

Cultivating Ethical Attitudes In Christian Religious Education For Students In The Digital Era

¹Selvikar Gulo, ²Stevanus Parinussa

^{1,2}STT Tabernakel Indonesia Surabaya
vikarrgul@gmail.com, stevanus.parinussa@sttia.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study examines the concept and implementation of cultivating ethical attitudes in Christian Religious Education (CRE) for students in the digital era. The problem is framed as a gap between knowledge of Christian values and their enactment in concrete moral decisions, rather than as a generalized claim of moral decline among students. Using a qualitative systematic literature review that adapts the main PRISMA selection stages, the study applies content analysis followed by thematic synthesis. The findings produce an integrative conceptual framework that connects five dimensions theological, pedagogical, psychological, social, and digital with six formative stages: value recognition, critical understanding, internalization, habituation, praxis, and reflection-renewal. Implementation requires ethical role-modeling by teachers, dialogical and experiential learning, authentic assessment, digital ethics, and a coherent school-family-church ecosystem. The contribution of the study lies in clarifying how these dimensions and stages are connected within CRE character formation.

Keywords: Christian Religious education, Ethical attitudes, Character formation, Digital ethics

INTRODUCTION

Student formation cannot be assessed solely in terms of academic knowledge; it must also consider students' capacity to use that knowledge responsibly in social relationships and digital spaces. Because character encompasses moral dispositions, judgment, habits, and actions, CRE needs to frame ethical concerns in terms of the relationship between what students know and how they make decisions in concrete situations (A. E. McGrath, 2018).

Article History

Submitet: September 12, 2026

Revised: September 30, 2026

Publish: October 30, 2026

Corresponding author: Selvikar Gulo

Copyright © 2026 The Author(s).



This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the **Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0)**, which permits use, distribution, reproduction, and adaptation in any medium, provided that appropriate credit is given to the original author(s) and the source, a link to the license is provided, and any changes made are indicated.

In the Indonesian context, ethical challenges faced by students are evident in educational settings that continue to confront bullying and other forms of violence. In 2023, KPAI recorded 329 complaints concerning children in educational settings, including 137 children identified as victims of bullying (Indonesia, 2024). These complaint data cannot be treated as estimates of national prevalence and do not demonstrate that students in general are experiencing moral decline. Nevertheless, the data show that students live within relationships that require the capacity to respect the dignity of others, exercise self-control, assist victims, and take responsibility for their choices. This need is also reflected in policies for preventing and addressing violence in educational institutions, including bullying, discrimination, intolerance, sexual violence, and technology-facilitated violence (Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, Dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia Nomor 46 Tahun 2023 Tentang Pencegahan Dan Penanganan Kekerasan Di Lingkungan Satuan Pendidikan, 2023).

A similar complexity is present in digital spaces. The Ministry of Communication and Informatics of the Republic of Indonesia (2023) reported that throughout 2022, the government addressed more than 3.18 million items of negative content; this figure does not indicate that students were the principal perpetrators, but rather illustrates an information environment that requires the capacity to evaluate information, manage relationships, and take responsibility for digital actions. Accordingly, digital ethics in this study is understood as a matter of students' moral capacities, not merely their ability to use technology.

Digital spaces broaden the domain of students' ethical decision-making. A systematic review shows that cyberbullying and cyberhate are interrelated forms of digital aggression in adolescent life (Fulantelli et al., 2022). A meta-analysis also indicates associations between traditional bullying and cyberbullying and a range of mental health problems among children and adolescents (Li et al., 2024). These findings should not be used to label students as perpetrators; what is relevant to this study is that students may be victims, witnesses, or decision-makers in digital interactions. Accordingly, cultivating ethical attitudes needs to foster self-control, respect for the dignity of others, verification of information, and responsibility for the consequences of digital actions.

In this context, CRE occupies a strategic position because Christian education does not end with the transmission of religious knowledge; rather, it forms persons whose lives embody faith (Lase, 2025a). The relationship between Christianity and education encompasses human formation, values, morality, and educational practice amid social change (Jeynes, 2018; Lase, 2025b). Therefore, the values of love, honesty, justice, responsibility, forgiveness, respect, and care need to be internalized as foundations for students' judgment and action.

The central problem addressed in this study is the gap between knowing values and embodying them in life. Christian character concerns the formation of habits that enable a person to act consistently with the good they affirm (Wright, 2010). Students may know that love is a Christian value, yet still require formation to respect differences, reject bullying, acknowledge wrongdoing, regulate emotions, and use social media responsibly. The cultivation of ethical attitudes is therefore positioned as both a theological and a pedagogical concern.

Cultivating ethical attitudes is inadequate if instruction merely supplies ready-made moral answers. Students need practice in evaluating situations, weighing reasons and consequences, listening to other perspectives, and taking responsibility for their decisions. This need is consistent with the development of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, for acting appropriately in concrete situations (Hatchimonji et al., 2020). In CRE, *phronesis* helps bridge Christian values and real-life dilemmas that are not always clear-cut.

