
Integrating Christian values into educational curriculum: Developing students' character in the digital era

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Abstract

This study explores the integration of Christian values in the education curriculum and its influence on the formation of students' character in the digital era. Using a qualitative approach and case study design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and analysis of curriculum documents in several Christian schools. The study results indicate that Christian values, such as love, honesty, responsibility, and respect for others, were successfully instilled through creative and contextual learning methods. Students better understood the importance of implementing these values in everyday life, both at school and outside. However, this study also identified challenges, such as the negative influences of the digital era, including gadget addiction and exposure to inappropriate content. This study concludes that integrating Christian values into the education curriculum can effectively form students' character in the digital era. Education that integrates Christian values aims to achieve academic excellence and to form students with strong character and integrity, ready to face the challenges of the times.

Keywords

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Introduction

In the rapidly developing digital era, education transfers academic knowledge and influences students' character and moral values. Technological advances have changed various aspects of life, including how students learn, interact, and view the world. Amidst the rapid and easily accessible flow of information, students often face various positive and negative influences. Technological advancements have made it easier for students to access knowledge, news, and learning previously inaccessible resources (Collins & Halverson, 2018). However, they are also vulnerable to inappropriate content, such as misinformation, violence, or material contrary to moral values. Such vulnerability creates a dilemma for students when sorting out helpful information and avoiding detrimental influences.

Social pressures online further complicate this dilemma for students. In the digital age, where social media and online platforms have become an integral part of everyday life, students often feel pressured to follow trends, gain validation, or meet the expectations of peers and the virtual community. This social pressure can influence students' decisions and behaviors, even when they conflict with the moral values they have learned. For example, students may feel compelled to participate in dangerous viral challenges, spread inappropriate content, or engage in cyberbullying to gain recognition or popularity online (Danuri, 2019).

In addition, the culture of "likes" and "followers" on social media often creates unhealthy competition among students. They may feel that their self-worth is determined by the number of likes, comments, or followers they get, thus neglecting the importance of values such as honesty, integrity, and empathy. This pressure can cause students to lose their true identity, as they focus more on their online self-image than on developing a strong and authentic character.

On the other hand, cyberspace is also often a place where students face conflicts and misunderstandings. Without face-to-face interaction, communication on social media is prone to misinterpretation, which can trigger conflict or even online bullying. Inability to manage emotions or resolve conflicts wisely can trap students in a negative cycle that can be detrimental to themselves and others (Halawa & Tapilaha, 2024).

Therefore, character education needs to equip students with the skills to deal with social pressures in cyberspace. Honesty, responsibility, and empathy can guide students to make the right decisions and avoid negative influences. In addition, students need to be taught to build a strong self-identity so that pressure or expectations from others do not easily sway them. Character education based on Christian values, for example, can help students understand that their popularity in cyberspace does not determine their self-worth, but rather their integrity and kindness (Hamambira, 2019).

Thus, character education helps students face dilemmas arising from the rapid flow of information. It prepares them to face social pressures in cyberspace with a positive, responsible attitude and by adhering to strong moral values. Character education that integrates Christian values can be a solution to help students face this dilemma. Values such as honesty, responsibility, and wisdom can guide students in evaluating information and making the right decisions (Agnesia et al., 2021). For example, students who understand the importance of honesty will be more likely to verify the truth of information before sharing it,

thereby reducing the spread of fake news. In addition, Christian values also help students develop a critical attitude toward the content they consume, so they are not easily influenced by messages that conflict with their moral principles (Noddings & Brooks, 2016).

In this context, integrating Christian values into the education curriculum can be an effective solution. These values provide a strong moral foundation and help students develop a positive attitude in facing the challenges of the digital era. Through a holistic approach, education can create a young generation that is intellectually intelligent, has a strong character, and is ready to face the complexities of the modern world. Thus, students can become agents of change that positively impact society, in the real and virtual worlds. Technological advancements have made it easier for students to access previously inaccessible knowledge, news, and learning resources. However, they are also vulnerable to exposure to inappropriate content, such as misinformation, violent content, or material that conflicts with moral values. Such exposure creates a dilemma for students when sorting out helpful information and avoiding detrimental influences. Without proper guidance, students can become confused or adopt behavior that does not follow social and spiritual norms (Mesterjon, 2021).

Therefore, education must also emphasize the importance of moral values as a filter in dealing with the rapid flow of information. Values such as honesty, responsibility, and empathy can guide students in using technology wisely and responsibly. Honesty helps students to respect copyright, avoid plagiarism, and use information ethically. In a digital world of easily copied and distributed content, honesty is an important foundation for developing academic and moral integrity. Students who understand the value of honesty will be more likely to use technology to learn and make positive contributions rather than to deceive or harm others (Kause et al., 2021).

