



# Christian Religious Education Learning Management in Strengthening Students Religious Character: Case Study at National Junior High School 12 Batam

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<p><b>Abstract:</b> Improving student character is a central issue in post-pandemic education in Indonesia, particularly with the discovery of a decline in student discipline, motivation, and religiosity at SMP Negeri 12 Batam. This study aims to analyze the effect of optimizing educational management through Christian Religious Education (PAK) learning on the formation of intelligent and religious character in ninth-grade students. The research design used a quantitative descriptive-correlational method involving 63 respondents selected purposively. Data were collected through a standardized questionnaire that had been tested for validity and reliability, then analyzed using simple and multiple linear regression techniques using SPSS 20. The results showed that PAK learning management had a significant effect on the formation of intelligent character (<math>p &lt; 0.05</math>), but did not significantly influence students' religious character. The PAK learning variable contributed 32.2% to the formation of intelligent and religious character. These findings emphasize the need to strengthen educational management through teacher training and school-parent collaboration as a comprehensive effort to build student character. The implications of this research can serve as a reference for improving the quality of character education management at the secondary school level.</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Christian Religious Education, Education Management, Intelligent Character, Religious Character, Secondary School.</p> <p><b>Copyright © 2026 The Author(s):</b> This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.</p>	<p><b>Research Paper</b></p>
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## INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia currently faces increasingly complex challenges, particularly in the context of post-COVID-19 pandemic recovery. Issues such as declining discipline, weak motivation to learn, and diminished social sensitivity among students are crucial issues directly impacting the quality of education at various levels, including at SMP Negeri 12 Batam. This situation demands strategic efforts through optimizing educational management as a primary instrument for strengthening holistic and sustainable character education.

Effective educational management, particularly school-based management, emphasizes the importance of integrated and participatory resource management involving principals, teachers, parents, and the school community to support the optimal achievement of educational goals, particularly in developing intelligent

and religious student character (Noyita, 2018). This finding aligns with international literature confirming that collaborative school leadership and educational governance have a significant influence on character building, student engagement, and post-crisis learning quality (Bush, 2020; Harris & Jones, 2020).

Furthermore, international research shows that adaptive and value-oriented school management is a key factor in restoring the learning climate and rebuilding students' moral integrity after a period of educational disruption (Leithwood *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, strengthening educational management in schools not only serves as a response to post-pandemic challenges but also serves as a strategic foundation in supporting the implementation of sustainable Christian Religious Education (PAK) learning oriented towards character building. The national education system, as mandated by Law Number 20 of 2003, emphasizes that education aims not only to develop students' cognitive aspects but also

to shape intelligent and religious character as a foundation for developing intellectually and morally complete human resources (Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003). Strengthening character education in schools is further strengthened through various strategic government policies, including the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile as a framework for character building and the development of learning innovations in the School Mover Program (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology [Kemendikbudristek], 2021).

In this context, Christian Religious Education (PAK) plays a strategic role in internalizing Christian values that contribute to the formation of intellectual intelligence and spiritual integrity in students. However, various findings in the field indicate a tendency for a decline in intelligent and religious character in students, which is further exacerbated by the limited direct pedagogical interaction during online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Kemendikbudristek, 2020). This condition emphasizes the importance of evaluating and strengthening educational management in schools, particularly in the management of PAK learning so that it can be implemented sustainably, adaptively, and optimally in supporting the achievement of national education goals. In addition to managerial aspects, the formation of intelligent and religious character in students must also be rooted in a biblical theological foundation, which is the main foundation in the context of Christian Religious Education. Biblical theology emphasizes that education is truly the fulfillment of the divine mandate to form intellectually and spiritually whole human beings. In the Bible, faith education is the primary responsibility of God's people, aiming to cultivate intelligence based on fear of the Lord and religious character reflected in daily life (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Proverbs 1:7). This approach ensures that PAK learning is not merely a curricular formality, but a means of genuine character transformation, combining intellectual intelligence with spiritual integrity.