Findings from social-emotional education indicate that systematic school-based interventions are associated with improvements in skills, attitudes, behavior, peer relationships, school climate, and academic achievement (Cipriano et al., 2023). This does not mean that CRE should be converted into a social-emotional learning program; rather, it underscores that ethical formation needs to engage reasoning, emotion, relationships, and decision-making alongside the spiritual dimension.

The digital era intensifies this need. Research on adolescent digital citizenship indicates that digital behavior is influenced by technological experience, internet skills, and psychological factors; digital citizenship education can also reduce negative online behavior to some extent (Lu & Gu, 2025). Technical competence therefore cannot be equated with ethical maturity, and CRE needs to guide students in exercising digital freedom responsibly.

Indonesian CRE literature has addressed character internalization, the role of teachers, the challenges of digital technology, family involvement, and character formation in the digital era (Halawa et al., 2021; Ipiana et al., 2021; Ones, 2026b; Simorangkir, 2026; Tafonao et al., 2022; Tambunan et al., 2024; Telaumbanua et al., 2024). However, these studies tend to address theological, pedagogical, psychological, social, and digital elements as separate areas of focus. This gap points to the need for a framework explaining how Christian values move from knowledge toward moral judgment, habits, and student praxis, while also showing how the process is supported by teachers, assessment, families, churches, and the digital environment.

This gap indicates that the principal problem in CRE is not a lack of moral content, but insufficient integration among faith, knowledge, dispositions, experience, and praxis. If CRE stops at knowledge transfer or compliance that depends on supervision, students may not be able to make ethical decisions independently. The research framework therefore needs to explain the progression toward practical wisdom that enables values to be applied in concrete situations (Hatchimonji et al., 2020).

On the basis of this gap, the novel contribution of this study is an integrative framework for cultivating ethical attitudes in CRE that connects five dimensions theological, pedagogical, psychological, social, and digital across six stages of formation: value recognition, critical understanding, internalization, habituation, praxis, and reflection and renewal. This framework is not intended as an empirically validated model, but as the result of a conceptual synthesis of the literature analyzed.

This study does not proceed from the claim that students or young people in general are experiencing “moral decline,” because the available data are insufficient to support such a generalization. Its focus is the gap between knowledge of values and praxis, together with the complexity of social and digital situations that require students to exercise ethical

capacities. Within this focus, students are positioned as moral agents who require formation in order to discern the good, weigh alternatives, and act responsibly.

This study aims to examine comprehensively the cultivation of ethical attitudes in CRE for students in the digital era. The research problem is organized around two questions: (1) how should the cultivation of ethical attitudes in CRE for students in the digital era be conceptualized? and (2) how can it be implemented through the role of teachers, instructional strategies, assessment, and the school-family-church ecosystem? Theoretically, the study seeks to clarify the relationship among Christian ethics, character education, pedagogy, and the digital context; practically, its findings are expected to help teachers and educational institutions design ethical formation that connects knowledge, moral judgment, habits, and praxis.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a systematic literature review design to examine the cultivation of ethical attitudes in CRE (Creswell & Guetterman, 2025; Soesana et al., 2025). The literature identification and selection process adapts the main PRISMA stages identification, screening, and eligibility assessment as procedures for selecting literature rather than as a separate research method (Zynuddin et al., 2023, p. 2). This formulation is used to maintain a single research design while clearly distinguishing the stages of the research process.

The selected literature was analyzed in two sequential stages. First, content analysis was used to identify, code, and categorize relevant information. Second, thematic synthesis was used to compare findings across studies and construct conceptual patterns. Phronesis was employed as an interpretive lens for examining the relationship between moral knowledge and concrete action, not as an additional analytical method (Hatchimonji et al., 2020, p. 131). A multidimensional approach remains necessary because character formation involves more than one domain of development (Cipriano et al., 2023, p. 1185).

The validity of the synthesis was strengthened through theoretical triangulation by comparing perspectives from theology, pedagogy, developmental psychology, character education, and digital ethics. Empirical literature on the effectiveness of character education (Brown et al., 2023, p. 121) and digital citizenship (Lu & Gu, 2025, p. 1135) was used to assess the consistency of the emerging themes with the available research evidence. Because details of the databases, search strings, search period, and number of records were not fully documented in the source manuscript, this study describes its use of PRISMA as an adaptation of the selection procedure and does not claim full PRISMA reporting for a systematic review.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Concept and Dimensions of Cultivating Ethical Attitudes in Christian Religious Education

The synthesis indicates that the cultivation of ethical attitudes in CRE is more appropriately understood as a process of formation than as the transmission of norms. This process brings together moral knowledge, inner dispositions, habits, reasoning, social relationships, action, and the orientation of faith. The complexity of definitions of character

in the literature reinforces the need not to reduce character to a list of observable behaviors (R. E. McGrath et al., 2022). In CRE, the distinctive point is that ethical decisions are understood as responses of faith that must take form in praxis.