Responsibility also plays a crucial role in the use of technology. In the digital age, where every action can be easily recorded, disseminated, and have a broad impact, students need to be aware that every decision they make in using technology has consequences (Nikolaos & Arifianto, 2023). Responsibility in this context is limited to personal use of technology and includes the impacts that may arise on others and the surrounding environment. For example, sharing personal information carelessly or spreading unverified content can pose a risk to privacy, misunderstanding, or even harm to others. Therefore, students must always be taught to consider the consequences of their every action in the digital world (Damayanti & Puridawaty, 2024).

By instilling the value of responsibility in technology, education can help students become competent in utilizing digital advances and aware of the impact of their every action. This will form a young generation ready to face the challenges of the digital era with a wise, responsible attitude and be oriented toward the common good. Students must know that their online actions affect themselves and others; for example, sharing personal information carelessly or spreading unverified content can negatively impact them (Panuntun, 2019). By instilling the value of responsibility, students can learn to use technology carefully and consider each decision's impact. Their responsibility also includes balancing time spent in the digital world and social interactions in the real world.

There is a higher risk of misunderstanding and conflict in the digital age, where communication often occurs via text or social media. Without tone of voice or facial expression, messages can easily be misinterpreted. This is where empathy plays a critical role.

Students with empathy are more careful in choosing their words and responding to others, reducing the potential for conflict and improving the quality of interactions. They also know how their actions affect the digital world, like how a post or comment can make someone feel.

In addition, empathy encourages students to use technology as a tool for charitable purposes. For example, they can use digital platforms to spread positive messages, support friends experiencing difficulties, or get involved in social campaigns that benefit the community. In this way, technology is a means for entertainment or learning and a tool for fostering a caring and supportive community.

By instilling the value of empathy, education can help students become technology users who are intelligent, compassionate, and caring toward others. This will create a young generation ready to face the challenges of the digital era with a positive and responsible attitude and can benefit society in the real and virtual worlds. Empathy helps students in the virtual world, where interactions often occur without face-to-face contact, to continue respecting the feelings and perspectives of others. For example, students with empathy will be more likely to avoid cyberbullying or spreading comments that hurt others. Instead, they will use technology to build positive relationships and support others.

By integrating these values into the educational curriculum, schools can help students develop wise and responsible attitudes toward using technology. These values serve as a guide in facing the challenges of the digital era and shape the character of students ready to contribute positively to society. Through a holistic approach, education can ensure that students become smart technology users and individuals with integrity and empathy in an increasingly connected world.

In this context, integrating Christian values into the education curriculum can be an effective solution. These values provide a strong moral foundation and help students develop a positive attitude in facing the challenges of the digital era. Through a holistic approach, education can create a young generation that is intellectually intelligent and has a strong character, and is ready to face the complexities of the modern world. Thus, students can become agents of change that positively impact society in the real and virtual worlds. This approach requires education to focus on intellectual development and forming a strong character based on solid moral values (Mendrofa & Hapsarini, 2023).

Character education becomes increasingly important in the digital era, where the boundaries between the real and virtual worlds are blurred. Without strong character education, students can easily be carried away by trends or social pressures in cyberspace, which are often not in line with moral and spiritual values. For example, the culture of "likes" and "followers" on social media can encourage students to seek validation from others, even at the expense of their values. Character education aids students in forging a robust identity, preventing them from succumbing to harmful influences or pressures to adhere to unhealthy trends. Values such as honesty, empathy, responsibility, and integrity guide students in dealing with the complexities of the digital world.

Moral values such as honesty, empathy, responsibility, and respect are becoming increasingly relevant in facing the challenges of the digital age. Students must understand that technology must be balanced with an awareness of its impact on themselves and others. Character education also helps students build a strong identity, so unhealthy social or cultural pressures do not easily influence them in cyberspace. In the digital age, students often

encounter values and norms from various cultures that can easily conflict with the principles they learn at home or school. Without a strong identity, students can easily be carried away by unhealthy trends or social pressures, such as consumer culture, impolite behavior, or even actions that harm themselves and others.

Instilling moral values from an early age helps students face the challenges of the digital era wisely and shapes their character as individuals with integrity and care for others. Education that integrates these values into the curriculum can be a strong foundation for forming a young generation ready to face the complexities of the modern world. Thus, students will become smart technology users and individuals who have strong morals and are ready to contribute positively to society amidst the ever-changing developments of the times. In addition, education also needs to emphasize the importance of balance between technological progress and the development of human values.

