes increasing rates of free sex, violence against children and adolescents, crimes against friends, theft by teenagers, cheating, drug abuse, pornography, rape, robbery, and property destruction, among various other social problems that have not been fully resolved. Fights, the freedom to bully others in school, and the tendency to cheat are some of the factors that influence teenage behavior. Since these activities have resulted in illegal acts, the implications are serious and can no longer be seen as a simple problem. Infidelity, widespread corruption, and conflict and violence or fighting are also characteristic of adult behavior (Dimayati, 2010, p. 84).

First, also, some facts that write about the deterioration of students' moral character in education, among others: *First*, also, some facts that write the decline of the moral character of students in the world of education, among others: First, on October 16, 2014, KPAI (Indonesian Child Protection Commission) published news about several acts of violence committed by private elementary school children in the city of Bukittinggi, West Sumatra. The violence was in the form of beatings and kicks committed by students against their friends (Davit Setyawan, 2014b, p. 1). Because it occurred at the most basic level of education, this incident is one of the most significant problems. If this problem is not addressed immediately, it will lead to more serious problems because students will begin to take this behavior as a matter of course. The second was published on March 8, 2018, and is about a student who hit his teacher with a chair after refusing to accept a reprimand for using his mobile phone during class (Wisnugroho Akbar, 2018, p. 2). Students are not allowed to bring mobile phones to class, according to school regulations. Since the student had broken the rule, the teacher deliberately met him privately to chat and offer help, but the student rejected the teacher's suggestion. It is clear from this action that the student lost respect for his teacher, as it can be seen that the student began to rebel and break the rules. Third, a case involving several high school students who attacked a junior high school student received a lot of attention on April 10, 2019 (Wisnugroho, 2019, pp. 1-4). The junior high school boy experienced physical and psychological violence during the incident, which left him terrified. Many people responded to the case because of the violence committed

against a young person. Fourth, there are examples of students engaging in bullying due to the addictive nature of violent online games (Davit Setyawan, 2014a, p. 1).

Fifth, a rape case committed by a 6-year-old child due to imitating pornographic videos. (Davit Setyawan, 2015, p. 1) Sixth, an example of a ninth grade student who decided to watch porn instead of attending class. (Muhammad Ikhan, 2018, p. 1) Seventh, the behavior of students who are busy using technology in class when learning is taking place. (Camelia, 2019, p. 1) Eighth, according to Budimani Telaumbanua, a Christian Religious Education teacher at SD Negeri 071012 Hiligodu, the researcher's observations show that in reality, the character of students is still not determined by what is mandated by the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003 concerning the national education system (Budimani Telaumbanua, 2018, pp. 31-35). Ninth, according to Juwinnen Dedy Kasingku and Faldo Nun Sasarari, Adventist Waropen Junior High School students lack role models in terms of inappropriate dress. Students' lack of understanding of Christian religious education and character education is the root of the problem (Kasingku & Sasarari, 2022, p. 1524). Tenth, based on Yaaman Gulo's observation at SMK Negeri 1 Sogaeudu, some students were seen smoking, violating school rules, and fighting with teachers. In addition, according to one of the teachers interviewed by Yaaman Gulo, the student affairs department said that lying to parents, being rude, and skipping classes are common problems at school. This is supported by the fact that many parents are called to the school because their children violate the rules and discipline. Yaaman Gulo continued that although children have received teaching about morals, religious education, and character education, the lessons they get are not applied in daily life (Gulo et al., 2022, p. 114).

According to Thomas Lickona, instilling discipline in students indirectly fosters beneficial character traits, such as accountability. Students who get moral discipline will develop responsibility. According to Thomas Lickona, moral discipline is what makes students respect rules, other people, and teacher authority. It also makes them feel responsible for their morals and for the good of society, both inside and outside the classroom (Lickona, 2019, p. 2). According to Kadek Hengki Primayana, the right approach is clearly needed to instill character education in students (Primayana, 2019, p. 87). Desy Wahyuningsari said this is in line with the Pancasila Learner Profile in the independent curriculum, where learning with the new paradigm focuses on strengthening the competence and character of learners. This learning is designed with the principle of differentiated learning so that students can learn according to the stage of development of learning achievements and the needs of students, both in terms of academics, character, and spirituality of students (Wahyuningsari et al., 2022, p. 531).