Several previous studies have emphasized the importance of Christian Religious Education (PAK) and educational management in shaping student character. For example, Gunawan (2017) demonstrated that strengthening intelligent character can be achieved through formal educational interventions with a habituation approach and teacher role models. Mulyasa (2016) also emphasized that the formation of religious character requires collaboration across educational environments, particularly between schools, families, and communities. In the context of PAK, Ardi *et al.*, (2024) found that the implementation of the PAIKEM (Active, Innovative, Creative, Effective, and Enjoyable Learning) approach increased the religiosity and creativity of students at a Middle School in Belakang

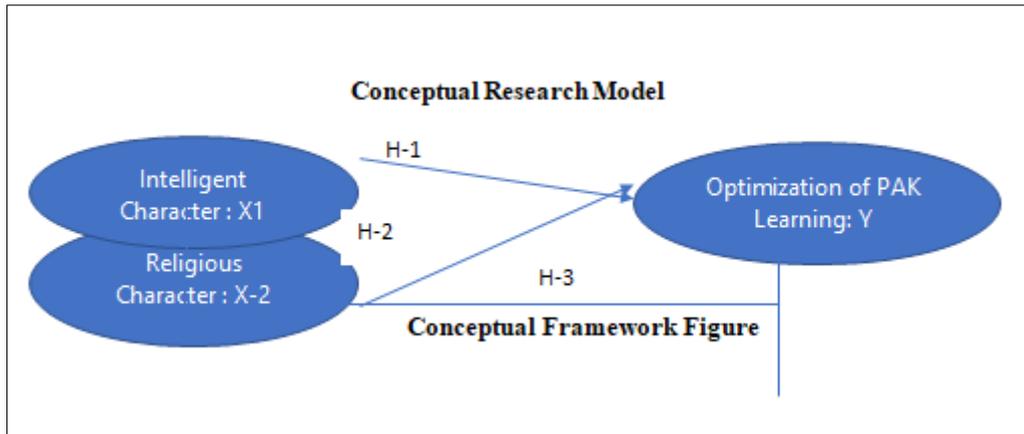
Padang. A similar study by Susana *et al.*, (2024) confirmed that the personality competencies of PAK teachers play a significant role in enhancing the religious character of students in Catholic schools. From a global perspective, Ruth Sianturi (2024) demonstrated that PAK contributes to the development of 21st-century skills in church youth, including critical thinking and collaborative skills. Meanwhile, Terasa Duha *et al.*, (2025) emphasized that character education in PAK needs to integrate socio-economic and humanistic aspects to address modern challenges.

While these studies make important contributions, most still focus on learning strategies or teacher competencies. A gap that emerges is the lack of studies specifically highlighting the optimization of biblical theology-based educational management as a key factor in shaping the intelligent and religious character of junior high school students. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by emphasizing the synergy between educational management, Christian Religious Education (PAK) learning, and biblical theology in building students' character holistically.

This research was conducted at SMP Negeri 12 Batam with the aim of analyzing the effect of optimizing educational management in supporting Christian Religious Education (PAK) learning on the formation of intelligent and religious character in ninth-grade students. Furthermore, this study explores the role of educational management in optimizing the implementation of PAK learning as an important strategy to support the overall development of student character. Optimizing educational management is expected to increase the effectiveness of PAK learning so that it can shape students who are not only intellectually intelligent but also spiritually religious.

The results of this study are expected to provide a significant contribution to the development of educational policies and practices, particularly in strengthening the religious education management system and character building at the junior high school level. By taking into account the theories and results of previous studies, a conceptual research framework can be formulated that describes the relationship between PAK learning, educational management, intelligent character, and students' religious character, as shown in the Figure below.

By paying attention to the theory and results of previous research, a conceptual research framework can be formulated that describes the relationship between PAK learning, educational management, intelligent character, and students' religious character, as shown in the following figure.