In this context, integrating Christian values into the education curriculum can be an effective solution. Christian values, such as love, forgiveness, and service, are relevant in spiritual life and can also guide students in facing the complexities of the digital era. Through a holistic approach, education can create an environment that supports students' intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth. Thus, students become academically intelligent individuals with strong characters and are ready to contribute positively to society amidst the challenges of the times. Technological advances have significantly impacted the younger generation's way of life, social interactions, and mindsets. Amidst the rapid flow of information and the influence of globalization, integrating Christian values into the education curriculum is becoming increasingly relevant and important. Values such as love, honesty, responsibility, and respect for others are the foundation for forming students' character and become guides in facing challenges and moral dilemmas in the digital era.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the integration of Christian values in the education curriculum and its influence on the formation of students' character in the digital era. This approach allows researchers to dig deeper into participants' perspectives, experiences, and understandings regarding integrating Christian values in the education curriculum. Using qualitative methods, researchers can capture nuances and complexities that may not be visible through quantitative approaches.

In addition, participant observation allows researchers to see firsthand how Christian values are implemented in daily learning practices. This observation provides a real picture of the interactions between teachers and students and how they internalize these values. Data obtained from observations often complement and strengthen interview findings because researchers can see differences or alignments between what participants say and what happens in the field. This process helps ensure that the data collected is based on participants' perceptions or memories and supported by objective evidence of the practices observed.

The analysis of curriculum documents also offers a more comprehensive design and integration of Christian values into the learning plan. These documents help researchers understand the school's vision and mission in shaping students' characters and how these values are adapted to students' needs in the digital age. By combining data from interviews,

observations, and document analysis, researchers can gain a holistic and in-depth understanding of the studied topic.

Thus, combining various data collection methods ensures that the research produces accurate findings and is rich in nuance and context. This allows researchers to provide relevant and practical recommendations for developing educational curricula that integrate Christian values and help shape students with strong characters ready to face the challenges of the digital era. Through semi-structured interviews, researchers can explore the thoughts and feelings of teachers, students, and education personnel in depth. Participatory observation also provides a direct picture of how Christian values are implemented in daily learning practices. Meanwhile, analysis of curriculum documents helps understand how these values are designed and integrated into learning plans.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and curriculum document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore the perspectives, experiences, and in-depth understandings of participants, including teachers, students, and education personnel, regarding integrating Christian values in the education curriculum. This method allowed the researcher to ask open-ended questions that elicit detailed responses while still providing flexibility to explore new topics that emerged during the interview process. Thus, the researcher obtained a comprehensive picture of how these values are implemented in daily learning practices, and the challenges and successes educators and students face.

Participatory observation was conducted to directly watch the interaction between teachers and students in the learning process and how Christian values are applied in authentic contexts. Through this method, researchers can capture nuances and dynamics, such as body language, expressions, and classroom atmosphere, which interviews may not reveal. Observation also helps researchers understand how students internalize these values and respond to learning based on moral and spiritual values.

Curriculum document analysis explores how Christian values are designed and integrated into the learning plan. These documents include the syllabus, lesson plan, and the school's teaching material. Through this analysis, researchers can understand the extent to which these values are embodied in the curriculum structure and how they are adapted to the needs of students in the digital era. Document analysis also provides a broader context about the school's vision and mission in shaping students' characters.

By combining these three data collection methods, this study produces in-depth and comprehensive findings. Semi-structured interviews provided direct voices and perspectives from participants, participant observation provided a real-world picture of practices on the ground, and curriculum document analysis provided an understanding of the conceptual framework underlying the implementation of Christian values. This triangulation approach ensured that the data collected was rich, contextual, and reliable, providing a strong foundation for analyzing and interpreting the research findings. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the perceptions, experiences, and challenges faced by teachers and students in integrating Christian values into the learning process. Participant observation was used to directly watch classroom learning practices and interactions between teachers and students. At the same time, curriculum document analysis was conducted to understand how Christian values were formulated and implemented in lesson plans.

The collected data were analyzed thematically following the stages proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), including data transcription, coding, theme identification, and interpretation. The analysis was carried out iteratively to ensure the accuracy and depth of the findings. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and methods and member checks, allowing participants to review and provide input on initial findings. This study also paid attention to ethical aspects by ensuring the confidentiality and voluntariness of participants and obtaining written consent before data collection was carried out.

Results and Discussion

The study results show that integrating Christian values into the education curriculum significantly impacts the formation of students' character in the digital era. Values such as love, honesty, responsibility, and empathy are taught theoretically and manifested in daily learning practices, helping students develop positive attitudes and behaviors. Students exposed to these values show a better understanding of the importance of applying moral principles in their lives, both in and outside school. They become more aware of the impact of their actions, in the real world and in the virtual world, and tend to make wiser decisions when using technology.