Differentiated learning strategies, Christian Religious Education, and the implementation of character education have been discussed in a number of previous studies. The article "Implementation of Christian Character Education in Early Childhood: Perspectives, Methods, and Challenges" by Eva Saryati Panggabean emphasizes the importance of character education in early childhood as a foundation for the development of moral and spiritual human beings (Eva Saryati Panggabean, 2024, pp. 17-30). Markus Oci's book entitled "Implementation of Religious Education and Character Education" thoroughly explores the importance of religious education as a foundation for character development, as well as how religious education can be a framework for thinking in discussing the ethics and behavior of everyone (Markus Oci, 2019, p. 54). The article "Christian Religious Education as a Means of Character Building in the

Context of Multiculturalism" by Yuni Tobe emphasizes the importance of Christian Religious Education (PAK) in helping students develop their character in the context of a heterogeneous Indonesian society. In addition to emphasizing knowledge of biblical theory, PAK instills moral principles relevant to cultural and religious diversity, such as love, tolerance, and responsibility (Tobe et al., 2024, pp. 26-27). However, no one has discussed the implementation of character education in Christian Religious Education through differentiated learning for students' Character development.

Departing from previous research, the author will not repeat what previous researchers have written. The novelty of this research lies in the Implementation of Character Education in Christian Religious Education through a Differentiated Learning approach and its Impact on Student Character Development. The purpose of this research is divided into five parts, among others: First, to explain the definition of character education. Second, to explain the definition of Christian Religious Education. Third, to explain the implementation of character education in Christian Religious Education. Fourth, to explain the urgency of differentiated learning methods towards character education in Christian Religious Education. Fifth, to explain the impact of the implementation of character education in Christian Religious Education through differentiated learning methods on students' character development.

METHODS

Based on the problems raised in the background above, this research uses literature techniques combined with qualitative methods. Research that uses words to describe phenomena, rather than statistics or other metrics, is known as qualitative research (Sigit Hermawan, 2015, p. 30). The literature approach, on the other hand, consists of several method procedures for collecting, evaluating, and combining relevant literary sources (Hamzah, 2019, pp. 1-2). The literature discussed is that the researcher investigates various related literature to be researched and analyzed as a point of departure. As a first step, the researcher identified the main findings of the research and highlighted the relationship between the understanding of the application of Student Character Transformation through Christian Religious Education Based on Differentiated Learning. In the next step, a literature search was conducted using keywords relevant to the topic, such as "Student character transformation", "Christian Religious Education", "differentiated learning", in various related literature, including books, articles, and the Bible, as well as other sources that support the research topic. The researcher selected the best and most relevant sources for analysis after the relevant literature was collected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Character Education in the Frame of Christian Religious Education

There are various terms used to refer to Christian Religious Education, such as Christian Education, Religious Education, Christian Religious Instruction, and some use the term Christian Nurture. According to Marten Luther, quoted by Daniel Stevanus, Christian Religious Education (PAK) is a form of education that involves members of the congregation to study

regularly and orderly, to become increasingly aware of their sin and rejoicing in the word of Jesus, which brings liberation.

In addition, Christian Religious Education (PAK) prepares individuals with the resources of faith, especially those related to the experience of prayer, the written word (the Bible), and various aspects of their culture, so that they can serve others, including society and the state, and participate responsibly in Christian fellowship (Stevanus, 2009, p. 2). According to John Calvin, cited by Daniel Stevanus, Christian Religious Education is the process of forming the minds of believers with the Word of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit through various learning experiences organized by the church. The goal is to produce sustainable spiritual growth in learners, which is reflected in an increasingly deep devotion to Jesus Christ, in the form of acts. Of love towards others. Based on the two opinions of the Christian Religious Education experts above, the author agrees more with the opinion of Jhon Calvin because education is a learning process that involves the power of the Holy Spirit which leads students to accept the truths of the Christian faith, without the Holy Spirit students cannot recognize the source of all wisdom and the Great Teacher.

