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Teacher Leadership Strategies In Character Formation: A Christian Education Perspective at XYZ Elementary School Surabaya

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ABSTRACT

Character formation constitutes a fundamental effort in cultivating a civilized generation. Despite continuous endeavors within educational settings, students frequently exhibit character-related problems such as bullying, delinquent behavior, diminished respect and empathy toward teachers and parents, and issues of discipline and responsibility. In contrast, XYZ Elementary School in Surabaya has not encountered such challenges. Its students consistently demonstrate character traits that align with expected standards, reflecting the school's commitment to instilling values and producing graduates of strong moral integrity and clarity of life purpose. This study aimed to examine teacher leadership strategies, from the perspective of Christian education, in shaping student character at XYZ Elementary School Surabaya. The research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The data analysis process involved data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that teacher leadership strategies grounded in Christian educational principles encompass teachers' understanding of students, intercessory prayer, role modeling, collaboration among teachers, partnerships with parents, and the implementation of six distinctive learning processes promoted by XYZ Elementary School Surabaya. These findings underscore the effectiveness of teacher leadership rooted in Christian education for character development, offering a potential model for other educational institutions seeking to strengthen student character formation.

ABSTRAK

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Pembentukan karakter merupakan upaya penting dalam membentuk generasi yang beradab. Meskipun upaya pendidikan terus dilakukan, berbagai permasalahan karakter masih banyak ditemui pada peserta didik, termasuk bullying, kenakalan remaja, rendahnya rasa hormat dan empati terhadap figur otoritas, serta persoalan kedisiplinan dan tanggung jawab. Menariknya, permasalahan tersebut tidak ditemukan di SD XYZ Surabaya, di mana siswa menunjukkan karakter sesuai dengan harapan sekolah. Hal ini mencerminkan komitmen sekolah dalam menanamkan tujuan dan nilai-nilai guna menghasilkan lulusan yang berkarakter kuat dan memiliki arah hidup yang jelas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji strategi kepemimpinan guru dalam perspektif pendidikan Kristen untuk membentuk karakter siswa di SD XYZ Surabaya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan analisis dokumen, kemudian dianalisis melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi kepemimpinan guru berbasis pendidikan Kristen meliputi pemahaman mendalam guru terhadap siswa, doa syafaat bagi siswa, keteladanan, kolaborasi antarguru, kerja sama dengan orang tua, serta penerapan enam proses pembelajaran khas yang dipromosikan oleh SD XYZ Surabaya. Temuan ini menegaskan efektivitas kepemimpinan guru yang berlandaskan pendidikan Kristen dalam membentuk karakter siswa. Model yang diterapkan di SD XYZ Surabaya memberikan wawasan berharga sekaligus potensi untuk diadaptasi pada konteks pendidikan yang lebih luas dalam rangka memperkuat pendidikan karakter.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The role of education in shaping individual character and potential as members of society is of paramount importance. Through education, efforts to holistically develop human beings—cognitively, spiritually, affectively, emotionally, socially, and in terms of independence—can be effectively realized. This principle is reflected in Law No. 20 of 2003, Article 1 on Education:

“Education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning environment and learning process in which students actively develop their potential to possess spiritual-religious strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills needed by themselves, society, the nation, and the state.”

One of the emerging paradigms in education is the facilitation of students in character formation. Although this new educational paradigm continues to be promoted by experts, in practice, numerous character-related problems among students are still encountered. For instance, criminal acts committed by students that harm others, such as inter-student brawls, cyber bullying, and sexual harassment, are increasingly reported (Lestari & Handayani, 2023, p. 102). These problems are also influenced by the rapid pace of technological development, which enables students to access various types of information online. As they are exposed to examples of criminal behavior, some students develop the desire to imitate such actions.

In recent years, bullying has emerged as one of the most significant character issues among students. A tragic example occurred in a school in Subang, West Java, where a third-grade elementary student died after being bullied by an older student. Although the victim received medical care for six days, their life could not be saved. This case of bullying reflects a severe lack of compassion among students toward their peers (CNN Indonesia, 2024).

