

Internalization of Honesty as a Christian Ethical Value among Christian Students

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Received : 22 November - 2025

Accepted : 21 December - 2025

Published online : 26 December - 2025

Abstract

This research examines the internalization of honesty as a Christian ethical value among Christian students through a literature study approach. The phenomenon of declining academic integrity in higher education highlights an urgent need for character formation grounded in honesty values, particularly within Christian higher education contexts. The purpose of this research is to describe the concept of honesty in Christian ethics perspective, elaborate the process of honesty value internalization, and identify supporting and hindering factors. The method used is qualitative literature study with content analysis on academic sources from the 2020-2025 period. The study results show that honesty in Christian ethics is not merely moral behavior, but a reflection of character formed through relationship with Christ. The internalization process involves cognitive, affective, and behavioral stages that are strengthened by personal spirituality, contextual religious education, and supportive social environment. However, challenges such as normalization of academic cheating, achievement pressure, and digital culture become major obstacles. This research recommends an integrative model involving family, campus, church, and spiritual community in Christian student character formation. The implications of this research for higher education practice include developing integrative character education curriculum, strengthening lecturers' role as moral mentors, forming a learning ecosystem that supports honesty value internalization, and multi-stakeholder collaboration in student character formation.

Keywords: Academic Integrity, Christian Ethics, Christian Students, Honesty, Value Internalization.

1. Introduction

Higher education in the contemporary era faces serious challenges related to academic integrity. The phenomenon of academic cheating, plagiarism, and dishonesty in various forms indicates a concerning moral crisis. Uge et al. (2019) affirm that character education in higher education has become an urgent need to form a generation that is not only intellectually smart but also morally mature. In this context, the value of honesty becomes an important foundation that must be internalized by students, especially Christian students who have the responsibility to reflect their faith in daily life. Honesty in Christian ethics has a deeper dimension than merely compliance with social norms. Gushee and Stassen (2016) explain that honesty is a manifestation of character formed through relationship with Christ and commitment to live according to the teachings of the Kingdom of God. Studies show that challenges to academic integrity among Christian students remain significant, especially in digital learning environments that normalize unethical academic practices (Simanjuntak et al., 2023). The digital era presents serious challenges for Christian character formation, as instant culture, digital anonymity, and technological shortcuts tend to erode moral



responsibility and honesty (Arifianto et al., 2025). In this context, the internalization of honesty is not only important as a response to external challenges, but as an integral part of Christian students' moral identity formation. The gap in literature shows that studies on honesty value internalization in Christian higher education context are still limited. Most research focuses on general aspects of academic integrity without exploring the theological and spiritual dimensions characteristic of Christian character formation. Therefore, this research uses a literature study approach to strengthen the theoretical foundation and provide comprehensive understanding of honesty internalization as a Christian ethical value among Christian students.

The formulation of the research problem centers on understanding how the concept of honesty is interpreted within the perspective of Christian ethics and how it applies in the context of higher education. It also explores the process through which Christian students internalize the value of honesty through cognitive, affective, and behavioral stages, as well as the factors that support or hinder this internalization process.

Higher education in the digital age faces serious challenges in maintaining academic integrity, marked by an increase in academic misconduct, plagiarism, and contract cheating in various learning contexts, including online learning (Bretag et al., 2019; Lancaster & Clarke, 2017). Penelitian (Ellis et al., 2018; Holden et al., 2021) shows that advances in technology and instant culture have increased the chances of academic misconduct, while weakening students' moral responsibility due to anonymity and ease of digital access. In the context of character education, (Kristjánsson, 2017) emphasises that honesty cannot be built solely through institutional policies or academic sanctions, but rather through a process of internalising values that encompasses cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions on an ongoing basis. This challenge becomes even more complex in Christian higher education, where academic integrity should reflect Christian ethics and the formation of students' moral identity rooted in Christian values and character (Buchanan, 2020; Harrison & Laco, 2022), however, in practice, Christian students also face similar pressures and temptations in the digital academic environment (Toledo, 2022). Although studies on academic integrity and character education have developed rapidly, there are still limitations in research that specifically examines the process of internalising the value of honesty from a Christian ethical perspective in higher education, especially those that integrate the challenges of the digital age with the formation of students' character and moral identity.

The objectives of this research are to analyze the concept of honesty from a Christian ethical standpoint and examine its implications for character education in higher education. The study also aims to describe the mechanism of honesty value internalization among Christian students within learning contexts, and to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors that shape this process, providing a foundation for the development of effective character education strategies.