According to B.S. Sidjabat, quoted by Hendrik Legi, one of the sources of idealism in Christian Religious Education is the Bible, the written word of God. The Bible is authoritative as the source of God's truth can be learned from the Bible from which understanding, the author agrees that the Bible is the theological foundation of Christian Religious Education. (Hendrik Legi, 2020, p. 13) According to Robert W. Pazmino, Christian Religious Education is a structured process that combines spiritual and human efforts to transmit knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, and behaviors by the teachings of the Christian faith, to promote change and renewal in individuals, groups, and social structures through the power of the Holy Spirit (Robert W. Pazmino, 1998, p. 81). Werner C. Graendorf argues that Christian Religious Education is a teaching and learning process that is grounded in the Bible, focused on Christ, and dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit. This process aims to guide individuals at various stages of spiritual development, through contemporary teaching methods, towards an understanding and experience of God's plan and will through Christ in all aspects of life. In addition, it aims to prepare learners for effective ministry, emphasizing Christ as the Great Teacher and the command to guide disciples to maturity in the faith (Werner C. Graendorf, 1981, p. 16). Based on the various opinions that have been expressed, it can be concluded that Christian Religious Education is an effort of the community of believers in fostering spiritual life through a teaching and learning process that is based on the Bible and focuses on Jesus Christ. This process relies on the power of the Holy Spirit to achieve a level of spiritual growth by God's will, namely, making students reach maturity of faith.

Likewise, character, which means nature, disposition, quality, obligation, morality, and personality, comes from the Latin word character (Fadilah, 2021, p. 12). The Greek word "character" comes from the verb "*charassein*," which means "to make deep" or "sharp" (Lorens Bagus, 2005, p. 392). The Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) defines character as traits that distinguish a person from others, such as duty, morals, and manners (Sutjipto, 2011, p. 504). Character, according to Kemndikdasmen (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education), is a way of thinking and acting that makes each person distinctive to live and work together, both

in a group environment, the general community, the nation, and the country (Intan & Handayani, 2017, p. 301).

In addition, some Christian writers have their own opinions on Christian character, among others: Willard states that Christian character is formed through inner transformation by the Holy Spirit. According to him, character growth is not mere moral habituation, but a change from within by the power of God working through spiritual disciplines (Willard, 2021, p. 145). Stott explains that Christian character is rooted in Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. He believes that Christians should reflect the values of the Kingdom of God, such as humility, compassion, and purity of heart (Stott, 2020, p. 136). Billy Graham argues that Christian character is a living testimony. An honest, clean, and loving life is an effective means of preaching the gospel (Graham, 2022, p. 18).

Fowler says that the theory of stages of faith development has a direct impact. On character formation. Christian character develops as one matures spiritually, especially in the "Universalizing Faith" stage, where unconditional love and commitment to the truth become evident (James W. Fowler, 2001, p. 164). Rick Warren states that Christian character formation is a life process directed toward eternal goals. Character is formed through a process of growth, testing, and service. Every aspect of life is used by God to form a Christ-like person (Warren, 2002, p. 4). According to Lewis, Christian character comes from the inner change wrought by Christ. He distinguishes between "morally good people" and people who are "renewed from within" (Lewis, 2001, p. 158). Based on the above opinions, it can be concluded that character is an inner quality that distinguishes a person from others, includes moral aspects, personality, and ways of acting, and is formed through a deep internal process. In the Christian context, character is not only seen as the result of moral habituation but as the fruit of inner transformation wrought by divine power. This process takes place through spiritual growth, spiritual discipline, and response to trials and service in life. Christian character reflects Kingdom values such as humility, compassion, and purity of heart, and becomes a living testimony in the world. Maturity of faith also influences character formation, where the more a person grows spiritually, the more unconditional love and commitment to the truth will be evident in his or her life.

Transformation of Character Education in Christian Religious Education

First, character education in Christian Religious Education is student-centered. The implementation of character education in the context of student-oriented Christian Religious Education (PAK) emphasizes the importance of active involvement of students as the subject of learning (Boiliu, 2023, p. 31). This approach rejects one-way learning patterns and focuses on memorizing moral values alone, and instead, prioritizes learning experiences that encourage students to think critically, reflect on the values of the Christian faith, and actualize them in their daily lives (Halomoan et al., 2024, p. 179).

Within the framework of participatory and reflective pedagogy, students are facilitated to play an active role through various learning strategies such as group discussions, case study analysis, spiritual drama, service projects, and personal reflection. These activities provide space for a deeper and more contextual internalization of Christian values (Rangga, 2024, p. 84).

Collaboration between students becomes a crucial aspect in this process because, through inclusive social interactions, students learn to build empathy, respect differences, and develop the capacity to work together in the spirit of love and service (Sianturi et al., 2024, p. 216).