Schools, as institutions tasked with fostering respect for parents and teachers, often fall short in fulfilling this responsibility. In reality, students’ respect for parents and teachers is steadily declining (Astuti, Herlina, Ibrahim, Prasilia, & Sintia, 2023, p. 141). Observations conducted by the researcher in one school confirm this trend. Students increasingly regard teachers and parents as equals rather than figures of authority. For example, students may ignore teachers who are not directly teaching them, passing by without even greeting or acknowledging them. Likewise, when encountering other students’ parents while passing by, they often fail to show common courtesy.

The growing number of character-related problems among students cannot be solely attributed to the students themselves. Several external factors play a role. First, negative parental behaviour—such as physical punishment or excessive pressure—can cause students to develop negative attitudes, low self-esteem, fearfulness, and an aversion to taking risks. These traits may persist into adulthood (Prasanti & Fitriani, 2018, p. 14). Second, the excessive use of gadgets contributes to student individualism, making them less aware of those around them. Gadgets offer constant entertainment, limiting students’ ability to build interpersonal relationships (Yumarmi, 2022, p. 108).

These various factors suggest that character education in Indonesia has not yet been fully optimized and still requires substantial improvement (Kembuan & Stefanus, 2022, p. 10; Debora & Han, 2020, pp. 1–14). This issue should become a central concern for all education practitioners in order to restore the moral identity of the Indonesian nation—one that values integrity, noble character, and high moral standards. Educational leaders must recognize that forming students’ character is a priority. Students need to possess strong character and ethics to navigate social life effectively. As they grow and interact with more people, they must be equipped to face the

challenges of the world. From an early age, students should be instilled with sound moral values so that they are not easily influenced by their surroundings.

A survey conducted by the researcher using an online questionnaire distributed to teachers across various regions in Indonesia further supports the importance of character formation. Several reasons emerged from the survey, including that good character equips students for future life, prepares them to become better individuals, serves as a key to academic and personal success, assists them in daily life, and ensures that their academic knowledge is balanced with strong moral character. Respondents also stated that character is the most essential aspect of human life.

The respondents included teachers from diverse regions of Indonesia, such as Surabaya, Jakarta, Toraja, Jambi, Batam, Bandung, Semarang, Papua, and Kalimantan. Of the 22 respondents, 98% affirmed that character education is essential. Data collected also indicated that common character issues found in schools include poor student discipline, low sense of responsibility, and declining respect toward others.

Character formation is influenced by several key environments: the family, school, and broader community (Prasanti & Fitriani, 2018, p. 14). These three environments significantly affect how students live out their daily lives. The parenting styles used at home are often unknown to teachers, and students come to school with diverse character traits that influence their behaviour. Therefore, schools—where students spend a significant portion of their time—bear substantial responsibility for shaping their character. Teachers, as those who interact closely with students, must take an active role in this formative process.

Christian schools, which are called to disciple every student, play a particularly vital role in character development. Within these schools are teachers who are also called to disciple and guide students to become Christ like. This responsibility is not simple, but it is essential. Teachers are expected to implement specific, well-considered strategies to shape students' character in ways that reflect Christ.

XYZ elementary school Surabaya is a Christian school located in Surabaya, offering education from early childhood to senior high school. The school's vision is:

"To raise a divine generation used by God as His servants and to become Christian leaders who reflect Christ-like character with a commitment to serve their generation."

This vision clearly demonstrates the school's strong commitment to character formation, aiming to develop students into individuals who reflect Christ's character and who are prepared to become Christian leaders with a heart to serve. Since its establishment in 1990, XYZ elementary school Surabaya has consistently committed itself to producing graduates who not only possess strong character but also understand their life's purpose.

Research on teachers' leadership strategies for shaping student character has been widely conducted in recent years. However, most of these studies focus on public schools and present relatively limited strategies. For example, research by Retnaningtyas & Zulkarnaen (2023, pp. 374–383) emphasizes the importance of fostering responsibility, discipline, routines, collaboration, mutual respect, and spontaneous character development through daily classroom activities. Teachers also use school culture and personal modeling to shape character. Similarly, Zaky & Setiawan (2023, pp. 232–244) highlight the importance of teacher modelling, particularly in spiritual disciplines. Debora & Han (2020, pp. 1–14) also assert that teachers must reflect good character when attempting to develop it in students.