The benefits of this research are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it contributes to the academic discourse on Christian ethics and character formation in higher education, particularly in understanding value internalization in the digital era. Practically, the findings offer valuable insights for developing learning strategies that strengthen character education, including experiential and reflective learning methods that facilitate honesty internalization, models for integrating character education into the curriculum, structured mentoring and coaching programs, comprehensive academic integrity policies, and collaborative efforts involving campuses, churches, families, and communities in shaping student character. Academically, this study can also serve as a reference for future research

that combines literature review with field investigations to gain a more comprehensive understanding of value internalization dynamics among Christian students.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Christian Ethics Concept

Christian ethics is the study of how Christians should live based on Biblical teachings and Christian tradition. Wright (2020) explains that Christian ethics is not merely a set of moral rules, but a way of life rooted in understanding of who God is and what He desires for His people. Christian ethics provides a framework for understanding the world and making moral decisions consistent with God's character. Gushee and Stassen (2016) in their monumental work on Kingdom Ethics affirm that Christian ethics must be understood in the context of God's Kingdom that has come through Jesus Christ. They identify that Christian ethics is not only deontological (duty-based) or teleological (consequence-based), but transformative which is changing individuals and communities to reflect Kingdom of God values.

Core values in Christian ethics include integrity, honesty, love, justice, responsibility, and humility. Hays (1996) in his analysis of New Testament moral vision emphasizes that these values cannot be separated from the grand narrative of Christ's redemptive work. Christian ethics, according to Hays, is always Christocentric centered on Christ as the model and source of strength for moral living. Jesus' teachings about righteous and honest living can be found in various Gospel passages. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), Jesus calls His followers to live with standards higher than mere external compliance with the law. McKnight et al. (2020) explains that Jesus demands heart transformation that produces integrity in every aspect of life, including honesty.

2.2. Honesty in Christianity Perspective

Honesty in Christian perspective has deep theological and moral dimensions. Theologically, honesty is understood as a reflection of God's character who is truth itself (John 14:6). Ethical challenges in digital spaces require intentional formation of Christian moral consciousness, particularly in cultivating honesty, integrity, and responsibility in online and academic contexts (Santoso & Wiryadinata, 2025). The biblical basis for honesty can be traced from the Ten Commandments, particularly the commandment "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor" (Exodus 20:16). However, Jesus' teaching brings understanding of honesty to a deeper level. In Matthew 5:37, Jesus teaches, "Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' Anything beyond this comes from the evil one." Hays (1996) explains that Jesus demands complete integrity, where there is no difference between what is said and what is in the heart.

The Apostle Paul also gives strong emphasis on honesty as part of new life in Christ. In Ephesians 4:25, Paul writes, "Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body." Gushee and Stassen (2016) interpret this verse in the context of Christian community that should be marked by radical honesty, because honesty builds trust and strengthens fellowship. The relationship between honesty and Christian character is very close. Wright (2020) explains that Christian character is formed through consistent spiritual practices, including commitment to live honestly in all situations. Honesty is not merely a momentary action, but an internalized habit that becomes part of one's moral identity. McKnight et al. (2020) adds that the church has responsibility to form communities that support character growth, including in honesty.

2.3. Value Internalization

Value internalization is the process by which a person adopts external values and integrates them into their personal value system. Value internalization is the process by which individuals integrate moral and spiritual values into their personal identity through holistic strategies that combine cognitive understanding, spiritual experience, and practical engagement (Lahagu & Widjaja, 2024). In moral psychology and education literature, value internalization is generally understood through three stages:

- 1) At this stage, individuals acquire knowledge about certain values. They understand the definition, importance, and implications of those values. Kohn (1999) explains that at the cognitive stage, students learn about honesty through formal teaching, discussion, and intellectual reflection.
- 2) This stage involves emotional acceptance of values. Individuals not only understand honesty intellectually, but also feel its importance and develop the desire to be honest. Uge et al. (2019) emphasize that without the affective dimension, value internalization will be superficial and not produce deep commitment.
- 3) At this stage, values that have been understood and emotionally accepted are manifested in concrete actions. Honesty becomes a consistent behavior pattern in various situations. The behavioral stage requires consistent practice supported by spiritual discipline, mentoring, and community accountability so that honesty becomes a habitual moral identity (Hamadi, 2025; Lahagu & Widjaja, 2024).