### Theoretical and Biblical Theological Basis for the Formation of Intelligent and Religious Characters

Regarding character formation in Christian Religious Education (PAK), it is not only based on modern educational theory but is primarily rooted in the biblical mandate. Education from a Christian perspective aims to produce individuals who are intellectually intelligent and spiritually religious, in harmony with God's call to live in truth and fear God.

First, the Bible affirms that faith education is the primary responsibility of God's people. Deuteronomy 6:6–7 commands that God's word be taught to children in every aspect of life. Situmorang and Gulo's research confirms the importance of spiritual instruction and the way it shapes character. (Situmorang & Gulo, 2022) Likewise, Proverbs 22:6 emphasizes the importance of educating young people in the right way from the beginning, so that Christian education is not merely the acquisition of knowledge, but also the instilling of values and the formation of character.

Second, intelligent character from a biblical perspective is rooted in the fear of God. Proverbs 1:7 affirms that "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge," meaning that true intelligence is not merely rationality but also involves an awareness of God. This is also confirmed in Urbanus' research, which examines the Bible to discover down-to-earth character values. (Urbanus, 2020) Daniel 1:17–20 shows that God gave knowledge and wisdom to Daniel and his friends, so that intellectual intelligence is always closely linked to spiritual integrity.

Next, thirdly, Warouw et.al explains the role of God's word in forming character. (Warouw & Kasingku, 2025) When God's word is taught, religious character is reflected in the transformation of lives wrought by the Holy Spirit. Paul emphasizes in Romans 12:2 that character transformation begins with the renewal of the mind, not merely formal religious observance. Similarly, 1 Timothy 4:12 reminds young people to be examples in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. This indicates that Christian education must emphasize real-life examples, not just the transfer of information.

Fourth, holistic character formation requires synergy between schools, families, and churches. Ephesians 6:4 affirms the role of parents in educating children "in the training and admonition of the Lord," while Colossians 3:16 underscores the importance of the faith community in enriching spiritual lives through the Word, teaching, and praise. Therefore, schools, as part of the faith community, must collaborate with families and churches to ensure ongoing character education.

In the context of Christian education, the formation of intelligent and religious character is not merely a pedagogical process, but rather a theological calling rooted in the biblical mandate to educate the younger generation according to God's will. The foundation of biblical theology affirms that character education must produce individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also spiritually religious, living in the fear of the Lord as the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7). This principle reinforces the view that true intelligence involves spiritual integrity that unites knowledge and faith.

The Word of God is the primary foundation for character formation, where true transformation occurs through the renewing of the mind by the Holy Spirit (Romans 12:2). Effective Christian education must emphasize real-life examples, not just the transfer of knowledge, as reminded in 1 Timothy 4:12 to be examples in speech, behavior, love, faith, and purity. Holistic character education requires the synergy of three main environments: school, family, and church, which together support the ongoing spiritual and intellectual growth of students (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:16).

Thus, a biblical theological foundation positions the management of Christian Religious Education (PAK) education and learning as a manifestation of obedience to the divine mandate. Optimizing educational management based on theology aims not only to achieve academic success but also to further develop students into individuals with intelligent and religious character, living integrated in the wisdom and truth of Christ. This approach is the primary differentiation of Christian education in developing a

holistic generation, grounded in the values of God's word and capable of facing the challenges of the modern world with divine wisdom.

With this theological basis, optimizing educational management through PAK is not only a pedagogical strategy, but also a form of obedience to God's mandate to educate the younger generation to have wisdom, intelligence, and a life rooted in Christ.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research method uses a quantitative approach with a descriptive-correlational design to examine the relationship and influence of optimizing educational management in the implementation of Christian Religious Education (PAK) learning on the formation of intelligent and religious character in grade IX students at SMP Negeri 12 Batam. The study was conducted in April 2022 with a sample of 63 students selected purposively from a population of 218 Christian students. The primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire consisting of 47 statements divided into three main variables: optimizing PAK learning, intelligent character, and religious character, using a Likert scale of 1-4. In addition to quantitative data, the author also involved qualitative data collection techniques in the form of interviews with PAK teachers, vice principals for academic and student affairs,

administrative staff, and official school documents such as the Educational Unit Operational Curriculum and the results of a SWOT analysis related to the implementation of the learning program.