Despite these contributions, there is still a significant lack of research on character development strategies rooted in a Christian perspective (Gaol & Nababan, 2019, p. 90).

This gap prompted the researcher to undertake a study on Christian education-based teacher leadership strategies in character formation. This research aims to identify such strategies at XYZ elementary school Surabaya and to highlight the importance of intentional character education in Christian schools.

Through this study, the researcher seeks to describe and explain how Christian educational principles inform teacher leadership strategies for character development at XYZ elementary school Surabaya. Therefore, the research question in this study is: How are teacher leadership strategies, based on Christian education, implemented in shaping students' character at XYZ Elementary School Surabaya? In addition, the study aims to identify the significance of these leadership strategies in cultivating Christ likeness character in students. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for other schools regarding how character education can be effectively implemented from a Christian perspective. Moreover, the research may offer broader implications for the development of leadership strategies that produce students with strong character who can apply these values in their future educational or professional settings.

Leadership is the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of an organization (House et al., 1999, p. 184 in Yulk, 2013, p. 19). Leadership is associated with the presence of an individual who leads and those who are led. A leader encourages every individual within the organization to actively participate in its development. Another element closely associated with leadership is the existence of an organization with clearly defined goals. All individuals involved strive according to their capacity to achieve the predetermined objectives. These goals significantly influence the development of the organization (Yulk, 2013, p. 19).

One type of leadership is servant leadership. Servant leadership is a form of leadership that begins with a sincere desire that arises in one's heart to serve. A leader in servant leadership is the first to serve. In servant leadership, a person has the desire to serve because the choice or will comes from within. The purpose of this leadership is to ensure that the needs of others are fulfilled before their own—developing others to become more mature, healthier, more autonomous, and ultimately to become future servant leaders (Lantu, 2007).

Servant leadership differs from other leadership styles, especially in the matter of the desire to lead and serve. A leader in servant leadership possesses the desire to serve even before the desire to lead emerges. Individuals with such leadership qualities are then chosen by their followers to lead them (Spears, 1995, in Lantu, 2007). Servant leadership employs a fundamental and long-term approach capable of delivering comprehensive transformation. The primary focus of this leadership is on how a leader develops their followers rather than prioritizing self-interest. A leader does not aim to fulfill their own needs, but rather strives to offer their best service to their followers and the organization they lead.

Gaol & Nababan (2019, p. 92) state that teacher leadership is a process through which teachers influence students to achieve learning objectives. Leadership is inherent in the role of teachers because they are the leaders in the classroom. Teachers must be able to direct students to act and behave in accordance with established norms. In this context, teachers must also serve as inspirations and role models for all school members, especially students. A teacher as a leader also implies that they are stakeholders in the school, creating synergy in achieving educational goals, particularly in Christian education.

Debora and Han assert that Christian teachers not only assist students academically but also play a vital role in shaping their character (Debora & Han, p. 6). This statement

emphasizes the significant role of teachers in character development. Not only is their role crucial, but the leadership strategies they employ in shaping students' character are equally important. As is evident, teachers are leaders for the students entrusted to them. Teachers lead these students to recognize and develop the potential within themselves in accordance with their life's purpose (Zaky & Setiawan, 2023, p. 236).

Widianing (2018, p. 87) proposes that Christian education must be biblical, placing Christ at the center of all educational efforts. The aim of learning is focused on God, not on humans. God is the standard of truth, and humans must seek that truth. Christian education is not designed based on a religious system, but rather on theological propositions derived from the Bible.

Majelis Pendidikan Kristen di Indonesia (2015, p. 10) states that the goal of Christian education is to assist and guide students to become responsible disciples. In this regard, teachers do not attempt to persuade students to convert to Christianity. Instead, they help students gain a vision of life as Christians. It is this vision of life that will influence character formation. The character formed is based on God's purpose for creating humans—to glorify Him. Glorification, in this sense, can take various forms, such as having an impact on others and being a role model wherever they are.