Modern value internalization models in character education emphasize the importance of holistic approaches involving cognition, emotion, and action. Uge et al. (2019) in their systematic review of character education in higher education identify that value internalization is most effective when involving experiential learning, critical reflection, and community support. This model aligns with Christian pedagogical principles emphasizing holistic transformation, not merely knowledge transfer.

2.4. Christian Students and Character Formation

Character represents the moral identity that influences both who a person is and how they behave. For Christian students, character formation is not limited to general moral virtues, but is deeply rooted in the effort to reflect Christ's character in everyday life. Christian character formation is therefore understood as an ongoing and holistic process that integrates spiritual growth, moral awareness, and practical obedience through spiritual disciplines, communal relationships, and acts of service (Lahagu & Widjaja, 2024). In the digital era, Christian students encounter increasingly complex moral challenges. One significant challenge arises from academic pressures that prioritize performance and achievement, which may encourage students to engage in dishonest behaviors such as cheating and plagiarism. Research on Christian education in digital contexts indicates that the culture of instant results fostered by technology often conflicts with the gradual and formative nature of Christian character development, a process that requires perseverance, discipline, and spiritual maturity (Arifianto et al., 2025).

In addition, Christian students frequently face social norms that are inconsistent with biblical values. The normalization of academic dishonesty, the spread of moral relativism, and pressures to conform within academic environments can gradually undermine students' commitment to honesty and integrity. These challenges are further intensified by digital learning environments, where anonymity and limited face to face interaction can reduce personal accountability and weaken ethical sensitivity (Simanjuntak et al., 2023). To address these challenges, the involvement of multiple formative agents is essential. Higher education

institutions, particularly Christian universities, play a crucial role by embedding character education within the curriculum and cultivating an academic culture that consistently promotes integrity. The internalization of honesty among Christian students is strengthened when institutions deliberately provide spiritual mentoring and model ethical leadership through lecturers who function as moral and spiritual exemplars (Hamadi, 2025). Moreover, faith based communities such as student fellowships, small groups, and campus ministries serve as important spaces for accountability, mutual encouragement, and the lived practice of Christian ethical values within digital academic contexts (Santoso & Wiryadinata, 2025).

3. Methods

3.1. Research Type

This research uses a qualitative approach with literature review method. This method was chosen due to its appropriateness with the conceptual-theoretical research objectives, which is to explore and describe the concept of honesty in Christian ethics and its internalization process among Christian students. Literature study allows researchers to integrate various theoretical, theological, and empirical perspectives from credible academic sources. Kohn (1999) explains that literature study is very suitable for theological and moral studies because it allows in-depth analysis of various traditions of thought and synthesis of previous research findings. In this research context, literature study enables comprehensive exploration of theological, psychological, and pedagogical dimensions of honesty internalization.

3.2. Data Sources

Data sources in this research consist of academic literature including:

1. Theology and Christian ethics books written by contemporary theologians and ethicists, which provide a foundational theological and ethical framework for understanding Christian moral formation. These include works by Gushee and Stassen (2016), Hays (1996), McKnight et al. (2020), and Wright (2020).
2. Peer-reviewed academic journal articles focusing on character education, moral education, and spiritual formation within Christian contexts. Priority is given to recent empirical and conceptual studies that address value internalization, academic integrity, and moral challenges in educational settings, particularly in the digital era (Lahagu & Widjaja, 2024; Simanjuntak et al., 2023; Hamadi, 2025).
3. Publications on Christian religious education and spiritual formation, especially those examining higher education and student development. These sources explore how Christian values such as honesty and integrity are cultivated through institutional culture, mentoring, and faith-based communities in contemporary academic environments (Arifianto et al., 2025; Santoso & Wiryadinata, 2025).

Priority is given to literature published between 2020 and 2025 to ensure alignment with contemporary contexts and recent developments in Christian ethics, character education, and digital learning environments. Nevertheless, classical and foundational works that continue to offer significant theoretical contributions are also included as secondary sources to support conceptual depth and continuity.

3.3. Data Collection Technique

The data collection process was conducted through several stages:

- 1) Literature search was conducted through various academic databases such as Google Scholar, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), and JSTOR. Keywords used include “Christian ethics,” “honesty,” “value internalization,” “character education,” “Christian students,” and combinations of these keywords.
- 2) The identified literature was then selected based on several criteria, including relevance to the research topic, publication year (with priority given to sources published between 2020 and 2025), and academic quality. These criteria were chosen to ensure that the analyzed sources directly addressed the research focus, reflected contemporary academic discourse and current educational challenges, and met established standards of scholarly credibility through peer-reviewed journals, reputable publishers, and recognized author expertise.
- 3) Selected literature was then documented by recording complete bibliographic information, key concepts, main findings, and relevance to research questions.

