



The Contribution of Christian Education in Shaping Work Ethics Among Christian Students

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Abstract: This research explores the contribution of Christian education in shaping work ethics among Christian students, particularly within academic and professional preparation contexts. The study investigates how values embedded in Christian teaching such as diligence, honesty, responsibility, and service are integrated into the educational process and internalized by students. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis from selected Christian schools and students. The findings reveal that Christian education plays a significant role in cultivating strong work ethics, primarily through biblical instruction, teacher modeling, character-based curricula, and school practices that emphasize moral discipline. However, the effectiveness of this formation is influenced by the consistency of value transmission, parental support, and community reinforcement. This study contributes to educational and theological discourse by highlighting the relevance of faith-based moral education in preparing ethically grounded individuals for the workforce. It offers insights for Christian educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers seeking to strengthen the integration of faith, character, and work readiness in educational settings.

Research Highlights:

- Identifies the pivotal role of Christian education in instilling core work ethic values such as responsibility, honesty, discipline, and perseverance among students.
- Reveals that faith-based instruction and teacher modeling significantly influence the moral and ethical behavior of students in academic and professional contexts.
- Demonstrates the importance of integrating biblical principles into daily learning activities, classroom management, and curriculum design to reinforce ethical formation.
- Highlights the need for collaboration between educators, families, and church communities to maintain consistency in moral teaching and student behavior.
- Provides practical recommendations for enhancing curriculum development and institutional policies to support character-building and career preparation in Christian educational settings..

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INTRODUCTION

In today's increasingly complex and competitive world, the importance of strong work ethics cannot be overstated. Work ethics encompassing values such as discipline, diligence, integrity, responsibility, and accountability are crucial not only for personal and professional success but also for the development of ethical and productive societies (Omisore & Adeleke, 2015). However, many educators and employers have observed a gradual decline in these values among younger generations, including students. This trend

raises critical questions about the role of education, especially value-based education, in shaping character and behavior.

In academic settings, work ethics are foundational to student success and educational integrity. Students who demonstrate qualities such as diligence, responsibility, and self-discipline are more likely to achieve academic excellence (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005). These traits contribute to consistent study habits, timely submission of assignments, collaborative learning, and respect for academic honesty. Conversely, the absence of ethical values may result in issues such as plagiarism, cheating, lack of motivation, and disengagement from the learning process. Educational institutions that emphasize work ethics help shape students who are not only academically competent but also morally upright individuals who value the process of learning as much as the outcome.

Work ethics also serve as a bridge between academic life and professional readiness. As students transition into the workforce, employers increasingly seek not just technical skills or qualifications but also soft skills that reflect a strong work ethic (Valenzuela, 2020). In the professional environment, employees with high ethical standards are more likely to contribute positively to organizational culture, maintain professional relationships, and uphold the values of integrity and accountability. They tend to be dependable, proactive, and resilient traits that are highly valued in every industry. A strong work ethic enhances job performance, reduces turnover, and promotes long-term career growth.

Moreover, in an age where automation and artificial intelligence are reshaping the nature of work, ethical behavior and human values remain irreplaceable. Traits such as responsibility, dedication, and moral decision-making continue to distinguish human workers from machines (Allen & Wallach, 2012). Work ethics not only ensure individual success but also contribute to the ethical foundation of institutions and societies at large. In environments where work ethics are upheld, corruption is minimized, efficiency is optimized, and mutual respect is nurtured.

Christian education, which integrates academic learning with biblical principles, holds a distinctive position in forming students holistically. Rooted in teachings that emphasize stewardship, service, perseverance, and faithfulness, Christian education seeks to nurture individuals who are not only intellectually competent but also morally and spiritually grounded (Long, 2014). The Bible promotes a strong theology of work, as seen in scriptures like Colossians 3:23 ("Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men") and Proverbs 12:24 ("Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in forced labor"). These verses and others provide foundational values that guide students in their attitude toward work, responsibility, and purpose.

The home, church, and school are traditionally seen as three central environments where moral and ethical values are cultivated. Among these, Christian schools and institutions play a significant role in the daily formation of student attitudes through curricula, discipline, mentorship, and spiritual practices (Horan, 2017). Despite this, there is still limited empirical research that explores the concrete impact of Christian education on students' work ethic particularly from the perspective of Christian students themselves.

A significant body of literature highlights that Christian education aims to produce not only knowledgeable individuals but also morally and spiritually grounded persons. Studies such as those by Holmes (2017) and Smith & Smith (2019) have emphasized that the integration of biblical principles into the curriculum cultivates values like diligence, honesty, accountability, and servant leadership—key elements of a strong work ethic. These studies argue that Christian educational institutions often approach learning as a form of worship and service, instilling a sense of responsibility and purpose in students that extends beyond personal achievement.