The role of educators in this approach has shifted from information transmitter to learning facilitator. PAK teachers are required to guide the character-building process through open questions, meaningful theological dialogue, and creative activities that are relevant to the reality of students' lives. Contextual and transformative learning models such as project-based learning, service learning, and experiential learning become very relevant in supporting this process because they place students as active agents in the growth of faith and character (Zachariah Victor Harefa, 2022, p. 211). Thus, character education in PAK not only functions as a means of inheriting values, but also as a forum for the formation of a Christian person who is fully knowledgeable of faith, has a strong character, and can make a real contribution to the life of the church and society critically, consciously, and responsibly.

Second, teaching by example. Second, teaching by example. An example is a person's positive attitude, words, and actions that should be emulated by others (Tu'u, 2010, p. 40). The most powerful and successful strategy to shape and prepare students' moral, spiritual, and social Character is the use of role models in the classroom. In the eyes of students, an educator is a model whose behavior and morals will be imitated, whether they realize it or not. As a result, these role models will also follow their feelings and behaviors, whether material, sensory, spiritual, or verbal (Hakim, 2008, p. 29). In this case, teachers need to imitate the Lord Jesus when teaching students. Like the Lord Jesus in His teaching, He not only conveyed information and knowledge, but also gave color and changed the lives of those who followed Him (Triposa et al., 2021).

Here, Christian Religious Education teachers need to have internal motivation in the form of a "servant" attitude (Mark 10:42-45). Christian Religious Education teachers must be able to develop their students into leaders (1 Pet 2:21). Christian Religious Education teachers are spiritual leaders who must demonstrate the value of spiritual life as servants of God. They must have deep and strong spiritual integrity, which they manifest by faithfully obeying God and His word. They must have high discipline and self-control in all aspects of life. So that they can prove themselves as living examples worthy of emulation by their students (Tu'u, 2010). Therefore, PAK teachers are living examples who shape students' characters through spiritual, moral, and social examples that reflect obedience to God.

Third, teaching honesty. Character education in Christian Religious Education also emphasizes the importance of teaching honesty and integrity to students. In Proverbs 10:9, it says that "he who lives honestly will be safe." Good character education needs to include teaching about honesty and responsibility, which can be reinforced through religious teachings (Renaldo Putrokoesoemo, 2025, pp. 77-78). Honest means not lying, telling the truth, or cheating, and so forth (Svitri, 2019, p. 14). People will be more prepared to face moral dilemmas in daily life if the values of honesty are integrated into Christian Religious Education. Integration, according to Tri Hanato, is the ability, knowledge, and proficiency in teaching. Therefore, to produce learners with integrity and a healthy mentality, Christian Religious Education teachers must pay attention to and be able to support other PAK teachers to instill the

values of honesty and integrity in students. This includes understanding the feelings, reasons, and purposes of children doing bad things (Tri Hanato, 2021, p. 160).

Fourth, it teaches responsibility. The ability to respond to a statement is what is meant by responsibility (Kasdin Sihotang, 2024, p. 165). According to Laura Hartaman and Desjardin, responsibility can be defined in four ways: (1) being reliable and trustworthy; (2) acting in the best interest of others; (3) claiming responsibility for an action or event; and (4) returning something to its original state (Laura Hartaman and Desjardin, 2011, p. 161). In addition, according to the Christian Religious Education principles of character education, teachers have duties in the field of education in schools. These tasks include mastering effective teaching and learning strategies, assisting in lesson units, understanding a good curriculum, teaching in the classroom, being a role model for students, giving advice, learning how to provide guidance and services, and making and completing evaluations (Jonar T.H. Situmorang, 2021, p. 55). Christian Religious Education teachers should also delegate responsibility to their students and support them throughout their development (Robert & Angeline Tucker, 2022, p. 64). In addition, Jesus stated in Matthew 25:21, "If you are faithful in small things, I will give you responsibility in great things." Therefore, children must continue to learn about accountability from Christian Education teachers through diverse teaching.