3.4. Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis uses content analysis method consisting of several stages:

- 1) Collected literature was read thoroughly and information relevant to research questions was extracted. This process involves identification of main themes, key concepts, and important arguments.
- 2) Reduced data was then grouped based on categories appropriate to theoretical framework and research discussion structure. For example, concept of honesty in Christian ethics, stages of value internalization, supporting factors, and hindering factors.
- 3) Grouped data was then interpreted to build coherent and comprehensive understanding. Interpretation involves critical analysis of various perspectives, identification of patterns and relationships between concepts, and synthesis of findings from various sources.
- 4) The final stage is composing synthesis that integrates findings from various sources into a coherent narrative answering research questions. This synthesis also includes critical reflection on theoretical and practical implications of findings.

3.5. Literature Study Limitations

This research has several methodological limitations that need to be acknowledged:

- 1) This research does not conduct interviews, surveys, or direct observation of Christian students. Therefore, findings are theoretical-conceptual and require empirical validation through field research.
- 2) The quality and scope of analysis depend on availability and accessibility of relevant academic literature. Some perspectives or certain contexts may be underrepresented in available literature.
- 3) Although using systematic analysis procedures, interpretation of literature still involves researcher subjectivity. However, this subjectivity is minimized through source triangulation and critical reflection.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Analysis of Honesty Concept in Christian Ethics

Based on literature review, honesty in Christian ethics can be understood in several interrelated dimensions. Wright (2020) explains that honesty is not merely individual moral virtue, but a “broken signpost”, a sign pointing to a greater reality about God’s character. God is the source of truth, and human honesty is a reflection of God’s truth. Hays (2022) in his analysis of New Testament moral vision shows that honesty in Jesus’ teaching has a radical dimension. Jesus not only forbids lying, but demands complete integrity where there is no difference between external appearance and internal reality. In Matthew 23, Jesus criticizes the hypocrisy of Pharisees who appear righteous outwardly but are full of falseness inside. Christian honesty, according to Hays, is about wholeness of life that is consistent between what is believed, said, and done. Gushee and Stassen (2021) develop understanding of honesty within the Kingdom Ethics framework. They explain that honesty is one of the characteristics of Kingdom of God citizens. In God’s Kingdom that has come through Jesus, honesty is not only a moral demand, but grace that enables God’s people to live in truth. Honesty, in their view, is closely related to liberation, honesty frees someone from the bondage of falseness and enables them to live authentically.

Literature review results identify three main dimensions of honesty in Christian ethics that have significant pedagogical implications, which are systematically presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Dimensions of Honesty in Christian Ethics

Dimension	Main Characteristics	Theological Basis	Pedagogical Implications
Theological	Reflection of God’s character as truth	John 14:6; Exodus 20:16	Learning based on understanding identity in Christ and relationship with God
Moral-Ethical	Complete integrity: thought, word, action	John 14:6; Exodus 20:16	Holistic character education integrating cognitive-affective-behavioral
Communal	Honesty as foundation of body of Christ fellowship	Ephesians 4:25	Community-based learning with mutual accountability

Honesty in Christian ethics is a multidimensional concept that encompasses theological, moral-ethical, and communal dimensions. The theological dimension views honesty as a reflection of God’s character as true righteousness, the moral-ethical dimension emphasises integrity between thoughts, words, and actions, while the communal dimension places honesty as the foundation of the fellowship of the body of Christ. These three dimensions indicate that the internalisation of honesty in Christian education needs to be carried out holistically through learning based on identity in Christ, comprehensive character building, and the strengthening of community-based learning with mutual accountability, as summarised in Table 1.

Honesty in Christian education context transcends conventional moral definitions. Based on analysis of Gushee and Stassen (2016), Hays (1996), and Wright (2020), honesty is not merely external rules but character transformation rooted in relationship with Christ. These findings indicate the need for pedagogical approaches that integrate spiritual dimensions in character education, not just moral knowledge transfer.