The term character originates from the Greek word *kharassein*, which means to engrave, carve, or sketch (Klann, 2007, pp. 6–7). Character is a quality of a person that is engraved and becomes an intrinsic part of them. Just like an engraving that requires a significant amount of time to produce a fine piece of art, character also needs a long and continuous period to be manifested in someone's daily behaviour.

Character education is a process that requires a considerable amount of time in its implementation. This necessitates the integration of hidden and academic curricula. The hidden curriculum includes elements such as teacher role modelling, relationships between students and teachers and school staff, interactions among teachers and staff, student diversity, learning processes, learning assessments, school environment management, and discipline policies. The academic curriculum consists of various subjects taught to students and other school programs such as co-curricular and extracurricular activities (*Tim Pusat Penilaian Pendidikan*, 2019, pp. 1–2).

Several principles can be applied by schools that focus on shaping students' character, one of which is involving families and the community as partners in character formation. The involvement of families and communities in character development can increase the likelihood of its success. Parents and schools can use technology-based communication platforms to build relationships. The relationship becomes more trustworthy when schools involve parents in decision-making processes related to students' character development. Moreover, schools can also carry out special initiatives to reach out to parents who may not feel part of the school community. In addition, effective collaboration between parents and schools can enhance their partnership with the broader community to actively engage in promoting student character formation (Character.org, 2016, p. 20).

2. METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researcher employed a qualitative research approach. Aspers and Corte (2019, p. 142) explain that qualitative research is characterized by its multi-method focus, involving interpretative and naturalistic approaches to its subject matter. In this regard, researchers who apply a qualitative research design study various aspects within the subjects and objects under investigation, aiming to understand and

interpret various phenomena in order to discover meaning. Qualitative research involves the use and collection of data derived from case studies, personal experiences, introspection, life stories, interviews, observations, history, interactions, and visual texts that depict routine and problematic moments, as well as meaning in individual lives.

Based on the above explanation, the researcher decided to use a qualitative research method to describe teacher leadership strategies grounded in a Christian education perspective in shaping students' character. This method is expected to provide clear and in-depth information about the case under investigation. The case in question refers to XYZ elementary school Surabaya, which has a strong focus or goal in developing student character. Character formation is a primary concern at XYZ elementary school Surabaya. This is confirmed by the vision of XYZ elementary school Surabaya, which is to prepare students through holistic Christian education based on the truth of the Bible, the Word of God.

This research adopts a qualitative approach because the researcher aims to obtain more descriptive and in-depth information about a case occurring at a school located in Surabaya, East Java. It is hoped that this study can provide insights to schools across Indonesia regarding student character formation. Moreover, the selected case can raise awareness among all stakeholders, particularly in the field of education, regarding the importance of developing student character, which requires the implementation of leadership strategies by teachers.

This study uses a case study approach. Yin (2003), as cited in Cabote et al. (2024, p. 4), identifies three types of case studies. First, the explanatory case study, which aims to explain events involving cause-effect relationships or correlations. Second, the exploratory case study, used when the intervention being evaluated does not have a clear and singular result. Third, the descriptive case study, which aims to describe the intervention or phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurs. Case studies may also be designed as single or multiple case studies. A single case study involves one unit of study or phenomenon, commonly referred to as a case. A multiple case study contains more than one single case to enable the researcher to analyze within and across settings. This study employs a qualitative research design using a single descriptive case study method to describe teacher leadership strategies based on a Christian education perspective for shaping student character at XYZ elementary school Surabaya.

This research was conducted at XYZ elementary school Surabaya, a private school with an educational background rooted in the Christian faith. The school is located in Surabaya, East Java Province. The study was carried out between January and May 2025, beginning with the planning phase, followed by observation and interviews. The selection of subjects in this case study employed a purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling is the intentional selection of research subjects to gain in-depth insights into the phenomenon being observed (Lenaini, 2021, p. 39). The subjects in this study were four teachers from XYZ elementary school Surabaya who are involved in student character formation. Data were collected through three techniques: interviews, observations, and document studies.