In addition, this study revealed that integrating Christian values into the educational curriculum also created a more harmonious and empathetic school environment. Interactions between teachers and students became more positive, and students showed a more respectful attitude toward others. This finding reflects that these values are taught and lived in everyday life. For example, through group discussions, social service projects, or personal reflection, students learn to internalize Christian values and apply them in various life contexts (Bessie et al., 2023).

However, the study also identified several challenges in integrating Christian values into the education curriculum. One of the main challenges is the negative influence of the digital era, such as gadget addiction, exposure to inappropriate content, and reduced face-to-face interaction. Some teachers expressed difficulty in balancing the use of technology with the instillation of moral values. In addition, there are differences in understanding among students regarding the relevance of Christian values in modern life, especially among students who are more exposed to global culture through digital media.

Overall, the findings of this study confirm that integrating Christian values into the education curriculum can be an effective strategy for shaping students' character in the digital era. However, this success requires a holistic and collaborative approach, involving teachers, families, and church communities, as well as creative and contextual adaptation of the curriculum. Thus, education can ensure that students become academically intelligent individuals with strong characters and integrity and are ready to face the challenges of the times by adhering to solid values based on faith. Through various learning methods designed creatively and contextually, values such as love, honesty, responsibility, and respect for others are successfully instilled in students (Cholilah et al., 2023). Teachers reported that students became more aware of the importance of applying these values in everyday life, both in and outside school. This improvement can be seen in student behavior, such as being more respectful of others, being responsible for using technology, and showing empathy in social interactions.

In addition, classroom observations revealed that interactions between teachers and students tended to be more positive and empathetic when Christian values were used as the basis for the learning process. Students also demonstrated the ability to reflect on their actions based on the values they had learned, which is an important indicator of character formation. This ability to reflect shows that students understand moral values theoretically and can apply them in their daily lives. For example, when students face a situation that requires a moral decision, such as the temptation to cheat or spread unverified information, they can consider the consequences of their actions and choose to act according to the values they have learned. This skill reflects moral maturity and an awareness of the importance of integrity in every action (Lestari et al., 2023).

Reflection also helps students learn from their experiences. When they make mistakes, evaluating their actions and understanding their impact on themselves and others is an important step in character growth. For example, a student who realizes that a comment they posted on social media hurt a friend's feelings can learn to be more careful about communicating in the digital world. This process of reflection improves behavior and strengthens students' commitment to living according to the moral values they believe in (Rokhman & Pristiwati, 2023).

In addition, the ability to reflect also encourages students to develop a proactive attitude in improving themselves and their surroundings. They focus on what is wrong and look for ways to contribute positively at school, home, and in the community. For example, students who realize the importance of responsibility may take the initiative to lead a social service project or help a friend in need. Their behavior shows that the values learned are personal guidelines and the basis for actions that have a broad impact.

This ability to reflect is also evidence that character education that integrates Christian values has succeeded in creating a real impact. Students actively internalize and apply moral values, not just passively receive them. Thus, character education forms knowledgeable students and individuals with self-awareness, empathy, and a commitment to living according to solid moral principles. Such an education is an important foundation for forming a young generation ready to face the challenges of the digital era with integrity and wisdom. However, this study also identified several challenges, such as the negative influence of the digital era, that can interfere with instilling moral values. Some students struggle with balancing technology with applying Christian values in their lives.

These findings suggest that the integrating Christian values into the educational curriculum can be a strong foundation for shaping the character of academically intelligent students with moral and spiritual integrity. However, this success requires support from various parties, including teachers, families, and communities, to create a consistent environment supporting student character formation. Thus, education can effectively prepare the younger generation to face the challenges of the digital era by adhering to solid values based on faith. Teachers reported that values such as love, honesty, responsibility, and respect for others were successfully instilled through various learning methods, including Bible stories, group discussions, and social service projects. Students also showed a better understanding of the importance of applying these values in everyday life, both in and outside school. In addition, classroom observations revealed that interactions between teachers and students

tended to be more positive and empathetic when Christian values were used as the basis for the learning process (Samaloissa & Bilo, 2024).