Conceptually, these findings shift the criterion of success in CRE from religious knowing toward Christian formation. Christian character formation requires a process of becoming a person who lives out the calling of faith in everyday life (Wright, 2010). Meta-analytic evidence from character education also indicates positive effects of character programs, although the magnitude of those effects depends on program design and implementation quality (Brown et al., 2023). Read together, these findings suggest that a theological foundation alone is insufficient without pedagogical design, while pedagogical design loses the distinctive orientation of CRE when it is disconnected from a Christ-centered orientation.

At the level of content, ethical formation encompasses the values of love, honesty, justice, forgiveness, responsibility, humility, and social concern. These values are not independent “model dimensions,” but content domains processed through the integrative framework. Internalization means that values move from information toward the ways students evaluate situations, perceive moral consequences, make choices, and act. The complexity of character as a multidimensional construct reinforces the need to connect knowledge, dispositions, and action (R. E. McGrath et al., 2022). CRE therefore needs to move students from asking “What should I do?” toward asking “What kind of person am I becoming through this decision?”

Christian character is formed through repeated experiences, role modeling, habituation, reflection, and practice in decision-making. The framework of phronesis positions practical wisdom as the capacity to apply moral judgment in concrete situations (Hatchimonji et al., 2020; Lase, 2025a). Meta-analytic findings indicate that character programs can have positive effects, but their effectiveness depends on the quality of program design and implementation (Brown et al., 2023). CRE therefore needs to move beyond occasional moral lectures toward systematic formation integrated into the culture of the school.

Moral responsibility requires students to understand the consequences of their actions, including in digital spaces. A systematic review shows the interrelationship between cyberbullying and cyberhate in adolescent life (Fulantelli et al., 2022). A meta-analysis also links bullying and cyberbullying with mental health problems among children and adolescents (Li et al., 2024). These findings underscore that digital actions continue to have social and moral consequences; CRE therefore needs to cultivate self-control, respect, and responsibility.

Commitment to truth and justice requires integrity among belief, speech, and action, together with respect for human dignity. In a plural society, ethical education needs to guide students in recognizing the effects of their actions on other groups. Citizenship scholarship emphasizes the capacity to maintain one’s identity while participating democratically with groups that are different from one’s own (Banks, 2022). For CRE, mature Christian identity should be accompanied by the courage to reject discrimination and injustice.

In Indonesia’s plural society, CRE needs to cultivate the capacity to live together without relinquishing faith identity. Citizenship education emphasizes a shift from assimilation toward the capacity to live amid diversity (Banks, 2022). Research on multicultural CRE also indicates the potential of love, tolerance, moral responsibility, and

dialogical approaches in character formation (Tobe et al., 2024). Diversity therefore becomes a context of praxis in which love and respect are tested.

The spiritual dimension distinguishes Christian character formation from general character education: ethical conduct is understood as a response of faith to God. Scholarship on the relationship between Christianity and education demonstrates connections among educational purposes, human formation, values, and life in community (Jeynes, 2018). Spirituality therefore needs to be integrated into the ways students learn, relate to others, navigate conflict, use technology, and make decisions; spiritual maturity becomes visible when faith forms integrity in action.

Praxis is the culmination of formation because values lose their transformative power if they remain at the level of discourse. Christian character formation concerns the process of becoming a person who lives out God's calling (Wright, 2010). Meta-analytic evidence supports the importance of systematic character programs (Brown et al., 2023). Other evidence demonstrates positive effects of school-based interventions on skills, attitudes, behavior, relationships, and school climate (Cipriano et al., 2023). The success of CRE therefore needs to be assessed through students' capacity to practice love, reject bullying, and make ethical decisions, not solely through their knowledge of values.

The Teacher's Role as an Ethical Role Model and Facilitator of Formation

The synthesis positions the CRE teacher as both an ethical role model and a facilitator of formation. An educator's personal life and use of authority form part of the educational experience (Palmer, 2017), and the teacher's role in character development at school has also been demonstrated in the Indonesian context (Yanti, 2021). Read together, these findings indicate that the effectiveness of values education depends on coherence among what is taught, modeled, discussed, and followed through in school life.

Role modeling is the first foundation. A teacher who teaches honesty yet manipulates grading, teaches love yet humiliates students, or teaches responsibility yet acts inconsistently with commitments creates a pedagogical contradiction. Students learn not only from lesson content but also from the way teachers exercise authority. Research on teachers as role models also highlights the importance of behavioral consistency, a supportive learning environment, and constructive feedback in character formation (Turner, 1969). The example set by CRE teachers should therefore be understood as a living hidden curriculum enacted every day.

Role modeling alone is not sufficient. Students still need conceptual explanations in order to understand why an action is right or wrong. Teachers therefore need to teach values explicitly while connecting them to real-life issues (Ones, 2025). Conceptual scholarship on character demonstrates the complexity of the construct; accordingly, values education needs to help students distinguish knowledge about values from genuine character development (R. E. McGrath et al., 2022). CRE teachers need to explain values, provide examples, present cases, facilitate reflection, and then create opportunities for students to practice those values.