In this study, the researcher used thematic analysis to analyze the research data. Thematic analysis is a method used to identify patterns or discover themes from the data collected by the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006, as cited in Heriyanto, 2018, p. 318). In practice, the first step the researcher undertook was to thoroughly understand the data collected. This involved re-listening to interview recordings, re-reading observation notes, and school documents from XYZ elementary school Surabaya. This

process aimed to allow for an initial interpretation of the data collected, enabling the researcher to identify the meaning contained within the data. The second step was the development of codes. Here, the researcher identified which data in the interview transcripts, observations, and document studies required coding. The researcher wrote codes based on the statements made by the informants in order to extract meaning from the data. The final step was to find themes. Based on the codes developed, the researcher identified themes aligned with the research objective, namely to identify leadership strategies based on the Christian education perspective in shaping student character at XYZ elementary school Surabaya. The researcher reviewed all codes formed. This review was conducted to ensure that the codes belonged to the same group. This research employed an inductive triangulation method aimed at theory development. The researcher categorized each strategy expressed by the informants and synthesized these statements with those of other informants in order to generate an account of the teacher leadership strategies in shaping student character at XYZ elementary school Surabaya.

Meanwhile, the triangulation methods used to test the validity of the data were twofold: source triangulation and method triangulation. Source triangulation was carried out by conducting interviews with four different teachers who also served as subjects in this study. Method triangulation was conducted through interviews, observations, and document studies carried out by the researcher at XYZ elementary school Surabaya. The researcher collected observation data related to the interview results. Therefore, the observations were also guided by the interview protocol found in the appendix. Similar to the document study data, the researcher used information related to the interview results to enhance the objectivity of the research findings.

3. RESULTS

1) Interview

Based on interviews conducted with four informants, the researcher found that there are six strategies employed by teachers in shaping students' character at XYZ elementary school Surabaya. First, teacher's knowledge of students. A teacher's knowledge of the students being taught is a process that must be undertaken by teachers. When a teacher knows the students, it means that the teacher is prepared to assist students according to their needs and is ready to be involved in the lives of the students entrusted to them. Conversely, for students, if teachers know them well, they must be willing to allow their lives to be shaped by the teacher. They will be more willing to cooperate with the teacher and to develop the potential within themselves to the fullest. A sound knowledge between teachers and students can foster a good relationship, enabling them to be more open with one another and willing to share both the joys and struggles of life. Second, Praying for Students. XYZ elementary school Surabaya is one of the schools with a strong foundation as a Christian school. On this basis, all activities carried out within the school are grounded in the Christian faith. One of the convictions upheld by XYZ elementary school Surabaya is that prayer can transform every human life, including that of children. Through prayer, students are also taught to depend fully on God in every circumstance they experience and in all that they do.

Third, exemplary conduct. Exemplary conduct is a process in which teachers provide a model for students. Teachers practice it first before communicating it to students. Teachers do not demand that students act independently of guidance. Instead, teachers provide an example first so that students may follow it. Fourth, collaboration

with other teachers. Teachers are one of the crucial components among several other important components in a school. Teachers must build collaboration with other teachers as well as with other components within the school. Good collaboration among teachers can produce a healthy community and achieve the educational goals that have been planned. Collaboration also enables teachers to carry out their tasks well and responsibly. Fifth, collaboration between teachers and parents. Collaboration between teachers and parents in education is of paramount importance. Good collaboration between teachers and parents ensures that education proceeds as it should and has a meaningful impact on students. Parents, as those who receive the mandate from God to educate their children, must fulfill this task and responsibility properly. The school, as an institution for nurturing students, also carries the same responsibility. Thus, both components must collaborate effectively to assist students in developing their potential and in becoming individuals who can positively impact others and the nation. Sixth, implementation of the six learning processes of XYZ elementary school Surabaya. XYZ elementary school Surabaya is a school located in Surabaya that has six learning processes integrated with one another. These six learning processes are implemented by teachers to guide students in becoming more like God, ultimately shaping them into students of character. These six learning processes will be further elaborated by the researcher as follows, in accordance with the interviews conducted with the informants in this study.

