

# THE ROLE OF SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN CHILDREN'S CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT AT BETHEL INDONESIA CHURCH, HOTEL PELANGI, SIMPANG SELAYANG, MEDAN, 2024

Novita Romauli Saragih<sup>1)</sup>, Selamat Karo-Karo<sup>2)</sup>, Dameria Girsang<sup>3)</sup> Padriadi Wiharokusumo<sup>4)</sup>, Esra Zalukhu<sup>5)</sup>

Fakultas Keguruan & Ilmu Pendidikan Universitas Darma Agung, Medan, Indonesia <sup>1,2,4)</sup>,

Usaha Perjalanan Wisata Akademi Pariwisata dan Perhotelan Darma Agung, Medan, Indonesia <sup>3,4)</sup>

Corresponding Author:

[novitaromauli12@gmail.com](mailto:novitaromauli12@gmail.com)<sup>1)</sup>, [selamatkaro@gmail.com](mailto:salamatkaro@gmail.com)<sup>2)</sup>, [mberhul@gmail.com](mailto:mberhul@gmail.com)<sup>3)</sup>, [knb.ministry76@gmail.com](mailto:knb.ministry76@gmail.com)<sup>4)</sup>, [esrazalukhu06@gmail.com](mailto:esrazalukhu06@gmail.com)<sup>5)</sup>.

## Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas peran guru Sekolah Minggu dalam membentuk karakter anak melalui pendidikan agama Kristen. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah mengidentifikasi strategi pengajaran yang diterapkan serta dampaknya terhadap perkembangan karakter anak. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus di Gereja Bethel Indonesia Hotel Pelangi Simpang Selayang Medan. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan studi dokumen.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru Sekolah Minggu berperan penting dalam membentuk karakter anak melalui keteladanan, pembelajaran berbasis Alkitab, dan interaksi sosial yang positif. Metode kreatif seperti bercerita, bermain peran, dan aktivitas kelompok terbukti meningkatkan pemahaman anak terhadap nilai-nilai Kristen. Namun, tantangan seperti kurangnya pelatihan, keterbatasan fasilitas, dan tingkat partisipasi anak yang bervariasi masih dihadapi.

Disarankan agar gereja menyediakan pelatihan rutin bagi guru Sekolah Minggu, meningkatkan ketersediaan bahan ajar yang relevan, serta mengembangkan kurikulum yang lebih terstruktur dan sesuai dengan perkembangan anak. Selain itu, keterlibatan orang tua dalam pendidikan karakter anak diharapkan dapat memperkuat hasil pembelajaran. Dengan memperkuat peran guru Sekolah Minggu, penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam membangun karakter anak secara moral dan spiritual sesuai nilai-nilai Kristen di Gereja Bethel Indonesia Hotel Pelangi Simpang Selayang Medan.

**Kata Kunci:** Guru Sekolah Minggu, Karakter Anak, Pendidikan Agama Kristen, Pembentukan Karakter.

## Abstract

*This study examines the role of Sunday School teachers in shaping children's character through Christian religious education. The objective of this research is to identify the teaching strategies implemented and their impact on children's character development. The study employs a qualitative method with a case study approach conducted at Bethel Indonesia Church, Hotel Pelangi, Simpang Selayang, Medan. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis.*

*The findings indicate that Sunday School teachers play a crucial role in character formation through role modeling, Bible-based learning, and positive social interactions. Creative teaching methods such as storytelling, role-playing, and interactive group activities have been proven to enhance children's understanding of Christian values. However, challenges such as a lack of training, limited facilities, and varying levels of student participation remain obstacles.*

*It is recommended that churches provide regular training for Sunday School teachers, improve the availability of relevant teaching materials, and develop a more structured curriculum suited to children's growth. Additionally, parental involvement in character education is expected to strengthen learning outcomes. By enhancing the role of Sunday School teachers, this study contributes to the moral and spiritual development of children in Bethel Indonesia Church, Hotel Pelangi, Simpang Selayang, Medan.*

**Keywords:** Sunday School Teachers, Children's Character, Christian Religious Education, Character Formation.

## INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, character education plays a crucial role in shaping children's personalities. Sunday School, as a key institution in Christian communities, contributes significantly to this process by integrating religious education with character formation. Sunday School teachers are tasked not only with imparting biblical knowledge but also with modeling and instilling Christian values in children's daily lives (Albrecht, 1995).