Ethical reflection within the Indonesian Christian context indicates that honesty in the digital era faces distinct challenges, particularly as digital environments tend to blur the

boundaries between truth and falsehood. Digital communication often reduces ethical sensitivity and weakens personal accountability, creating conditions that may normalize dishonest behavior. In response to these challenges, Christian ethics emphasizes the necessity of consistent honesty regardless of context or medium. Honesty is understood not merely as the avoidance of falsehood, but as a comprehensive commitment to truth in all forms of life, including digital interaction and academic practice (Santoso & Wiryadinata, 2025).

The relationship between honesty and spiritual maturity is also a central theme in Christian ethical literature. Spiritual maturity is reflected in a person’s willingness to live in truth, even when such commitment entails personal cost or disadvantage. Individuals who demonstrate spiritual maturity exhibit integrity that is consistent across both spiritual life and everyday conduct, without compartmentalizing faith and daily practices (McKnight et al., 2020). Furthermore, the internalization of honesty among Christian students is strengthened when higher education institutions intentionally integrate spiritual mentoring and exemplary leadership from lecturers, who function as moral and spiritual role models within the academic community (Hamadi, 2025).

4.2. Honesty Internalization Process in Christian Students

Understanding of the process of internalising honesty among Christian students was obtained through the identification of supporting and inhibiting factors presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Supporting and Hindering Factors in the Internalization of Honesty among Christian Students

Domain	Supporting Factors	Working Mechanism	Hindering Factors	Negative Impact	Intervention Strategy
Individual-Spiritual	Healthy personal spirituality	Moral strength from relationship with God	Spiritual-secular dualism	Behavior inconsistency	(1) Christian worldview teaching; (2) Faith-learning integration
Pedagogical	Contextual religious education	Relevance with real challenges	Overloaded curriculum	Minimal moral reflection	(1) Character education integration; (2) Experiential learning
Social-Campus	Integrity environment	Positive reinforcement	Cheating normalization	Conformity pressure	(1) Honor code system; (2) Campus integrity culture
Relational	Lecturer/mentor exemplary	Ethical behavior modeling	Minimal mentoring	Absence of role models	(1) Lecturer training as mentors; (2) Structured mentoring
Cultural-Digital	Supportive spiritual community	Peer accountability	Instant digital culture	Shortcut ease	(1) Digital ethics education; (2) Cyber wisdom formation
Systemic-Institutional	Clear integrity policies	Consistent standards and sanctions	Grade-oriented system	Achievement pressure	(1) Formative evaluation; (2) Academic support

The honesty internalization process in Christian students involves more complex dimensions compared to general value internalization, as it incorporates spiritual and theological elements alongside psychological and educational processes. Based on the synthesis of relevant literature, this process can be understood through several interconnected

stages, as summarized in Table 2, which outlines the supporting and hindering factors influencing honesty internalization across personal, pedagogical, social, and institutional domains.

1) Cognitive Stage

At the cognitive stage, students acquire foundational knowledge about honesty through formal instruction such as ethics courses, Christian religious education, and theological teaching within academic and church settings. This stage provides the conceptual and theological framework necessary for moral understanding, yet cognitive awareness alone is insufficient to produce lasting behavioral change. Studies on Christian value internalization indicate that although students may understand moral principles cognitively, this understanding must be integrated with spiritual meaning and lived practice to become transformative (Lahagu & Widjaja, 2024). Within the Christian context, the cognitive stage involves a theological understanding of honesty as an essential attribute of God's character. When students recognize honesty as rooted in biblical teaching and divine truth, moral motivation extends beyond pragmatic considerations toward a faith-based commitment. Theological reflection in Christian education emphasizes that understanding honesty as a reflection of God's nature provides a deeper and more enduring foundation for character formation than moral instruction based solely on rules or consequences (Arifianto et al., 2025).

2) Affective Stage

The affective stage involves the internal acceptance of honesty values through emotional engagement and the development of personal commitment. At this stage, students move beyond knowing that honesty is morally right to valuing and desiring honesty as part of their identity. Research on Christian character formation highlights that affective internalization is closely linked to spiritual experience, particularly encounters with God's grace and participation in faith communities that nurture moral sensitivity (Lahagu & Widjaja, 2024). In Christian education, affective transformation is often fostered through spiritual practices, mentoring relationships, and communal worship that shape conscience and moral sensitivity. Exposure to spiritual mentoring and faith-based community life helps students develop an inner responsiveness to dishonesty and a growing desire to live truthfully. Such affective engagement strengthens moral motivation and supports the integration of faith and ethical behavior within daily academic and digital contexts (Santoso & Wiryadinata, 2025).