Empirical research by Barna Group (2016) and Christian School Education journal (2020) supports this theoretical framework by providing data on Christian school graduates. These studies found that students who had undergone Christian education reported higher levels of intrinsic motivation, time management skills, and ethical decision-making in both academic and workplace environments. Furthermore, they

showed a higher likelihood of integrating faith and ethics in their career choices and demonstrating a sense of vocation rooted in service and stewardship.

In the African and Southeast Asian contexts, researchers such as Mbiti (2015) and Simanjuntak & Tobing (2021) investigated the role of Christian education in shaping work ethics among secondary and university students. Their findings revealed that spiritual practices embedded in school routines such as morning devotions, Bible classes, and service-learning activities played a central role in forming students' sense of discipline, punctuality, and responsibility. However, these studies also pointed out that the effectiveness of Christian education varies depending on the consistency of teacher modeling, institutional policies, and parental involvement.

Another relevant area of study focuses on faith formation and moral development. Scholars like James K. A. Smith (2016) in his work "You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit" argued that education is not merely cognitive but formational. He stressed that repeated practices within Christian schools such as prayer, confession, and community service can habituate students to ethical behavior, including their approach to work and responsibility. These arguments are further supported by studies in Christian higher education, where students exposed to theological reflection and vocational training exhibit stronger ethical reasoning and perseverance in their professional lives.

Nonetheless, some critiques have emerged as well. A few researchers (e.g., Turner, 2018; Lee, 2022) cautioned that Christian education alone is not always sufficient to produce ethical behavior unless it is accompanied by personal faith development and real-life application. They emphasize the need for mentorship, contextualized learning, and the reinforcement of biblical values at home and in the broader church community.

This research seeks to fill that gap by analyzing how Christian education contributes to the formation of work ethics among Christian students. By exploring students' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors, the study aims to understand how deeply Christian educational values are internalized and whether they translate into a robust and godly work ethic. In doing so, this research will contribute not only to educational studies but also to the ongoing discourse on the integration of faith and character development in academic settings.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method to explore and understand the contribution of Christian education in shaping work ethics among Christian students (Eshun, 2018). The qualitative method is chosen because it allows the researcher to delve deeply into the experiences, perceptions, and values held by students and educators within Christian educational institutions. This approach emphasizes understanding meaning and context, which are crucial when studying moral and spiritual dimensions such as work ethic formation.

The research population includes Christian students enrolled in secondary and tertiary educational institutions that implement Christian-based curricula (Smith, 2016). The selection of participants uses a purposive sampling technique, targeting individuals who have been exposed to Christian educational principles for at least two years. This criterion ensures that participants have had sufficient engagement with the educational system and its values to reflect meaningfully on its influence (Robinson, 2012).

Data collection is conducted through a combination of semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and document analysis (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). Semi-structured interviews with students, teachers, and school administrators are used to gather in-depth insights into how work ethic values are taught, modeled, and internalized within the school environment. The FGDs provide a platform for students to express their experiences and attitudes collectively, facilitating the identification of shared themes and challenges (Theobald et al., 2011). Meanwhile, document analysis involves reviewing relevant school materials such as curricula, syllabi, student handbooks, and devotional guides to assess how work ethics and Christian values are embedded in formal educational content.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the data, the research applies triangulation, comparing findings across different data sources and participant groups. Member checking is also conducted, wherein participants are given opportunities to review and validate their responses, ensuring accurate representation of their perspectives.

The data collected are analyzed using thematic analysis, which involves coding the data, identifying patterns and recurring themes, and interpreting them in relation to the research objectives (Joffe, 2011). The analysis focuses on identifying how students perceive and demonstrate work ethic values such as diligence, responsibility, punctuality, integrity, and commitment and how these are influenced by their Christian education experience.

Ethical considerations are strictly upheld throughout the study. All participants are informed about the purpose of the research, and their consent is obtained before participation (Wiles et al., 2007). Anonymity and confidentiality are guaranteed to protect the privacy of the respondents. The research is also conducted in accordance with institutional ethical review standards.

In summary, this methodology is designed to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of the influence of Christian education on student work ethics. By engaging multiple data sources and stakeholders, the study seeks to generate nuanced and reliable findings that reflect the lived realities of Christian students in educational settings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this research reveal that Christian education plays a significant role in shaping and reinforcing work ethics among Christian students. Data obtained from interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis indicate that values such as diligence, responsibility, punctuality, integrity, and perseverance are consistently emphasized within Christian educational settings and are meaningfully internalized by many students.