Students will not develop morally if they are always positioned as recipients of answers. They need to learn to account for their moral reasoning. A dialogical approach enables students to test arguments, listen to different perspectives, and understand the complexity of decisions. Scholarship on *phronesis* emphasizes the importance of practical wisdom in character development (Hatchimonji et al., 2020). Teachers therefore need to present problems that do not have mechanical answers. Cases involving bullying,

plagiarism, the spread of hoaxes, intolerance, group conflict, and peer pressure can serve as a “moral laboratory” for students.

Conflict is not necessarily a failure of education. It can become an experience of moral learning when it is managed educationally. Through conflict, students can learn to listen, apologize, acknowledge wrongdoing, repair relationships, and consider the interests of others. CRE teachers therefore should not always resolve conflict through punishment. A restorative approach is more likely to help students understand the consequences of their actions and assume responsibility for repairing the harm. This principle is consistent with approaches to character education that understand character as the capacity to do what is right, rather than as mere compliance with rules.

The teacher’s role extends beyond the CRE subject. Ethics needs to function as a perspective throughout the educational experience. School climate is important because character develops within a broader social environment. A systematic literature review of school climate shows associations with several dimensions of students’ noncognitive development, including engagement, well-being, behavior, safety, and social relationships (Zynuddin et al., 2023). CRE teachers therefore need to collaborate with other teachers, homeroom teachers, counselors, school leaders, families, and communities. Ethical education loses its force if it takes place only during CRE lessons while contradicting the wider culture of the school.

Pedagogical Strategies and Assessment of Ethical Attitudes

The synthesis indicates that implementing the cultivation of ethical attitudes requires a complementary sequence of strategies rather than a set of disconnected methods. Role modeling and habituation provide behavioral consistency; dialogue and reflection develop moral reasoning; experience and participation cultivate praxis; authentic assessment provides feedback; and institutional integration sustains continuity. Within this structure, the strategies discussed below are understood as implementation components of a single pedagogical framework.

Values need to be repeated in practice until they become habits. Schools can establish routines that strengthen honesty, responsibility, respect, discipline, care, and service. However, habituation must not become an empty ritual; it needs to be accompanied by an understanding of the moral reasons underlying the behavior. A meta-analysis of character education found an overall positive effect, although outcomes varied (Brown et al., 2023). This suggests that the success of character education depends on the quality of program design and implementation, not merely on the existence of a character program.

Dialogue provides space for students to examine their beliefs and moral reasons. The teacher does not always have to provide the final answer. Instead, the teacher can ask questions such as: “What would happen if everyone did this?”, “Who would be harmed?”, “What is our responsibility toward the victim?”, or “How can Christ’s principle of love be applied in this situation?” This approach is important because character requires not only rules but also practical wisdom. *Phronesis* is positioned as the capacity to act appropriately in concrete situations (Hatchimonji et al., 2020).

Values become more meaningful when students experience them directly. Social-service projects, environmental stewardship, visits to vulnerable groups, anti-bullying campaigns, and humanitarian projects can serve as settings for ethical education. A meta-analysis of *service-learning* indicates that service experiences can increase empathy, especially

when students engage directly with communities (Marco-Gardoqui et al., 2020). This has important implications for CRE: service should not be confined to extracurricular activities. Service can become a laboratory for character formation, where students learn to translate love into action, responsibility into service, and justice into solidarity with those in need.

An integrative approach means that ethical education is not confined to a single subject or program. Values need to be present in the curriculum, teacher-student relationships, school policies, extracurricular activities, technology use, relationships with families, and social service. Research on school climate demonstrates its relationship with the development of students' noncognitive skills (Zynuddin et al., 2023). Character formation therefore requires an ecosystem, not merely a CRE classroom.

Instruction centered on ethical attitudes needs to integrate three domains: what students know, how they evaluate and feel about an issue, and how they act. Learning therefore does not stop at the transfer of knowledge. A meta-analysis of school-based social-emotional learning shows associations with improvements in skills, attitudes, behavior, peer relationships, school climate, and academic achievement (Cipriano et al., 2023). These findings indicate that the development of social and moral capacities has broader consequences for students' lives.

Case studies enable students to engage with realistic situations. Cases may involve plagiarism, grade manipulation, *cyberbullying*, intolerance, the spread of false information, peer pressure, identity conflict, discrimination, or environmental issues. Through case studies, students can be asked to identify the problem, the parties affected, conflicting values, possible courses of action, the consequences of each option, and the most responsible decision. This approach develops moral *reasoning* as well as *practical wisdom*.