However, this study also identified several challenges in integrating Christian values into the education curriculum. One of the main challenges is the negative influence of the digital era, such as gadget addiction, exposure to inappropriate content, and reduced face-to-face interaction. Several teachers expressed difficulty in balancing the use of technology with the instillation of moral values. This challenge arises because technology, although it offers many benefits in the learning process, can also be a distraction that diverts students' attention from the core values that are intended to be instilled. For example, excessive use of gadgets can reduce face-to-face interaction between students and teachers, an important moment to instill moral values through dialogue and role models. In addition, teachers also face difficulties in ensuring that the digital content used in learning is in line with the moral values intended to be taught. Not all digital materials are designed with moral aspects in mind, and teachers must work extra hard to filter and adjust the content to suit the objectives of character education (Waruwu & Waruwu, 2023).

On the other hand, the digital era requires teachers to continue to adapt and develop creative learning methods. Teachers need to find ways to utilize technology as a tool that supports the instillation of moral values, not as a barrier. For example, digital platforms for group discussions or collaborative projects can teach values such as cooperation, responsibility, and mutual respect. However, this challenge requires adequate training and support for teachers to integrate technology effectively without sacrificing the focus on character development for students.

In addition, collaboration between teachers, parents, and the community is also key to overcoming this challenge. Parents need to be involved in the character education process, especially in supervising the use of technology at home. Meanwhile, the community can provide support through programs that support students' moral and spiritual development. With cooperation between all parties, instilling moral values can remain a priority even though technology continues to develop rapidly. This strategy ensures that students are smart technology users and individuals with strong character and moral values. In addition, there are differences in understanding among students regarding the relevance of Christian values in modern life, especially among students who are more exposed to global culture through digital media (Tafonao et al., 2022).

In the discussion, this study highlights the importance of a holistic approach in integrating Christian values into the educational curriculum. Teachers act as instructors and as living role models for students. Collaboration between schools, families, and churches is also important to create a consistent environment that supports student character formation. Character education cannot rely solely on the role of schools, because students spend significant time outside the school environment, both at home and in community activities, including church. Therefore, synergy between these three parties is key to ensuring that the moral and spiritual values taught in schools are also applied and reinforced in the family and church environment. When students see the harmony between what is taught at school, home, and church, they will find it easier to internalize these values and apply them in their daily lives (Waruwu & Sibarani, 2023).

Families play a central role in shaping students' character because parents are the first role models for children. When parents actively support the moral values taught in schools, such as honesty, responsibility, and empathy, students will feel more motivated to implement them. In addition, families can also help create healthy boundaries in the use of technology, ensuring that students are not exposed to negative content or spend excessive time in the digital world. Open communication between schools and families can strengthen these efforts, for example, through regular meetings or parenting programs that discuss the challenges of character education in the digital era (Brek, 2022).

As a center of spiritual activity, the church also has an important role in reinforcing the Christian values taught in schools. The church can help students understand the deeper meaning of love, forgiveness, and service through worship, service, and spiritual formation. Collaboration between schools and churches can be done through joint programs, such as retreats, social activities, or service projects that involve students. Such involvement enriches students' spiritual experiences and provides opportunities for them to practice the values they learn in authentic contexts.

With strong collaboration between schools, families, and churches, students will grow in a supportive and consistent environment where moral and spiritual values are taught, reinforced, and practiced continuously. This will help students face the challenges of the digital age with strong character and hold on to solid values, so they can become academically successful individuals with integrity and contribute positively to society. In addition, this study emphasizes the need for more creative and contextual curriculum adaptations, for example, by utilizing digital media to convey Christian values in a more interesting and relevant way for the younger generation (Hutching, 2014).

Conclusion

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that integrating Christian values into the education curriculum plays an important role in shaping students' character in the digital era. Values such as love, honesty, responsibility, and empathy provide a strong moral foundation and help students face the challenges that arise from technological advances. In the context of a digital world full of distractions and negative influences, these values serve as a guide for students to use technology wisely and responsibly. Students who understand and apply Christian values tend to balance technology and real life and make ethical decisions in their interactions in cyberspace. In addition, this study shows that integrating Christian values into the education curriculum impacts the formation of individual character and creates a more positive and empathetic school environment. The interaction between teachers and students becomes more harmonious, and students show greater respect for others. This illustrates the theoretical teaching of Christian values and their practical application in daily life, both inside and beyond the classroom.

However, this study also revealed that successfully integrating Christian values into the education curriculum requires support from various parties, including teachers, families, and church communities. Collaboration between schools, families, and churches is key to creating a consistent environment that supports student character formation. In addition, the curriculum needs to continue to be developed creatively and adaptively to be relevant to the

dynamics of the times and the needs of the younger generation. Overall, this study confirms that education that integrates Christian values aims to achieve academic excellence and form students with strong character, integrity, and readiness to face the complexities of the digital era. Thus, integrating Christian values into the educational curriculum can be a solid foundation for forming an intellectually intelligent young generation, has noble morals, and is based on faith.

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