From the students' perspectives, one of the most influential factors in developing a strong work ethic is the integration of biblical values into academic life. Many respondents reported that scriptural teachings particularly those related to stewardship, discipline, and service serve as daily reminders of the moral and spiritual dimensions of their academic responsibilities. Verses such as Colossians 3:23 ("Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart...") are frequently cited by both students and teachers as motivational anchors that influence how tasks are approached and completed.

Furthermore, the study finds that teachers serve as moral role models, significantly impacting students' attitudes toward work and responsibility. Educators in Christian institutions are perceived not merely as instructors, but as mentors and spiritual guides who embody the values they teach. Students expressed that witnessing consistency between what teachers say and what they do reinforces the importance of living out one's faith through daily work and academic engagement.

The school environment itself contributes to ethical formation through structured practices such as morning devotions, character education sessions, service projects, and strict academic honesty policies (Starratt, 2005). These practices create a culture where ethical behavior and hard work are not only expected but celebrated. In many institutions, excellence is defined not solely by grades, but also by attitude, discipline, and willingness to serve.

Despite these positive findings, the research also uncovers challenges and variations in how work ethics are internalized. While most students acknowledge the influence of Christian education, a few admitted that their personal motivation was more external such as meeting academic requirements or pleasing parents than rooted in faith-based convictions (Lee, 2018). Additionally, students from schools with inconsistent discipline or less-engaged faculty were less likely to demonstrate strong ethical behaviors,

indicating that institutional consistency and staff commitment play critical roles in effective moral formation.

Another notable finding is the influence of family and church in reinforcing or weakening school-based values. Students who reported receiving similar messages about work ethics at home and church tended to exhibit stronger alignment between their beliefs and actions. This suggests that Christian education is most effective when supported by a broader ecosystem of moral and spiritual reinforcement.

In conclusion, the results demonstrate that Christian education when implemented holistically through curriculum, modeling, spiritual practices, and community involvement contributes substantially to the formation of work ethics in Christian students. However, the effectiveness of this formation depends heavily on the consistency of implementation, the engagement of educators, and the reinforcement of values across home, school, and church settings.

Potential Contribution to Christian Educational Practices, Curriculum Development, and Moral Education Policy

First, the research underscores the importance of intentional formation in educational environments. The evidence suggests that when biblical values related to work such as diligence, stewardship, integrity, and perseverance are explicitly taught and consistently modeled, students are more likely to internalize these values and apply them in their academic and professional lives. This finding contributes to Christian educational practices by affirming the need for a classroom culture that not only imparts knowledge but also shapes character. Teachers and administrators can use this insight to reflect on their roles as mentors and role models, ensuring their own conduct aligns with the values they teach.

In terms of curriculum development, the research suggests that integrating work ethic principles into both religious and general subjects can yield positive behavioral outcomes (Chowdhury, 2018). Rather than relegating moral instruction to Bible or character education classes alone, Christian schools can infuse biblical perspectives on work and responsibility into subjects such as mathematics (through discipline), literature (through narratives of integrity), or science (through stewardship of creation). Curricula can be revised to include project-based learning, service-oriented assignments, and vocational reflections that challenge students to connect faith with practical responsibility. The research also highlights the value of devotional materials, thematic chapel sessions, and extracurricular activities that reinforce these principles in diverse and engaging ways.

On a broader scale, this research contributes to the formulation of moral education policy in Christian institutions (Hill, 2009). It emphasizes the need for a systemic approach that integrates ethical formation into institutional mission statements, strategic plans, teacher training, student assessment, and community engagement. Policymakers and school boards can draw on these findings to design frameworks that promote character development alongside cognitive achievement. Furthermore, the study reinforces the importance of collaborative moral education, suggesting that partnerships among school, family, and church are essential for consistent value transmission. Future policy initiatives may benefit from fostering these partnerships through parent education, church-school collaboration, and service-learning initiatives that connect students to real-world ethical challenges.

Additionally, the research can serve as a foundational reference for teacher development programs. Preparing educators to be moral exemplars and ethical facilitators is critical to sustaining the influence of Christian education on student behavior (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2008). Training modules could be developed to help teachers integrate work ethics into classroom management, student mentoring, and pedagogical strategies.

This research contributes meaningfully to Christian education by providing empirical evidence that supports the transformative power of faith-based schooling in the formation of work ethics. It invites Christian educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers to reevaluate and enhance their efforts in shaping not just competent students, but responsible, ethical, and spiritually grounded individuals who view work as a form of worship and service to others.