Assessment of ethical attitudes is inadequate if it relies solely on written tests. A scoping review reveals substantial methodological problems in character education research: of 981 articles analyzed, only 10% were intervention studies, while 72% of quantitative studies did not use measures judged to be valid (Oldham & McLoughlin, 2026). These findings show that character measurement is a methodological issue that should not be treated lightly. CRE assessment therefore needs to triangulate evidence. Teachers can combine observation, rubrics, portfolios, self-reflection, peer assessment, service projects, interviews, and case-based tasks. No single instrument is sufficient to conclude that a person possesses a particular character trait.

Rubrics help translate abstract moral concepts into observable behavioral indicators. Scholarship on rubrics emphasizes that effective rubrics require criteria aligned with the purpose of assessment and clear descriptions of performance levels (Brookhart, 2018). However, rubrics should not be understood as tools for "assigning an absolute score to character." They provide only indicators based on behavioral evidence. Because character develops dynamically, assessment results should be used to determine the next steps in formation.

Portfolios allow student development to be viewed as a process. They may include reflective journals, service reports, social-project outputs, activity documentation, responses to case studies, and reflections on moral experiences. Research on self-assessment indicates that this approach can support students' engagement in understanding the quality of their work and developing self-regulation (Andrade, 2019). In CRE, self-reflection can be guided by questions such as: "What did I do?", "Why did I do it?", "Who was affected?", "Did my action reflect Christian values?", and "What do I need to change?" *Peer assessment* is also important because character is always expressed in relationships. However, its use requires

clear guidelines so that it does not become a means of disparaging others. Peer assessment should be oriented toward feedback rather than punishment.

Observation enables teachers to examine behavior in real contexts. However, observation needs clear indicators and repeated application so that it is not dominated by subjective impressions. A meta-analysis of 435 studies involving more than 61,000 participants found positive effects of feedback on learning, although its effectiveness depends greatly on the quality of the information provided (Wisniewski et al., 2020). Thus, a comment such as “You need to do better” is less educational than specific feedback: “During the discussion, you were able to defend your position, but you did not yet give your classmate space to finish their argument; how could you improve this in the next discussion?” This approach turns assessment into a process of formation rather than merely a process of classification.

The cultivation of ethical attitudes needs to begin at the planning stage. Teachers need to formulate objectives that explicitly connect knowledge competencies with attitudes and actions. A CRE learning objective, for example, should not stop at “students understand the meaning of love,” but can be developed into “students are able to analyze conflict on the basis of the principle of love, demonstrate the ability to listen to the perspectives of others, and design a reconciliatory course of action.” With this formulation, character becomes part of the learning objective rather than an addition after the content has been taught.

Case studies can serve as a primary strategy for developing ethical reasoning. Simulation then moves students from the cognitive domain into experience. For example, a teacher can design a simulation of a *cyberbullying* case. Some students take the roles of victim, perpetrator, witness, teacher, and parent. After the simulation, the teacher does not immediately provide a conclusion but asks students to reflect on the experience of each role. This strategy is important because moral issues often require not only knowledge of rules but also the ability to understand the experiences of others. This is consistent with the framework of *phronesis*, which emphasizes the capacity to apply moral judgment in concrete situations (Hatchimonji et al., 2020).

Biblical narratives can be used not only as sources of information but also as means of forming the moral imagination. Stories of forgiveness, courage, service, conflict, suffering, and reconciliation can be connected with students’ experiences. Dialogue then functions as a bridge between narrative and life. Teachers can ask: “If you were in the position of this person, what would you do?” or “What makes such an action difficult?” Questions such as these enable students to develop moral sensitivity.

Character develops in relationships. Collaborative learning therefore needs to be designed not merely to complete tasks more quickly, but to help students learn to share responsibility, resolve conflict, listen, and value the contributions of others. Research on *service-learning* demonstrates benefits for social engagement and empathy, especially when students interact directly with communities (Marco-Gardoqui et al., 2020). In CRE, projects may take the form of anti-bullying campaigns, service to vulnerable groups, environmental projects, child mentoring, initiatives to foster social concern, or digital literacy. Assessment should address not only the final product but also the process: responsibility, cooperation, integrity, leadership, and the capacity to resolve conflict.

Digital Ethics and the Supporting Ecosystem

In the context of implementation, the findings show that teachers cannot work alone. School climate is associated with students' noncognitive development (Zynuddin et al., 2023), while adolescent digital citizenship is shaped by technological experience, digital skills, and psychological factors (Lu & Gu, 2025). Taken together, these findings indicate that CRE requires an ecosystem that maintains consistency of values across the classroom, school culture, family, church, community, and digital spaces. Digital ethics is therefore not an additional topic, but a context of praxis for love, honesty, self-control, respect, and responsibility.

Character formation cannot be entrusted to schools alone. Schools, families, churches, and communities are interacting environments in students' lives (Ones, 2026a). Research on family-school-community partnerships highlights the importance of connections among these contexts in education (Sheldon & Turner-Vorbeck, 2018). In CRE, this principle can be extended into an ecosystem of Christian character formation. Families can reinforce habits developed at school (Panjaitan, 2022); churches can provide spaces for service and mentoring; schools provide pedagogical structures; and communities provide contexts for social enactment. Consistency across these four environments increases the likelihood that values will be internalized.