The Urgency of Differentiated Learning Studies for Character Education in Christian Religious Education

While discussing teaching strategies is nothing new for educators, there are a number of issues that often arise when creating innovative teaching strategies. Teachers often use teaching methods that are outdated and not in line with the demands of today's students, which makes students uninterested and discouraged in learning Christianity, Sianipar said (Sianipar, 2023, p. 76). Stepanus and Friska Hasali pointed out that students complain that Christianity lessons are boring because the teachers always use lecture or note-taking techniques. After school, many students are sad and rarely talk about the teachings they learned. Some students are also lackluster in completing homework with religious assignments given by their teachers, as a result, students do not develop intellectually and also characteristically (Daniel, Stepanus, 2016, p. 42). It can be seen, as stated by Yaaman Gulo n, that some parents of students were called to school because their children violated the rules and discipline, proving that there were students at SMK Negeri 1 Sogaeedu who were caught smoking, lying to parents, being disorderly, and skipping classes. Yaaman Gulo continued by saying that although the students have received teaching on morals, religious education, and character education, students do not study seriously due to boredom, so the lessons learned at school have not been applied in their daily lives (Gulo et al., 2022).

Not only that, in the context of Christian Religious Education (PAK), not all learning strategies provide effective results, especially if they are not adapted to the main objectives of PAK, namely, faith growth, theological understanding, and Christian character building. Some examples of less effective strategies include: First, Dogmatic Memorization (Eky, 2017, p. 136). This strategy emphasizes the mastery of theological information and concepts through memorization of verses or doctrines without deep understanding. While memorization of God's

Word is important, if it is not accompanied by reflection and application, it can result in a rigid faith that is irrelevant to life. PAK should form a person who lives the faith, not just knows it theoretically. Second, Academic Value-Based Competition Approach (Ucok P. Sinaga, 2025, p. 139). Some learning methods encourage competition between students (for example, through quick quizzes or memorization competitions), which emphasizes academic values more than spiritual values. The academic value-based competency approach is not appropriate in the context of PAK, because PAK itself aims to form Christian characters who are loving, humble, and respectful of others. Excessive competition can foster selfishness, superiority, and does not reflect the values of Christ. Third, Learning is Too Abstract and Not Contextualized (Tanasyah & Putrawan, 2022). Strategies that emphasize doctrines or teachings in the abstract without linking them to the context of students' real lives make learning meaningless. True Christian faith must apply to daily life. Without context, students have difficulty understanding the relevance of biblical teachings in their lives as teenagers or members of society. Fourth, Learning Without Space for Reflection or Dialogue (Sutrisno, Ribut Agung, and Yulia Warih Her Wulandri, 2023, p. 186). Strategies that rely solely on the delivery of material without space for discussion or personal reflection will limit students' inner engagement. Reflection and dialogue are important parts of faith formation. Students need time to ponder, question, and dialogue with God's Word to become part of their lives.

Based on some of the problems above, this is a serious problem in education that can hinder student development in terms of academics, character, and spirituality. Thus, the proposed strategy that is very suitable is one of differentiated learning. Differentiated learning recognizes that every student is different and has different learning styles. One of the most important methods for teaching character education in Christian schools, Religious Education is a differentiated learning approach (Maulidiawati, Tasya, 2024, p. 151). In implementing differentiated learning, educators must pay attention to two things: 1. Teachers must know their students well, understand their needs, interests, and skill levels. 2. Teachers can modify lesson plans to meet the needs of each student (Elfin Warnius Waruwu & Dyulijs Thomas Bilo, 2024, p. 255). Ngaisah points out that in order for each student to fully participate according to their preferred learning style, teachers must use creativity when choosing various teaching tactics, such as group discussions, projects, or individual assignments. By using these various teaching techniques, varied learning allows students to develop their moral character and realize their full potential (Ngaisah, Nur Cahyati, 2023, p. 2). In addition, feedback from each student should be tailored to their unique needs, which will provide motivation to continue learning. In addition, the application of various learning concepts helps foster an inclusive learning environment and encourages the continuous development of each student.