The data processing process was carried out through a series of instrument validity and reliability tests, with criteria of corrected item-total correlation  $> 0.24$  and Cronbach's Alpha value  $> 0.6$  to ensure the consistency and credibility of the data obtained. Statistical analysis included classical assumption tests such as normality and heteroscedasticity tests to ensure the data met the requirements of regression analysis. Next, simple and multiple linear regression analyses were conducted using SPSS version 20 software to determine the magnitude of the influence and relationship between the independent variables (intelligence and religious character) on the dependent variable (optimization of Christian Religious Education learning). Data triangulation methods were also applied to strengthen the validity of the results by combining quantitative and qualitative data. All research implementation procedures followed applicable research ethics standards and relevant institutional guidelines.

## RESULTS

### Respondent Characteristics Table

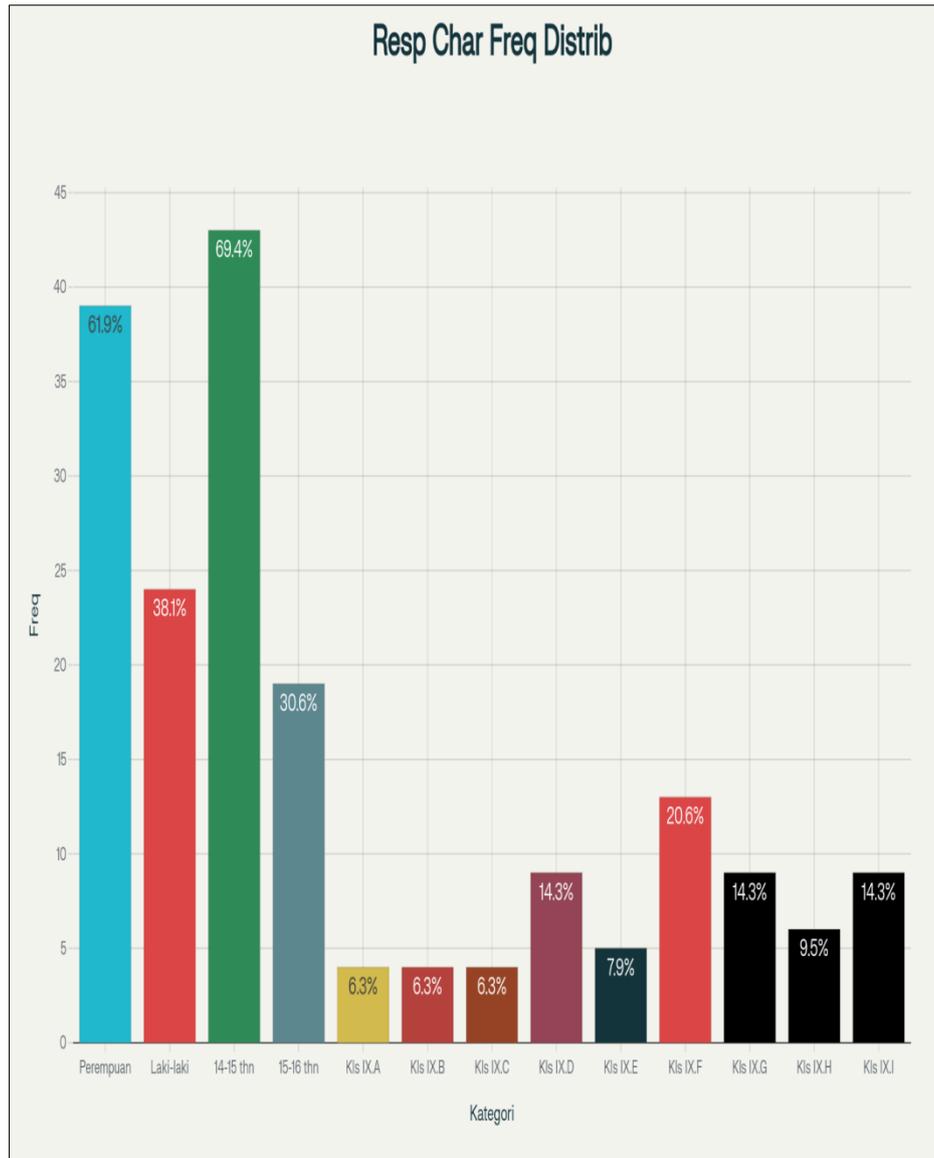
Table 1

	Frequency	Percentage %
Sample Size	63	100
<b>Gender</b>		
Woman	39	61.90
Man	24	38.10
<b>Age</b>		
14 - 15 years	43	69.40
15 - 16 years	19	30.60
<b>Class</b>		
IX.A	4	6.3
IX.B	4	6.3
IX.C	4	6.3
IX.D	9	14.3
IX.E	5	7.9
IX.F	13	20.6
IX.G	9	14.3
IX.H	6	9.5
IX.I	9	14.3
<b>Total 63</b>		

Source: Primary data processed (2022)

This study emphasizes the importance of optimizing educational management through Christian Religious Education (PAK) learning in developing intelligent and religious character in ninth-grade students of SMP Negeri 12 Batam. As seen in the Conceptual

Framework Figure above, the synergy between PAK learning, educational management, and character building is an important focus of study in the context of biblical theology.



**Respondent Characteristics Table Based on Gender, Age and Class**

The primary research data presented in the Respondent Characteristics Table above also shows a representative sample distribution based on gender, age,

and grade, with 61.9% of respondents being female and 69.4% aged 14-15. This depicts a fairly representative population of ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 12 Batam. Next, take a closer look at the figure below.

**Table 2**

Instrument Reliability Test Results Table		
Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
PAK Learning	0.625	15
Smart Character	0.838	17
Religious Character	0.665	15