2) Observation

In the implementation of teacher leadership strategies that are consistent with the findings from the interviews, the researcher found that teachers know the students well. This can be seen from the way teachers assist students in the learning process being carried out. Teachers provide relatively more time to accompany students who have certain needs and help them to maximize themselves in learning. Teachers sit close to or engage in personal discussions with the respective students to guide them in working on the modules. Not only that, for students who require assistance in learning, teachers also provide additional lessons, for example during recess or after school hours. Teachers will inform the parents so that students can be picked up after the additional lessons are completed. There are also mentor teachers who assist students in learning and later provide information to parents regarding the needs of the students at school and what actions can be supported by parents at home.

In addition, the researcher also found teacher leadership strategies in accordance with the interview indicators, namely teachers praying for students. Teachers pray for students when they are about to face the final test. These prayers help students to perform well on the final test and not feel pressured. In the same context, the researcher also found that before and after beginning a series of activities, they start with prayer. There are times when the teacher leads the prayer and times when the students lead the prayer. The researcher's conversation with teachers who teach in the classroom also confirmed that teachers also pray for students personally to remind them that these students belong to God who has been entrusted to them. Therefore, in teaching and guiding students, teachers must always remain attached to God and they need God in all aspects of their lives.

Another teacher leadership strategy that the researcher found during the observation, consistent with the interview indicators, is that teachers demonstrate role modeling for students. One example is evident through attendance at school and in class during the learning process. Teachers arrive on time and begin lessons punctually. From this, students also demonstrate discipline by being present at school and attending

lessons on time. Another example of role modeling is evident in the way students treat their peers. They show love to all their friends by playing together and not being selective in choosing friends. Students also communicate well and do not use negative words. Other examples of role modeling carried out by teachers include greeting all teachers and students kindly, disposing of trash in its proper place, not cursing or shouting at teachers or students, and others.

3) Document Studies

The document study conducted by the researcher found that there are learning processes developed by XYZ elementary school Surabaya. These learning processes are as follows:

- a. Independent learning. The focus of independent learning is to help students develop an intimate relationship with God, to struggle, to go through processes, and to fully surrender only to God. In this regard, if students experience difficulties in learning, they can ask for help from God. In addition, in this independent learning, students are also trained to have planning skills and to discover a learning style that suits their uniqueness.
- b. Collaborative learning. The process of collaborative learning is carried out by students together with their peers. The focus of collaborative learning is to help students grow together and to be shaped to become more like Christ through mutual respect and appreciation of each other's talents, sharing with one another, and helping each other.
- c. Field practice. Field practice consists of three stages, namely knowing (knowledge), understanding (skills), and interpreting correctly (wisdom). Field practice is necessary so that the knowledge already possessed as cognitive competence can be developed into skills applied in commitment to the values of God's truth.
- d. Learning through serving. The essence of learning through serving is to witness and to present Christ who cares and loves — for others who are served by each student. The process of learning through serving will nurture a heart that loves, cares, is willing to let go of ego and personal rights, is ready to sacrifice, and is committed to prioritizing others.
- e. Talent development. Every student needs to be given the opportunity to develop the talents that God has bestowed in their lives. Each talent from God is related to the life calling of each student. This must also be understood as a process of appreciating, being grateful for, and discovering God's calling in the life of each student.
- f. Relationship and communication. Students who have a good relationship with God will have a good relationship with themselves. In a right relationship with God, students will discover the meaning and purpose of their lives in accordance with God's plan. A right relationship with God will also help students to be ready to proclaim the gospel of Christ and to carry out the Great Commission.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings from the interview data with four informants, observations, and document studies on teacher leadership strategies in character formation: a Christian education perspective at XYZ elementary school Surabaya explain that there are several leadership strategies implemented by teachers in shaping the character of students. These strategies will be explained in more detail as follows:

1) Teachers' Understanding of Students

Teachers' understanding of students is one of the strategies used by teachers at XYZ elementary school Surabaya to shape students' character. Understanding enables the establishment of a relationship between teacher and student. If the teacher has a good relationship with students, it will make students trust the teacher and enable them to listen and pay more attention to what the teacher conveys. Students will also become more open, allowing teachers to better understand the needs of the students.