Character education serves as a foundational pillar for nurturing integrity in young generations. The church, through Sunday School, provides a structured environment where children learn to align their character with the teachings of Jesus Christ. However, challenges such as limited teaching resources, outdated methodologies, and lack of environmental support often hinder the optimal impact of these efforts (Damon, W. 2008).

### Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in two pivotal theories:

1. Berkowitz's Character Education Theory (2012):
  - a. Emphasizes a tripartite approach to moral development:
    - 1) *Moral knowing* (understanding values like honesty and empathy through biblical teachings).
    - 2) *Moral feeling* (cultivating emotional responses such as guilt and compassion).
    - 3) *Moral action* (applying values in real-life contexts, e.g., group prayers or charity work).
  - b. Aligns with the role of Sunday School teachers as facilitators of value internalization.
2. Bandura's Social Learning Theory:
  - a. Highlights observational learning (*modeling*), where children emulate teachers' behaviors.
  - b. Stresses the importance of *reinforcement* (e.g., praise for positive actions) and *social interaction* (e.g., peer collaboration in activities).
  - c. Supports the use of creative methods (storytelling, role-

playing) to reinforce moral lessons.

### **Research Gap and Objectives**

While prior studies (e.g., Damon W, 2008) acknowledge the role of Sunday School in moral development, few examine how teachers' strategies align with these theoretical frameworks in resource-constrained settings. This study addresses this gap by:

1. Analyzing the teaching methods employed by Sunday School teachers at Bethel Indonesia Church, Hotel Pelangi, Simpang Selayang, Medan.
2. Evaluating their effectiveness in character formation through the lenses of Berkowitz's and Bandura's theories.
3. Proposing context-specific solutions to enhance teachers' impact.

By bridging theory and practice, this research aims to empower churches and educators to optimize Sunday School programs for holistic character development.

### **A. Definition of Christian Religious Education**

Christian religious education is a teaching and learning process aimed at shaping a person's character and personality according

to Christian teachings. The goal of Christian religious education is to develop faith in Jesus Christ and foster behavior that aligns with Christian values. "Christian religious education is an effort to teach and instill Christian values, doctrines, and principles in an individual or a group. Its purpose is to help individuals develop a proper relationship with God, fellow human beings, and the universe." Additionally, Christian religious education aims to help students understand and apply Christian teachings in their daily lives.

Albrecht, Gloria (1995), emphasizes the character of the Christian community, which is rooted in Christian religious teachings, and how this character shapes the church's collective praxis. The objective is to help individuals understand, internalize, and practice the values contained in these teachings. "Christian education is not only focused on the transfer of knowledge but also on character and moral development according to Christian teachings." Generally, Christian religious education can be defined as an effort to provide teaching and guidance to individuals so that they acquire knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of Christian religious values and can apply them in their daily lives.

The primary objectives of Christian religious education include:

1. Introducing Jesus Christ as the Savior.
2. Deepening the teachings of the Bible.
3. Developing spirituality and a relationship with God.
4. Shaping character according to the example of Jesus Christ.
5. Applying Christian values in daily life.
6. Providing knowledge about Christian teachings based on the Bible.
7. Helping individuals understand the meaning and relevance of Christian teachings in modern life.
8. Strengthening faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

According to Groome, Thomas H. (1998), "it is essential to understand and apply Christian religious teachings in daily life, not merely as theoretical knowledge but as a foundation for action and interaction with the world." He also emphasizes the importance of building a faith community that supports and enriches an individual's spiritual growth.

Education plays a crucial role in human life and the development of a nation. The following are definitions of education and references: "Developing Self-Potential: Education helps individuals develop their potential in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. Through education, individuals can acquire the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to face life's challenges."

According to Albrecht, Gloria (1995), Character Formation: Education plays a role in shaping an individual's character and personality. "Moral, ethical, and cultural values are taught through education so that individuals can become responsible citizens who contribute positively to society."

Several definitions of education include:

1. Education is "a conscious and planned effort to create a learning environment and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to have spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills needed for themselves, society, the nation, and the state."
2. Education is the process of guiding human development toward maturity through teaching and training.

3. Education is an effort to shape personality and develop an individual's abilities or potential to overcome life's challenges.
4. Education is a process of preparing young generations to live effectively and efficiently and achieve life's purposes.

In general, "education aims to develop all human potential, both physically and spiritually, shape personality, intelligence, and noble character, as well as the skills necessary for individuals and society." The educational process continues throughout life, both formally in schools and informally in various settings.