**Source:** Primary data processed (2022)

The instrument reliability test presented above shows a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.6 for all variables, confirming that the measurement instrument has internal consistency and is suitable for further

analysis. The intelligent character variable has excellent reliability ( $\alpha = 0.838$ ), while religious character and optimization of Christian Education learning meet the criteria for sufficient reliability.

**Table 3**

Correlation Coefficient and Determination				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	0.586	0.343	0.322	279,683

Source: Primary data processed (2022)

Furthermore, by looking at the table above, we can say that the results of the statistical analysis with multiple linear regression produced a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.586 and a determination coefficient (R<sup>2</sup>) of 0.343 as shown in the Correlation and

Determination Coefficient Table above. This means that 34.3% of the variation in the optimization of Christian Education learning can be explained by the intelligent and religious characters together, with an adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of 0.322 (32.2%).

**Table 4**

t-Test Results		
Variables	Coefficient	Significance (p)
Smart Character	0.347	0.000
Religious Character	0.026	0.818

Source: Primary data processed (2022)

Then note that the t-test results in the t-test results table above reveal that intelligent character has a significant influence on Christian Education learning (p = 0.000), while religious character has no significant influence (p = 0.818). This indicates that students'

intellectual aspects and self-control play a greater role in learning success than religious aspects, which are predominantly influenced by external factors such as family and community support.

**Table 5**

F-Test Results (Simultaneous/Model Fit)					
Category	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
Regression	245,520	2	122,760	15,694	0.000
Residual	469,337	60	7,822	—	—
Total	714,857	62	—	—	—

Source: Primary data processed (2022)

Next, simultaneous testing with the F-test is carried out, the results of which are presented in the F-Test Results Table (Simultaneous/Model Fit) above. These results indicate that both independent variables contribute significantly together (p = 0.000) to the dependent variable, strengthening the validity of the regression model to explain variations in Catholic Religious Education learning.