Not every moral issue can be addressed through whole-class instruction. Students may face family problems, peer pressure, identity conflicts, experiences of being bullied, dilemmas of faith, or personal struggles that require individual support. CRE teachers therefore need a basic capacity to recognize students' needs, but should not assume the role of a professional counselor when an issue falls outside their competence. Ethical-spiritual accompaniment should be grounded in relationships that are safe, empathetic, confidential within professional boundaries, and oriented toward restoration. This approach is also consistent with the understanding that character develops within relational environments. Research on school climate indicates that the quality of relationships and a sense of safety are important dimensions of school life (Gonzálvez et al., 2023); (Zynuddin et al., 2023).

Synthesis of the Integrative Framework: Five Dimensions and Six Stages of Ethical Formation

Based on the overall review, this integrative framework has two layers that need to be distinguished to avoid overlap. The first layer comprises five analytical dimensions—theological, pedagogical, psychological, social, and digital—that explain the elements that need to be connected in ethical formation. The second layer comprises six process stages: value recognition → critical understanding → internalization → habituation → praxis → reflection and renewal. This distinction clarifies that the “dimensions” answer what is integrated, whereas the “stages” answer how formation unfolds.

The *first* stage is value recognition. Students need to know the values that provide the foundation for Christian life. The *second* stage is critical understanding: the ability to explain why a value is important and how it applies in concrete situations. The *third* stage is internalization, when values begin to shape inner orientation and decisions. The *fourth* stage is habituation, when ethical actions are repeated until they become behavioral dispositions. The *fifth* stage is praxis, when students enact values in real life. The *sixth* stage is reflection and renewal, when students evaluate their actions and determine what changes are needed.

These six stages do not imply that character development is always linear. Character appears in relatively consistent tendencies but may progress or regress depending on

context; assessment therefore needs to be repeated and formative. The literature on character measurement warns of problems concerning instrument validity and research-design quality (Oldham & McLoughlin, 2026). Consequently, claims that students “already possess character” should not be based on a single test or observation; teachers need to interpret development as a pattern over time and involve the supporting ecosystem.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, this study extends CRE from a knowledge-transmission paradigm toward Christian ethical formation and offers an explicit relationship between five dimensions and six stages. Pedagogically, evidence from character education and social-emotional learning indicates that systematic interventions can support the development of attitudes and behavior (Brown et al., 2023); (Cipriano et al., 2023). Within CRE, these findings are interpreted as a need to integrate the theological foundation, learning experiences, relationships, reflection, and assessment rather than adopting general programs uncritically. Practically, the distribution of implementation roles is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Operational Directions for Implementing the Ethical-Attitude Cultivation Framework

Actor/Context	Primary Role	Implementation Practices	Process Indicators
CRE Teacher	Ethical role model and facilitator of reflection	Case studies, ethical dialogue, mentoring, formative feedback	Consistency of role modeling, quality of reflection, and follow-up
School	Building a consistent culture and set of policies	Bullying prevention, digital ethics, authentic assessment, a safe school climate	Coherence of rules, safe relationships, and consistency of practice
Family	Reinforcing habits and providing guidance	Values dialogue, habituation, guidance in the use of digital media	Continuity of values between home and school
Church	Faith accompaniment and spaces for service praxis	Mentoring, faith reflection, service projects	Participation, responsibility, and reflection on experience
Digital spaces	Context for enacting moral responsibility	Information literacy, respectful communication, self-control	Capacity to evaluate information and the consequences of digital actions

The challenge of cultivating ethical attitudes is not primarily a lack of moral content, but a lack of continuity among what students are taught, what they experience, what is assessed, and what they practice. If a school teaches honesty while its assessment system encourages unhealthy competition, if CRE teaches love while students experience humiliation, or if a school speaks about digital responsibility while adults themselves display unethical digital behavior, education communicates contradictory moral messages.

The principal contribution of CRE to character formation therefore lies not in the number of values taught, but in the coherence among theology, pedagogy, role modeling, experience, school culture, assessment, and the praxis of life. Christian ethical education becomes transformative when students are not only able to say that an action is right, but also possess the wisdom to discern what is right, the courage to choose it, the habit of acting upon it, and the humility to continue correcting themselves when they fail.

Accordingly, the cultivation of ethical attitudes in CRE should be understood as a Christ-centered, relational, reflective, experiential, contextual, digital, and ongoing process of formation. Its ultimate orientation is not merely to produce students who comply with school rules, but persons who are able to embody Christian faith authentically in the family, school, church, society, and digital spaces. In this sense, CRE recovers its transformative function: not merely teaching about Christian life, but forming students to live as witnesses to Christian faith in a continually changing world.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the principal challenge in cultivating ethical attitudes in CRE is not simply a lack of moral knowledge, but the gap between the values students know and their capacity to use those values in real decisions, including in digital spaces. To address this challenge, the study develops an integrative framework that connects five dimensions – theological, pedagogical, psychological, social, and digital – with six stages of formation: value recognition, critical understanding, internalization, habituation, praxis, and reflection and renewal. Students are thus positioned as moral agents who require formation in order to evaluate situations, make decisions, and take responsibility for their actions on the basis of Christian faith.