This study's results align with the characteristics of teachers presented by Lowrie (1988) in the *Majelis Pendidikan Kristen di Indonesia* (2015, 48–52). According to this view, teachers must be sensitive to students' needs and attentive to them. To be able to do so, teachers must first understand their students well. A good teacher understands and listens to what students express, thereby enabling them to comprehend students' needs. Good understanding between teacher and student can build an intimate relationship between them, making it easier to understand students' needs and help them maximize their potential.

This data is consistent with the study by Retnaningtyas & Zulkarnaen (2023, 374), which found that building communication with children can be used as a strategy to develop students' character. Communication will be established well if it begins with a good understanding between teachers and students. Students will find it easier to communicate their struggles with teachers if they feel comfortable with them. Therefore, the understanding between teachers and students in character formation is very important to develop and maintain.

2) Role Modelling

Role modeling provides students with an example of how they should behave and act. Students have role models who guide and help them to do what is right and in accordance with societal norms. Interviews with the four informants revealed that the teachers at XYZ elementary school Surabaya serve as role models in character formation. The teachers become pioneers in student behaviour. For example, in terms of discipline, teachers demonstrate discipline to students so that they have clear boundaries and direction. Students, with their own awareness, recognize the importance of managing time and living well.

These findings align with the research by Retnaningtyas & Zulkarnaen (2023, 374–383), which reveals that teachers can serve as role models in shaping students' character. Examples of role modelling by teachers can be seen in attitudes, speech, and daily behaviour. Role modelling has a great impact on students because students tend to imitate what they see directly from figures who hold authority over them. Therefore, teachers, as authority figures, are responsible for demonstrating good character traits to students, such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, love, and so on. This is a good alternative in instilling character education in students. Role modelling can also become the main foundation in the character formation process within the school environment.

These findings are also consistent with the research conducted by Zaky & Setiawan (2023, 232). Role modelling can be used to shape students' character. Students will find it easier to imitate a behaviour than merely receive advice from teachers. Practice helps them internalize good character in their lives more effectively.

3) Praying for Students

The presentation of interview, observation, and document study results shows that XYZ elementary school Surabaya, as a Christian school, believes that prayer can bring change in human life, including for students. Teachers believe that the results of prayer may not be felt immediately but come through various processes and times that cannot be measured by humans. They realize that as human beings they also have limitations and cannot fully control the students. Only God, as the owner of life, can fully change the

human heart and guide it to the right path. Teachers at XYZ elementary school Surabaya also believe that praying helps both teachers and students to have a close relationship with God. Moreover, through prayer and surrender to God, they understand that they cannot rely on their own strength. They need God in every aspect of their lives, especially when facing struggles.

These findings align with one of the goals of Christian education, which is to help students have an intimate relationship with God (Debora & Han, 2020, 8). An intimate relationship with God teaches humans that their lives are under God's control and that without God they can do nothing. In addition, a relationship with God can serve as a foundation for teachers and students in shaping all aspects of life. If teachers and students have an intimate relationship with God, it will help them reflect love, integrity, and wisdom in all areas of life.

4) Collaboration with Other Teachers

The data show that teachers at XYZ elementary school Surabaya collaborate with colleagues in shaping students' character. The full awareness that a teacher cannot carry out the task and responsibility of educating children alone enables good collaboration among teachers. In practice, they strive to ensure that all teachers share the same goal in guiding and developing students. They also work together to support each student's learning process. Moreover, teachers believe that students' learning processes in school are continuous, requiring synergy with other teachers.

These findings are also in line with the research by Zaky & Setiawan (2023, 232), which found that one strategy teachers can use in shaping students' character is by building cooperation among teachers. Such collaboration greatly helps them in guiding students to have good character and make a positive impact on others.