### **B. The Role of Sunday School Teachers in Character Development**

The role of Sunday school teachers in children's character development is crucial. "Sunday school teachers do not only teach religious and spiritual values but also play a role in instilling positive character in children." Some key points regarding the role of Sunday school teachers in children's character development are as follows: (Homrighausen, E.G. & Enklaar, I.H., 2004, p.3).

- **Being a Role Model**

Sunday school teachers must serve as role models in their behavior and speech. Children tend to imitate what they see and hear from those around them, especially teachers they respect.

- **Teaching Positive Values**

Sunday school teachers have the responsibility to teach positive values such as honesty, responsibility, respect for others, discipline, and hard work. These values should be integrated into classroom learning.

- **Creating a Positive Environment**

Sunday school teachers must create a positive, safe, and comfortable learning environment for children. Such an environment helps children feel valued and supported in their character development process.

- **Providing Guidance and Support**

Sunday school teachers act as guides and supporters for children in facing challenges and problems. They must be ready to offer advice and direction to help children develop good character.

- **Involving Parents**

Sunday school teachers must collaborate with parents to ensure consistency in character-building efforts at home and in

Sunday school. Good communication with parents is essential in this process (Homrighausen, E.G. & Enklaar, I.H., 2004, pp. 6-7).

By fulfilling these roles, Sunday school teachers can contribute significantly to children's character development, enabling them to become a faithful and morally upright generation.

#### **• Education's Role in Character Formation**

The role of education must be examined based on current developments and in line with time. There is also a modern and future perspective on education's role. One of education's important tasks is to ensure that knowledge remains an asset for the future while also being preserved and available for present-day life. The current perspective refers to an ongoing process or activity that involves receiving and discovering knowledge. Meanwhile, the future perspective indicates the direction or goal of education efforts (Wiharjokusumo, 2021).

Therefore, "the role of religion as a unifier among religions and nations is essential. In a society with diverse ways of life, Christian religious education [CRE] focuses on strengthening faith." As a result, differences among individuals in society should not lead

to mutual blame. Christian religious education should aim at fostering true understanding to avoid conflicts.

#### **• Understanding Character**

According to the National Language Center, character refers to "innate traits, heart, soul, morals, behavior, personality, nature, temperament, and disposition." Character also determines how we apply moral values in the form of actions or behaviors. Therefore, a dishonest, cruel, greedy, or otherwise immoral person is labeled as having a bad character, whereas a person who behaves according to moral and ethical norms is considered to have noble character (Saragih et al, 2024).

#### **• Christian Values That Should Be Applied (Galatians 5:22-23)**

(Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-Control,).

#### **• The Importance of Love in Human Life**

"Love unites human life, and without love, the world would be chaotic because people would not prioritize love for one another." Love is the primary commandment that Jesus taught to every believer (Wiharokusumo, 2024).

## METHOD IMPLEMENTATION

This study was conducted at the Bethel Indonesia Church, Hotel Pelangi, Simpang Selayang, Medan, aiming to analyze the role of Sunday school teachers in children's character development. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and surveys, involving 5 Sunday school teachers, 15 parents, 20 children (aged 7-12), and 2 pastors. Teachers were selected based on a minimum of two years of experience, while parents had children actively participating in Sunday school. Children were randomly selected from the Sunday school group.

The data collection methods included in-depth interviews to understand the experiences and views of teachers, parents, children, and pastors regarding moral education, parental support, and the impact of Sunday school activities. Observations were made during Sunday school sessions to identify teaching methods, teacher-child interactions, and behavioral changes. Surveys were distributed to parents and children to assess the influence of moral values taught in Sunday school on character development, focusing on honesty, empathy, and responsibility.

Data analysis involved categorizing the interviews and survey results to identify themes related to teaching methods and parental involvement. Observational data were analyzed using Berkowitz's and Bandura's theories on moral education and social learning. Teachers also reported challenges such as limited resources and lack of formal pedagogical training, which affected the consistency and effectiveness of character education.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### A. Research Results

This study aims to analyze the role of Sunday school teachers in the character development of children at the Bethel Indonesia Church, Hotel Pelangi, Simpang Selayang, Medan. Data were collected through interviews with Sunday school teachers, parents, children, and pastors. The following are the key findings:

#### 1. Forms of Sunday School Teacher Service

- a. **Bible Teaching:** Using storytelling, drama, and visual aids.
- b. **Prayer and Worship:** Leading group prayers and hymns.
- c. **Creative Activities:** Coloring, drawing, and crafts related to Bible lessons.