Implementing this framework requires CRE teachers to function as ethical role models and facilitators of reflection, not merely as transmitters of content. Learning needs to integrate dialogue, case studies, participatory experiences, habituation, mentoring, digital ethics, and ongoing authentic assessment. Responsibility for successful formation cannot be placed on teachers alone; consistency among the school, family, church, community, and digital spaces is necessary so that students receive coherent moral messages and have opportunities to put them into practice.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in its clearer distinction between the five dimensions to be integrated and the six stages of the ethical-formation process in CRE, while its practical contribution consists of implementation directions that connect the roles of teachers, schools, families, churches, and the digital context. The study is limited by its basis in literature synthesis and by the fact that the framework has not yet been tested empirically with students; in addition, documentation of the search procedure does not yet meet full PRISMA reporting requirements. Future research needs to test the applicability of the framework through field studies and develop valid evaluation indicators for assessing longitudinal changes in ethical attitudes.

REFERENCES

- Andrade, H. L. (2019). A critical review of research on student self-assessment. *Frontiers in Education*, 4, 87. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2019.00087>
- Banks, J. A. (2022). Diversity, group identity, and citizenship education in a global age. In U. Bauer, U. H. Bittlingmayer, & A. Scherr (Eds.), *Handbuch Bildungs- und Erziehungssoziologie*. Springer VS. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-31395-1_20-1
- Brookhart, S. M. (2018). Appropriate criteria: Key to effective rubrics. *Frontiers in Education*, 3, 22. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2018.00022>
- Brown, M., McGrath, R. E., Bier, M. C., Johnson, K., & Berkowitz, M. W. (2023). A comprehensive meta-analysis of character education programs. *Journal of Moral Education*, 52(2), 119–138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2022.2060196>

- Cipriano, C., Strambler, M. J., Naples, L. H., Ha, C., Kirk, M., Wood, M., Sehgal, K., Zieher, A. K., Eveleigh, A., McCarthy, M., Funaro, M., Ponnock, A., Chow, J. C., & Durlak, J. D. (2023). The state of evidence for social and emotional learning: A contemporary meta-analysis of universal school-based SEL interventions. *Child Development*, 94(5), 1181–1204. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13968>
- Creswell, J. W., & Guetterman, T. C. (2025). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (7th ed.). Pearson.
- Fulantelli, G., Taibi, D., Scifo, L., Schwarze, V., & Eimler, S. C. (2022). Cyberbullying and cyberhate as two interlinked instances of cyber-aggression in adolescence: A systematic review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 909299. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.909299>
- Gonzálvez, C., Bacon, V., & Kearney, C. A. (2023). Systematic and evaluative review of school climate instruments for students, teachers, and parents. *Psychology in the Schools*, 60(6), 1781–1836. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22838>
- Halawa, C., Hestiningrum, P. N., & Iswahyudi. (2021). Peran guru pendidikan agama Kristen dalam pembentukan karakter peserta didik di sekolah. *Didache: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristen*, 2(2), 133–145. <https://doi.org/10.55076/didache.v2i2.44>
- Hatchimonji, D. R., Linsky, A. C. V, Nayman, S. J., & Elias, M. J. (2020). Spiral model of phronesis development: Social-emotional and character development in low-resourced urban schools. *Journal of Moral Education*, 49(1), 129–142. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2019.1626703>
- Indonesia, K. P. A. (2024). *Pemerintah bersama tri pusat pendidikan harus lebih optimal “turun tangan” atasi bullying/perundungan pada satuan pendidikan*. Komisi Perlindungan Anak Indonesia. <https://www.kpai.go.id/publikasi/pemerintah-bersama-tri-pusat-pendidikan-harus-lebih-optimal-turun-tangan-atasi-bullying-perundungan-pada-satuan-pendidikan>
- Ipiana, Novitasari, K. D., & Mononimbar, Y. Y. (2021). Internalisasi pendidikan karakter melalui Pendidikan Agama Kristen. *Metanoia: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Kristen*, 3(2), 102–111. <https://doi.org/10.55962/metanoia.v3i2.50>
- Jeynes, W. H. (Ed.). (2018). *The Wiley handbook of Christianity and education*. Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119098416>
- Lase, O. P. (2025a). Experiential Learning: Dari Pengetahuan Kognitif Menuju Iman Konkret dalam Pendidikan Agama Kristen. *DOREA: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristiani*, 3(2), 116–129.
- Lase, O. P. (2025b). Robert Raikes dan Relevansi Sekolah Minggu: Dari Sejarah Pendidikan Agama Anak Hingga Tantangan Era Digital. *Parakletos: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen*, 2(1), 1–16.
- Li, C., Wang, P., Martin-Moratinos, M., Bella-Fernández, M., & Blasco-Fontecilla, H. (2024). Traditional bullying and cyberbullying in the digital age and its associated mental health problems in children and adolescents: A meta-analysis. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 33(9), 2895–2909. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-022-02128-x>
- Lu, C., & Gu, M. M. (2025). A systematic review and meta-analysis of factors and outcomes of digital citizenship among adolescents. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 45(4), 1130–1145. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2023.2296352>
- Marco-Gardoqui, M., Eizaguirre, A., & García-Feijoo, M. (2020). The impact of service-learning methodology on business schools’ students worldwide: A systematic literature review. *PLOS ONE*, 15(12), e0244389. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0244389>
- McGrath, A. E. (2018). *Theology: The Basics* (4th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
- McGrath, R. E., Han, H., Brown, M., & Meindl, P. (2022). What does character education mean to character education experts? A prototype analysis of expert opinions. *Journal of Moral Education*, 51(2), 219–237. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2020.1862073>