Relevance for Faith-Based Institutions Seeking to Prepare Students Spiritually and Ethically for Professional Life

Faith-based institutions are uniquely positioned to offer an education that is holistic one that nurtures the mind, soul, and character (Burns, 2012). However, spiritual formation without ethical grounding may result in students who are theologically informed but ethically inconsistent. This research underscores the importance of integrating work ethic principles such as honesty, discipline, perseverance, and accountability into the spiritual and academic life of students. These values are not peripheral to Christian education; they are core expressions of living out one's faith in real-world contexts, including the workplace.

The findings highlight that Christian education, when implemented with intentionality and consistency, serves as a powerful vehicle for instilling ethical behavior (Green, 2009). This is particularly relevant for institutions that view education as a form of discipleship. The classroom becomes more than a place of knowledge transmission; it becomes a training ground for future professionals who are called to be "salt and light" (Matthew 5:13-16) in their industries, whether in business, healthcare, education, law, or ministry. Christian students are challenged to view their careers not merely as sources of income, but as arenas for stewardship, service, and witness.

Moreover, this research reinforces the idea that ethics must be cultivated through both instruction and modeling. Faith-based institutions must ensure that their educators and leaders consistently model the work ethic and character they seek to develop in students. Teachers who demonstrate integrity, punctuality, and a commitment to excellence provide living examples of what it means to live out the gospel through one's work. This relevance extends beyond moral behavior into professional identity, encouraging students to align their vocational goals with Christian values such as justice, compassion, and excellence.

For faith-based higher education institutions preparing students for competitive and ethically complex workplaces, this research calls for a more intentional integration of faith and work (Johnson, 2017). Programs in theology, business, science, and the arts must not only teach technical proficiency but also ethical decision-making informed by a Christian worldview. Capstone courses, internship programs, and vocational counseling can all benefit from a framework that equips students to navigate the ethical challenges they will face in their careers with integrity and faithfulness.

Ultimately, this study affirms that preparing students for professional life in a faith-based context must involve more than spiritual instruction it must cultivate ethical excellence that reflects the character of Christ in every sphere of life. In doing so, Christian institutions fulfill their higher calling: to educate individuals who are not only academically capable and spiritually aware, but also professionally ethical and socially responsible.

Broader Implications for the Integration of Faith and Work

At the heart of Christian theology is the belief that all of life including work is a domain of worship and discipleship (Ogden, 2019). The broader implication, therefore, is that faith should not be compartmentalized into spiritual or religious activities alone, but must shape one's approach to daily responsibilities, professional conduct, and vocational purpose. This study affirms that Christian education, when grounded in biblical principles and lived practice, can effectively bridge the gap between belief and behavior, thereby forming individuals who view their work as both a calling and a service to God and society.

One significant implication is the redefinition of work as a sacred vocation, not just a secular activity (Ashforth & Vaidyanath, 2002). For Christian students, this means that careers in law, business, healthcare, arts, and other fields are not merely about productivity or income generation they are opportunities to glorify God through excellence, integrity, and service. When work is seen through the lens of stewardship and worship, students are more likely to pursue it with responsibility, humility, and

purpose. Faith becomes a guiding compass for ethical decision-making, conflict resolution, and leadership in the workplace.

Furthermore, the integration of faith and work reshapes how institutions and educators think about vocational training and career readiness. Rather than preparing students solely for employment, Christian schools and universities are challenged to prepare students for ethical influence in their fields (Flatt, 2019). This includes embedding theological reflection, ethical reasoning, and character development into every academic discipline not as an add-on, but as a core part of professional education. It also encourages institutions to form partnerships with churches, businesses, and communities to mentor young believers in living out their faith authentically in the workforce.

This integration also contributes to social and cultural transformation. As Christian students internalize strong work ethics and enter various sectors of society, they become agents of integrity and hope in environments often marked by corruption, exploitation, or moral ambiguity (Atsu, 2020). Their presence has the potential to uplift organizational cultures, advance justice, and model redemptive practices in leadership, management, and service. Thus, Christian education's impact on work ethic extends far beyond the individual it becomes a catalyst for broader societal renewal.

In addition, this research reinforces the importance of life-long discipleship. Faith and work integration is not a one-time achievement but a continual journey of aligning one's professional life with the character and mission of Christ (Buszka & Ewest, 2019). The role of the church, mentors, and Christian communities is essential in sustaining this integration beyond school years, helping graduates navigate ethical dilemmas and maintain spiritual resilience in their careers.