- d. **Moral and Ethical Guidance:** Teaching Christian values such as honesty and responsibility.
- e. **Emotional Support:** Providing support and advice to children.
- f. **Social Activities:** Visiting orphanages and charitable activities.
- g. **Spiritual Development:** Guiding children in their personal relationship with God.
- h. **Collaboration with Parents:** Offering advice and resources for children's development at home.
- i. **Special Events:** Organizing events such as Christmas, Easter, and Vacation Bible School (VBS).

## 2. Role of Parents

Parents serve as the primary role models in character formation by:

- a. Establishing moral foundations.
- b. Setting positive behavior examples.
- c. Providing emotional support and supervision.
- d. Actively engaging in their children's lives.

## 3. Parental Contributions

- a. 73% of parents reinforced Sunday school lessons at home.

- b. Primary roles: **modeling behavior** (e.g., honesty), **emotional support**, and **supervision**.

## 4. Children and Pastor Perspectives

- a. Children associated "good character" with **helping others** (85%) and **truthfulness** (78%).
- b. Pastors emphasized teachers' role in **establishing moral foundations**.

## B. Discussion of Research Results with Supporting Theories

**Tabel 1**

**Comparison of Berkowitz's Character Education Theory and Bandura's Social Learning Theory in Children's Moral Development**

### **Berkowitz's Character Education Theory (2012)**

Component	Description	Example
<b>Moral Knowing</b>	Children understand values such as honesty, empathy, and responsibility .	Sunday school teachers convey moral values through Bible stories and discussions.
<b>Moral Feeling</b>	Children develop	Social activities



	empathy, guilt when they do wrong, and motivation to behave well.	like visiting orphanages help children feel compassion for others.
<b>Moral Action</b>	Children learn to apply values in daily behavior.	Children are taught to be honest in admitting mistakes and helping friends.
<b>Supportive Environment</b>	Schools, families, and communities create a consistent climate for character building.	Collaboration between Sunday school teachers and parents strengthens the application of values at home and church.

### Bandura's Social Learning Theory

Component	Description	Example
<b>Modeling</b>	Children imitate behaviors of authority figures such as teachers and parents.	Sunday school teachers serve as role models for honesty, patience, and kindness.
<b>Reinforcement</b>	Positive behavior is reinforced through praise, rewards, or recognition.	Teachers praise children when they display helpful or honest behavior.

<b>Social Interaction</b>	Children learn values through interactions with peers and adults.	Group activities in Sunday school teach cooperation and empathy.
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### Synthesis:

- **Berkowitz** explains how children *understand* values (e.g., through Bible stories), while **Bandura** highlights *imitation* of teacher/parent behaviors.
- Both theories align in emphasizing consistent environments (church + home) for lasting impact.

### C. Challenges & Solutions

- Teacher limitations (resource scarcity, training gaps) reduced lesson consistency.
- Recommendation: Church-funded workshops to enhance pedagogical skills.

### D. Integrative Analysis: How Theories Support Research Findings

- Moral Value Learning (Berkowitz & Bandura)**
  - Sunday school teachers use Bible stories (Berkowitz: moral knowing) and drama/role-playing (Bandura: observational learning) to teach values like honesty and compassion.

- b. Children not only understand the values but also witness concrete examples from teachers (Bandura: modeling).

## 2. Formation of Positive Habits

- a. Routines like group prayers and charity activities (Berkowitz: moral action) help children form good habits.
- b. Positive reinforcement (Bandura: reinforcement), such as praise when children behave well, strengthens the internalization of values.

## 3. Role of Social Environment

- a. Collaboration between teachers and parents creates a consistent environment (Berkowitz: supportive environment).
- b. Interaction with peers during group activities (Bandura: social interaction) trains social skills such as cooperation and empathy.

# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## A. Conclusion

Sunday school teachers play a vital role in children's character development by teaching moral values, serving as role models, and facilitating interactive activities

at the Bethel Indonesia Church, Hotel Pelangi, Simpang Selayang, Medan. The theories of Berkowitz and Bandura support the idea that effective character education requires a combination of understanding, observation, practice, and a supportive environment.

## B. Recommendations

Sunday school teachers should use active learning and positive feedback to reinforce values, while parents must model and apply these at home. Future research should explore the long-term impact of character education and peer influence, providing a stronger foundation for effective moral development.

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