3) Behavioral Stage

The behavioral stage refers to the concrete expression of honesty in consistent actions and daily practices. At this stage, honesty is demonstrated through repeated ethical choices in academic work, interpersonal relationships, and digital interactions. Research on Christian moral formation emphasizes that repeated practice, reinforcement, and accountability are necessary for honesty to develop into a stable moral habit (Hamadi, 2025). In the Christian tradition, character formation is closely associated with habit formation through spiritual disciplines and communal practices. Honesty becomes fully internalized when students consistently act with integrity even in situations where external supervision is absent or when honesty leads to personal disadvantage. The digital learning environment presents particular challenges to this stage, as opportunities for academic dishonesty and ethical compromise are widespread. Successful internalization is evident when students maintain honest behavior across academic and digital contexts as an expression of integrated faith and moral maturity (Simanjuntak et al., 2023).

4.3. Hindering Factors of Honesty Internalization

Research on Christian higher education indicates that one of the major obstacles to honesty internalization is the normalization of academic dishonesty within campus environments. When cheating practices become widespread and socially accepted, students who choose to remain honest often experience significant social pressure. They may be perceived as naive, overly idealistic, or lacking solidarity with peers. Such normalization gradually reshapes moral perception, positioning honesty as an exception rather than a shared academic norm (Simanjuntak et al., 2023).

This condition is further reinforced by moral rationalization processes that allow students to justify dishonest behavior. Within academic contexts, students may rationalize cheating by appealing to collective behavior, perceived systemic injustice, or external expectations such as family pressure and academic survival. These justifications reduce the perception of cheating as a serious moral violation and instead frame it as a necessary or acceptable strategy for coping with academic demands (Lahagu & Widjaja, 2024).

Another significant barrier to honesty is the intense pressure to achieve high academic performance. Expectations from parents, scholarship requirements, and personal aspirations often create substantial stress for students. In highly competitive, grade oriented educational systems, success is frequently measured by outcomes rather than learning processes. Under such conditions, students who feel unable to meet expectations through honest means become more vulnerable to engaging in academic dishonesty (Hamadi, 2025).

The challenges to honesty are further intensified by the digital learning environment, which promotes a culture of instant results and ease of access. Digital technology provides numerous shortcuts for dishonest practices, including unauthorized copying, the use of artificial intelligence tools for assignments, and online services that facilitate academic misconduct. These technological affordances lower psychological barriers to dishonesty and normalize unethical behavior. Moreover, digital environments often create a sense of distance and anonymity that weakens personal accountability and moral responsibility, making it easier for students to rationalize dishonest actions (Arifianto et al., 2025; Santoso & Wiryadinata, 2025).

Kohn (1999) identifies that many higher education institutions, including some Christian campuses, give inadequate attention to character formation. Curriculum overloaded with academic courses leaves little room for moral reflection and character formation. Lecturers often focus on knowledge transfer and do less personal mentoring required for character formation. McKnight et al. (2020) adds that churches also sometimes fail in providing adequate guidance for students. Church programs may not be sensitive to special challenges faced by students on campus, or do not provide safe space for students to discuss their moral struggles without fear of being judged.

Gushee and Stassen (2016) identify more fundamental obstacle: dualism between spiritual life and secular life. Some Christian students separate their faith from their academic life which can be very spiritual at church on Sunday, but compromise their integrity on campus on other days. This dualism prevents comprehensive internalization of Christian values. Wright (2020) explains that this dualism results from incorrect theological understanding separating sacred and secular, or spiritual and material. When students do not understand that their entire life including academic study is worship to God, they are easier to compromise integrity in academic context.

4.4. Honesty Internalization Model Recommendations

An integrative model for honesty internalization among Christian students, involving synergy between family, campus, church, and student spiritual community. This model

emphasizes that honesty character formation requires multidimensional collaboration: family plays role in instilling values from early age through exemplary, emotional support, and open communication while avoiding excessive achievement pressure; campus must integrate character education in curriculum, create clear academic integrity policies, provide academic support such as tutoring, train lecturers as character mentors, and build culture that values learning process; church provides specific coaching programs, small groups for accountability, holistic theology teaching, safe discussion space without judgment, and appreciation for integrity; while student spiritual community creates integrity culture, peer support, activities strengthening Christian commitment, and counter-culture against cheating normalization on campus.