The discussion of these findings aligns with the character education theory according to Gunawan (2017), who emphasizes the importance of teacher role models and the instilling of values in shaping intelligent character, and Mulyasa (2016), who emphasizes the importance of the role of family and community in building religious character. As also emphasized in the biblical theological foundation, which can also be seen in the Conceptual Framework Figure above, character education must be holistic with collaboration between educational and socio-religious environments.

So, here we can see that there are limitations to this research, particularly in the contribution of the Catholic Religious Education (PAK) learning variable, which is still 32.2%, leaving 67.8% influenced by other factors outside the model. This limitation opens up space for further research with a more comprehensive

approach, such as mixed methods, and a focus on school culture, social interactions, and religious activities outside the classroom. The practical implications of these results will encourage the improvement of ongoing Catholic Religious Education (PAK) teacher training, the development of active collaboration between schools, families, and faith communities, and the implementation of integrative and sustainable character development programs. An effective learning community model and spiritual mentoring can be a key strategy in strengthening the formation of intelligent and religious characters at the secondary school level.

These findings confirm that aspects of character intelligence involving critical thinking, self-control, and decision-making skills are more dominant in influencing the success of the Christian Religious Education (PAK) learning process compared to religious aspects that require reinforcement from the external environment, such as family and church community support. These results are in accordance with previous findings by Gunawan (2017), who stated the importance of strengthening intelligent character through formal educational interventions, as well as the opinion of Mulyasa (2016) who emphasized that the formation of religious character depends not only on learning in schools but also on collaboration across educational and

social environments. Therefore, it is recommended that schools strengthen the Christian Religious Education (PAK) learning program with a holistic managerial approach, including involving parents and community members for more optimal religious character development.

The F-test results were used to examine the simultaneous influence of independent variables on the dependent variable in the regression model. Based on the analysis, the F-value obtained was 15.694 with a significance level (p) of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 significance level. This indicates that together, the intelligent character and religious character variables have a significant effect on the implementation of Christian Religious Education (PAK) learning in grade IX students of SMP Negeri 12 Batam. Thus, the regression model involving both independent variables is suitable for explaining the variability of the dependent variable. This finding strengthens the conclusion that student character is an important factor that must be considered to improve the quality of PAK learning as a whole.

## DISCUSSION

This study reveals that optimizing educational management through the implementation of Christian Religious Education (PAK) learning has a significant influence on the formation of intelligent character in ninth grade students at SMP Negeri 12 Batam. The intelligent character developed includes aspects of critical thinking, self-control, and decision-making abilities based on the principle of fear of the Lord as the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7). This finding strengthens the biblical theological foundation that emphasizes the divine mandate in faith education to form a whole person intellectually and spiritually (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). Therefore, structured PAK learning based on biblical values is an effective means of developing a comprehensive and integrated intelligent character.

Meanwhile, the influence of Christian Religious Education (PAK) learning on religious character has not shown statistical significance. This indicates that the formation of religious character requires broader environmental support, namely the involvement of families and church communities as a holistic synergy in education, in accordance with the principles of child-rearing in Christian teachings (Ephesians 6:4). True religious character education occurs through the transformation of the mind by the Holy Spirit, and is manifested in real examples in daily attitudes and actions (Romans 12:2; 1 Timothy 4:12). Therefore, the development of religious character cannot rely solely on formal learning in schools, but must be strengthened by close collaboration between schools, families, and religious communities.

The research conceptual framework linking Christian Religious Education (PAK) learning, educational management, and intelligent and religious character (Figure 2.1) is proven to be consistent with empirical results showing a 32.2% contribution of Christian Religious Education (PAK) learning to character formation. This finding aligns with character education theory, which emphasizes the importance of role models and the instillation of values in the learning process (Gunawan, 2017), as well as the need for collaboration across educational and social environments in building religious character (Mulyasa, 2016).