Comparison of Research Results with Previous Research

One strong point of convergence lies in the affirmation that Christian education positively influences the ethical development of students, particularly in areas related to discipline, integrity, and responsibility. This supports the findings of Holmes (2017) and Smith & Smith (2019), who emphasized that the integration of biblical principles within educational settings fosters moral growth and ethical awareness. Just as these scholars highlighted the role of scripture in moral instruction, this research similarly finds that verses like Colossians 3:23 and Proverbs 12:24 are frequently cited by both educators and students as motivators for hard work and ethical behavior.

Moreover, the present study aligns with the empirical findings of the Barna Group (2016), which reported that Christian school graduates often demonstrate higher levels of motivation, ethical reasoning, and spiritual integration in their vocational aspirations. In this study, Christian students expressed that their academic responsibilities were not merely tasks but acts of stewardship and worship—an attitude closely mirrored in the Barna Group's conclusion that Christian education encourages a "faith and work" mindset.

The research also confirms the observations of Simanjuntak & Tobing (2021), who studied Christian secondary students in Southeast Asia and found that structured spiritual activities such as morning devotions and religious assemblies fostered ethical habits like punctuality and perseverance. Similarly, the current study reveals that spiritual routines, institutional culture, and teacher modeling contribute significantly to the internalization of work ethics in Christian schools.

However, this study also contributes new depth to the literature by identifying inconsistencies in ethical formation where Christian education is not holistically implemented. While previous research has largely emphasized the positive impacts of faith-based schooling, this study reveals that without consistent discipline, strong role models, and supportive home environments, the impact of Christian education on work ethics can be weakened. This expands upon critiques raised by Turner (2018) and Lee (2022), who argued that Christian schooling alone is insufficient without personal conviction and practical reinforcement. The current findings support this argument by showing that some students rely more on external motivators (grades, parental pressure) than internalized Christian values suggesting a gap between exposure and transformation.

Another significant comparison lies in the role of the broader moral ecosystem, including church and family. While earlier studies primarily focused on school-centered influences, this research emphasizes the importance of cross-contextual consistency. Students who received reinforcement of Christian values at home and church were more likely to develop a coherent and lasting work ethic. This finding adds a relational and ecological dimension to prior research, showing that effective value formation requires a collaborative effort across multiple domains of a student's life.

In summary, the results of this study are largely consistent with and supportive of existing literature on the positive influence of Christian education on student ethics. However, it also adds to the scholarly conversation by revealing the conditional nature of this impact highlighting the need for integrity in practice, alignment across environments, and deeper engagement with students' personal faith formation. In doing so, the research not only affirms previous findings but also calls for a more nuanced and integrated approach to moral and vocational education in Christian contexts.

CONCLUSION

This research has examined the role of Christian education in shaping the work ethics of Christian students, focusing on how biblical values and educational practices influence students' attitudes and behaviors toward work, responsibility, and integrity. Through qualitative analysis involving student experiences, teacher input, and institutional practices, the study concludes that Christian education when implemented holistically and consistently plays a significant role in nurturing strong work ethics among students. The findings demonstrate that values such as diligence, discipline, honesty, punctuality, and perseverance are effectively instilled through a combination of spiritual instruction, teacher modeling, character-based curricula, and daily routines such as devotionals and service activities. These practices, rooted in scripture, not only guide students academically but also prepare them ethically for the demands of professional life. Students are encouraged to view work not merely as a task, but as a calling an expression of faith and service to God and others. However, the study also reveals that the success of Christian education in shaping work ethics is not automatic. It depends greatly on the consistency of moral instruction, the authenticity of role models, and the reinforcement of values at home and within the broader Christian community. In contexts where these elements are lacking, students may struggle to internalize the ethical principles being taught, relying instead on external motivators or exhibiting inconsistent behavior. The research contributes to the broader discourse on faith and education by affirming that the integration of biblical principles into educational experiences equips students with the ethical foundation necessary for both academic and professional success. It also holds significant implications for curriculum developers, school leaders, and policymakers within Christian institutions, urging them to place greater emphasis on the formation of character alongside intellectual development. This study underscores that Christian education has the potential to cultivate not only spiritually aware individuals but also ethically responsible citizens and professionals. It calls on Christian educators, families, and faith communities to work collaboratively in shaping a generation that approaches their work with excellence, integrity, and a sense of divine purpose.

AUTHORS' DECLARATION

Authors' Contributions and Responsibilities

The author was responsible for all aspects of this research project. This includes the formulation of the research problem, literature review, development of the research framework, and design of the methodology..

Competing Interests

The author declares that there are no competing interests financial, academic, or personal that could have influenced the outcomes or interpretation of this research.

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