Impact of Student Character Transformation through Differentiated Learning-Based Christian Religious Education

First, students' understanding of Christian values is enhanced. Students have the opportunity to better understand core Christian values such as love, honesty, responsibility, and forgiveness. This understanding will be evident from students' reflections in discussions and application in daily life. The Bible clearly states that every human being is created in the image

and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). This realization makes teachers integrate biblical values into learning principles. This encourages appreciation of each student's uniqueness and potential to have Christ-like character (Simeri Hati Sarumaha, 2024, p. 135). In addition, the teaching of love is the teaching of Jesus Christ, as stated in Matthew 22:37-39, which emphasizes the importance of loving God and others. Christian Religious Education teaches students to empathize, care, and sacrifice for the good of others (Simeri Hati Sarumaha, 2024). Christian Religious Education also teaches the importance of honesty and integrity. Proverbs. 10:9 says that "he who lives honestly will be saved." Good character education needs to include teaching about honesty and responsibility, which can be reinforced through religious teachings (Renaldo Putrokoesoemo, 2025). By integrating the values of honesty in Christian Religious Education, individuals are better equipped to face moral challenges in daily life. In addition, in Matthew 25:21, Jesus taught, "You have been faithful in small things, I will give you responsibility in great things." So the responsibility taught by Christian Religious Education teachers is a must to be taught to students, which allows it to shape the development of students' moral character for the better.

Second, the growth of students' self-awareness. Students in the same group begin to equate a higher level of morality and ethics based on Christian moral standards. This is a complete system of learners in daily worship and reflection activities. The lessons that teachers give to students about contemplating God's word are one of the means to foster students' spirituality. Contemplation is a persuasive process that incorporates all elements to connect with God personally and renew students' perspectives and attitudes. By taking time every day to reflect on God's words, students can gain wisdom, hope, and strength in their lives (Dag Heward Mills, 2015, p. 6). The words of God that students contemplate can provide opportunities for them to reflect on them in their daily lives, and apply them in real actions (Dag Heward Mills, 2015). Through this practice, students' relationship with God deepens, Christian character is gradually formed, and their hearts become more sensitive to God's voice. Therefore, reflection is not just a routine activity, but a means of spiritual transformation that. Results in positive changes in all aspects of life, including the moral character of students.

Third, students' active involvement in spiritual activities. There is an increase in students' participation in spiritual activities such as group prayer and social service. Character education may include influencing students' intellectual development. Prayer plays an important role in the teachings of Jesus, who explicitly emphasized the importance of prayer. Christian Religious Education teachers have a responsibility to motivate and guide their students in the practice of prayer, helping them build a strong personal relationship with God. By encouraging a life of prayer, teachers can guide students towards deeper spiritual experiences (Debby Sandra Tendean, 2024, p. 99). Similarly, social service is the embodiment of Christian values in practical and ethical living (Nggiri et al., 2024, p. 72). Participation in community service provides opportunities for students to develop their faith and character through direct experience in serving others. Social service can be carried out in various forms, such as helping people in need, participating in church social activities, and supporting missionary programs aimed at spreading the love of Christ (Indarto, Nico Dwiyadi Koes, 2023, p. 130). Therefore, it can be concluded that Christian Religious Education plays an important role in shaping students' moral and spiritual character through three main aspects. First, students' increased

understanding of Christian values such as love, honesty, and responsibility, which are integrated in the learning process, encourages students to apply them in their daily lives. Second, the growth of students' self-awareness is fostered through daily reflection on God's word, which deepens their relationship with God and gradually shapes their Christian character. Thirdly, students' active involvement in spiritual activities such as prayer and social service shows the real application of the teachings of faith and strengthens students' spiritual experience and service ethics. These three aspects complement each other in shaping students' personalities who are not only intellectually intelligent but also morally and spiritually mature, by the example of Christ.

CONCLUSION

This research makes a significant contribution both theoretically and practically in the field of Christian Religious Education (PAK). In terms of theory, this research enriches the study of the integration of character education in PAK with a differentiated learning approach. It broadens the perspective on how Christian character can be fostered through methods that are responsive to students' needs, interests, and readiness. In addition, this approach emphasizes the position of PAK not only as a dogmatic teaching but also as a means of holistic character formation. Practically, this article offers implementable strategies for PAK teachers to develop students' moral character through more participatory, contextual, and transformative learning. Teachers are challenged to be active facilitators and living examples for learners. The findings also show that implementing differentiated learning can improve students' understanding of Christian values, strengthen spiritual self-awareness, and encourage active involvement in spiritual and social activities. However, this research has limitations because it only uses a qualitative approach based on literature studies without direct empirical data from the field. Therefore, future research could focus on field studies with a qualitative-descriptive approach or educational experiments to test the effectiveness of implementing differentiated learning in improving the character of Christian students. Further research could also explore the challenges teachers face. Implementing this approach, as well as its influence in the context of multicultural and cross-denominational education.

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