- Oldham, P., & McLoughlin, S. (2026). Character education research: A scoping review. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 74(2), 169–192.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2025.2557208>
- Ones, O. P. L. (2025). Kontribusi dan Keterbatasan Teori Behavioristik dalam Proses Pembelajaran. *PAIDEIA: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Kristen*, 1(2), 1–12.
- Ones, O. P. L. (2026a). Manajemen Moral dan Karakter dalam Pendidikan Kristen di Era Kontemporer. *Edukris: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Kristen*, 2(01), 45–61.
- Ones, O. P. L. (2026b). Strategi Pendidikan Agama Kristen Dalam Menyiapkan Pemimpin Kristen Yang Tangguh di Era Sekularisasi. *PAIDEIA: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Kristen*, 2(1), 1–14.
- Palmer, P. J. (2017). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life* (20th anniv). Jossey-Bass.
- Panjaitan, Y. K. (2022). Studi Eksegesis Ulangan 6:4-9 Bagi Pendidikan Anak. *Skenoo : Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen*, 2(1), 80–88.
<https://doi.org/10.55649/skenoo.v2i1.31>
- Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia Nomor 46 Tahun 2023 tentang Pencegahan dan Penanganan Kekerasan di Lingkungan Satuan Pendidikan, (2023). <https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Details/285721/permendi>
- Sheldon, S. B., & Turner-Vorbeck, T. A. (Eds.). (2018). *The Wiley handbook of family, school, and community relationships in education*. Wiley-Blackwell.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119083054>
- Simorangkir, H. (2026). The role of Christian Religious Education teachers in shaping students' character in the digital era: A qualitative study at SMP Negeri 1 Siatas Barita. *Journal of Education and Religion*, 2(2), 64–71.
- Soesana, A., Sugianto, E., Sutandharu, A. N., Panjaitan, Y. K., Gani, M., Lase, O. P., Kairupan, A. Y. Y., Sihombing, R. L., Manurung, P., & Zebua, K. (2025). *Metodologi Penelitian Teologi*. Yayasan Kita Menulis.
- Tafonao, T., Gulo, Y., Situmeang, T. M., & Ditakristi, A. H. V. (2022). Tantangan Pendidikan Agama Kristen dalam menanamkan nilai-nilai Kristen pada anak usia dini di era teknologi. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 6(5), 4847–4859.
<https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v6i5.2645>
- Tambunan, R. P., Arifianto, Y. A., & Triposa, R. (2024). Peran Pendidikan Agama Kristen dalam mengembangkan karakter siswa di era digital. *Jurnal Lentera Nusantara*, 4(1), 30–47.
- Telaumbanua, A., Zega, Y. K., & Harefa, D. (2024). Implementasi Pendidikan Agama Kristen dalam keluarga terhadap pertumbuhan iman anak. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Konseling*, 6(2), 2150–2158. <https://doi.org/10.31004/jpdk.v6i2.19231>
- Tobe, Y., Tafuli, J., & Topayung, S. L. (2024). Pendidikan Agama Kristen sebagai sarana pembentukan karakter dalam konteks multikulturalisme. *Berkat: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Dan Katolik*, 1(4), 25–37. <https://doi.org/10.61132/berkat.v1i4.178>
- Turner, V. (1969). *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*. Aldine.
- Wisniewski, B., Zierer, K., & Hattie, J. (2020). The power of feedback revisited: A meta-analysis of educational feedback research. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 3087.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.03087>
- Wright, N. T. (2010). *After you believe: Why Christian character matters*.
- Yanti, G. A. M. T. (2021). Teachers' role in developing Indonesian students' character education at school. *Journal of Educational Study*, 1(2), 21–27.
<https://doi.org/10.36663/joes.v1i2.148>
- Zynuddin, S. N., Kenayathulla, H. B., & Sumintono, B. (2023). The relationship between school climate and students' non-cognitive skills: A systematic literature review. *Heliyon*, 9(4), e14773. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e14773>