Optimizing educational management must continue to be directed toward enhancing the capacity of Christian Religious Education teachers as facilitators of values and role models. The role of the principal and other management elements is crucial in supporting an effective learning process grounded in Christian values. Increased communication and active partnerships between schools, parents, and religious communities will strengthen religious character development and create an educational environment conducive to holistic character development.

The limitations of the study which show that 67.8% of the factors influencing student character come from variables outside the model, open up opportunities for further research to explore these factors, such as school culture, peer influence, and religious extracurricular activities with a more comprehensive mixed research approach.

Overall, Christian character education based on biblical theology emphasizes that the formation of intelligent and religious character must be a theological calling, oriented not only toward academic aspects but also toward spiritual integrity. Through obedience to the divine mandate in God's Word, character education at SMP Negeri 12 Batam is expected to produce a generation that is intelligent, religious, and capable of facing the challenges of the times with the wisdom and love of Christ.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that optimizing educational management through systematic and planned Christian Religious Education (PAK) learning management has a significant empirical contribution to the formation of intelligent character in grade IX students at SMP Negeri 12 Batam. This finding indicates that effective educational management practices are able to create a learning environment that supports the development of critical thinking skills, self-control, and moral decision-making based on Christian values, especially the principle of fear of God as an epistemological basis in the formation of knowledge and wisdom. Theoretically, these results strengthen the view that character education cannot be separated from the

quality of learning governance and educational leadership at the school level.

The practical implications of these findings emphasize the importance of strengthening educational management focused on the ongoing capacity development of Catholic Religious Education (PAK) teachers, along with building strong synergies between schools, parents, and religious communities. This collaborative approach is seen as a key strategy in holistically and sustainably developing the character of intelligent and religious students. Furthermore, the contribution of the PAK learning variable, which is 32.2%, to character formation, suggests that other external factors still play a significant role. This opens up opportunities for further research to explore the role of school culture, peer influence, and the effectiveness of extracurricular religious activities in strengthening character education at the secondary school level.

## RECOMMENDATION

Based on the research results that have been conducted, the author recommends several things, namely: (1) Continuous Training for PAK Teachers. Schools need to hold continuous training for Christian Religious Education teachers so that they are able not only to master the material but also to become facilitators of values and role models of intelligent and religious character. Strengthening teacher capabilities will support the effectiveness of PAK learning based on biblical theology. (2) Active Synergy between Schools, Parents, and Religious Communities. To form optimal religious character, schools must build and strengthen partnership networks with parents and church communities. Joint character development programs, integrated spiritual activity schedules, and active student participation in faith communities need to be developed so that learning at school and in the family/church environment is aligned and mutually supportive. (3) Strengthening School-Based Education Management. The principal and management team must manage PAK learning systematically and holistically with a planned strategy. Improving communication between educational stakeholders and the use of a learning community approach and spiritual mentoring can strengthen the internalization of intelligent and religious character values. (4) Development of Extracurricular Programs that Support School Character. In this case, it is recommended to develop extracurricular programs based on religion and the development of soft skills that can enrich the learning experience and shape the religious and intelligent character of students as a whole. (5) Further Research with a Comprehensive Approach. Further research is needed using a mixed methods approach to explore other influencing factors such as school culture, peer influence, and the effectiveness of religious activities outside the classroom to get a complete picture of student character formation. (6) Integration of Biblical Theology in All Aspects of Education. Character education based on biblical

theology is not only programmed in Christian Religious Education learning, but needs to be integrated into all aspects and school curriculum so that Christian values can guide the entire educational process towards the formation of a complete character, by exploring various influential external factors, such as school culture, peer influence, and the effectiveness of extracurricular spiritual programs. The implementation of this recommendation is expected to strengthen the quality of Christian Religious Education learning and build student character holistically. Overall, the findings of this study provide an empirical and conceptual basis for the development of an educational management optimization model based on biblical theology as a strategic approach in strengthening character education in secondary schools. This model is expected to contribute to the formation of a young generation that is not only intellectually superior, but also has spiritual depth and a strong Christian character in facing social dynamics and the challenges of the times.

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