5) Teacher-Parent Collaboration

The data show that teacher-parent collaboration at XYZ elementary school Surabaya is considered essential in the student education process at school. XYZ elementary school Surabaya believes that the primary responsibility for educating students lies with the parents. The school, represented by the teachers, is a partner of the parents in fulfilling this responsibility. Parents are given a mandate by God to educate and guide their children according to the life purposes that God has revealed to them. From this perspective, teachers at XYZ elementary school Surabaya are actively involved in involving parents in the students' education process at school, particularly in character formation. The school facilitates parents to actively support student education, such as through parent groups, which also involve teachers to help them grow and strengthen each other.

These findings correlate with the theory proposed in the book by Character.org regarding principles of character formation. In this context, the school involves families and the community as partners in the character formation of student. The school, through its teachers, establishes good relationships with parents to enable their active participation in shaping students' character. This participation is not limited to taking part in school-organized activities. Parents can also apply character-building approaches that align with those used in school when guiding students at home. This will help students recognize the consistency of both teachers and parents in supporting their character development. Thus, students begin to build self-awareness regarding the importance of character formation for their lives (Character.org, 2016, 20).

6) Implementing the Six Learning Processes at XYZ Elementary School Surabaya

The research data show that XYZ elementary school Surabaya implements six learning processes in shaping students' character. These six learning processes are

independent learning, discipleship, field trips, learning through serving, relationships and communication, and talent development. These six learning processes help students grow and develop holistically and assist them in adapting to any environment they encounter. In practice, these learning processes also facilitate students in showing concern for others. They also help students continue their education to higher levels. This forms a strong foundation for them and becomes a guide for acting in all aspects of their lives.

These findings align with documents from XYZ elementary school Surabaya studied by the researcher regarding the learning processes they implement. In these documents, it is stated that teachers are expected to implement these learning processes well in order to form students who increasingly resemble Christ. Ultimately, Christ-likeness produces good character that aligns with societal norms.

The facts found in the field and in-depth interviews with informants, along with document studies, show that the character formation process at XYZ elementary school Surabaya is relatively effective and can be adopted by other schools, particularly Christian schools. XYZ elementary school Surabaya directs the formation of students' character toward Christ-likeness. Christ-likeness shapes students into individuals who possess good character and behave in accordance with societal norms.

Character formation is designed to help students live in love and glorify God in their lives. In addition, character formation can be applied through a sustainable curriculum design that helps students develop holistically. These findings align with the views of *Tim Pusat Penilaian Pendidikan* (2019, 1–2), which states that character formation can be integrated into the hidden and academic curriculum. The hidden curriculum includes the examples set by teachers for students, student relationships with teachers and school staff, school environment management, learning activities and assessments, and other school policies.

This study presents a distinctive contribution, namely the identification of strategies that can only be implemented within a Christian school context, such as praying for students. Prayer fosters awareness among teachers that they must continually cultivate their relationship with God and rely upon Him in the process of shaping students' character. Furthermore, the six learning processes developed by XYZ elementary school Surabaya represent a novel finding that may be adapted by other schools, particularly those founded on Christian principles. In addition, this research underscores the importance of collaboration between teachers and parents. Such collaboration is undertaken to harmonize the vision shared by teachers and parents in the formation of students' character.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research on teacher leadership strategies in character formation: a Christian education perspective at XYZ elementary school Surabaya that has been elaborated in the previous section, it can be concluded that teacher use several leadership strategies in shaping students' character rooted in Christian education perspective. These strategies include teachers' understanding of students, teachers pray for students, role modelling, collaboration with other teachers, collaboration between teachers and parents, and the implementation of six learning processes initiated by XYZ elementary school Surabaya. These strategies provide a holistic learning experience for students at XYZ elementary school Surabaya so that they can possess good character in all aspects of their lives.

Based on the conclusions formulated in the preceding section, two implications may be derived from this study, namely practical and theoretical implications. Practically,

this research may serve as a model for character formation in other schools. Theoretically, the study has the potential to enrich scholarly discourse on teacher leadership within the framework of Christian education. These implications underscore the significance of integrating faith-based values into leadership strategies and highlight the broader relevance of this study for both educational practitioners and academic scholarship.

5. AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The author affirms that the manuscript is free from plagiarism.

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