Recommended practical strategies for strengthening the internalization of honesty among Christian students emphasize a holistic and formative approach that integrates theological understanding, ethical reflection, and lived practice. One key strategy is the implementation of structured character discipleship programs that combine biblical teaching, ethical case studies, and sustained personal mentoring. Such programs enable students to connect Christian moral principles with real academic and digital challenges, while mentoring relationships provide guidance, accountability, and moral modeling that support long term character formation (Lahagu & Widjaja, 2024; Hamadi, 2025).

Another important strategy involves fostering a shared commitment to integrity at both personal and communal levels. This can be achieved through the establishment of integrity covenants that articulate shared moral expectations and promote mutual accountability within the academic community. Research in Christian higher education highlights that integrity is more effectively internalized when honesty is upheld not only as an individual virtue but also as a collective moral commitment embedded within institutional culture (Simanjuntak et al., 2023). Contextual preaching and teaching that directly address students' specific moral struggles, particularly those arising in academic and digital contexts, also play a vital role. Teaching that engages real ethical dilemmas faced by students, supported by one on one or small group mentoring, provides safe spaces for reflection, confession, and moral discernment. Such approaches strengthen students' moral awareness and help translate ethical convictions into consistent practice (Arifianto et al., 2025).

In addition, formative experiences such as spiritual retreats and intensive reflection programs contribute significantly to deeper moral internalization. These settings allow students to step back from academic pressures and engage in sustained self-examination, prayer, and ethical reflection. The integration of classical Christian spiritual disciplines, including self-examination, confession, and accountability partnerships, supports the development of habitual honesty by aligning spiritual maturity with daily ethical conduct (McKnight et al., 2020; Hamadi, 2025). Finally, experiential learning opportunities such as service learning and mission-oriented activities help students grasp the broader social and moral implications of honesty. Through direct engagement in service contexts, students learn to connect personal integrity with social responsibility and witness the impact of ethical commitment in real world situations. Together, these strategies contribute to a comprehensive and sustainable approach to honesty internalization that addresses cognitive, affective, spiritual, and behavioral dimensions of Christian character formation (Santoso & Wiryadinata, 2025).

The results of this study indicate that the internalisation of honesty in Christian education has a direct impact on the design and implementation of more holistic character education. Christian ethics education provides a moral foundation for building integrity and honesty among students in academic and real-life contexts (Listari & Simanjuntak, 2024).

Christian education that explicitly integrates the value of honesty into the curriculum, Bible-based learning, and teacher role modelling has proven effective in shaping consistent moral character (Lado & Windarti, 2024; Sarumaha & grace Mantiri, 2025). Christian Religious Education teachers play an important role as moral role models who strengthen students' integrity through example and guidance in values (Samaloisa & Hutahaeon, 2023). The integration of honesty values in Christian religious education is also needed to respond to the increasingly complex challenges of the digital age, so that curriculum development and learning strategies must include the dimensions of digital ethics and character (Paparang & Marjono, 2024; Sari & Bermuli, 2021). Furthermore, the implementation of Christian education that strengthens character through values such as honesty, responsibility, and integrity helps shape students who are not only academically competent but also have strong ethics in society.

5. Conclusion

Honesty in Christian ethics is a profound value reflecting God's character as truth itself, encompassing complete integrity between thought, word, and deed. Honesty internalization in Christian students is a complex process involving cognitive, affective, and behavioral stages, with distinctive spiritual dimension, faith community role, and theological motivation, requiring integration of formal teaching, spiritual experience, exemplary, and communal practices. This value is very important for Christian students' moral identity formation in digital era and high academic pressure, where honesty is not only individual virtue but also communal identity as part of Christ's body. Supporting factors of internalization include healthy personal spirituality, contextual religious education, social environment supporting integrity, and mentor exemplary, while obstacles such as cheating normalization, excessive achievement pressure, instant digital culture, minimal character guidance, and spiritual-secular dualism need to be overcome with comprehensive strategies.

Christian students are advised to strengthen personal spiritual life through consistent spiritual disciplines, build accountability relationships with mentors, develop courage to differ from group norms conflicting with Christian values, integrate faith in academic study, and actively participate in spiritual community. Christian campuses need to systematically integrate character education in curriculum, develop clear and fair academic integrity policies, provide adequate academic support, train lecturers as character mentors, and create culture valuing integrity through co-curricular programs such as retreats and mentoring. Churches, spiritual coaches, and families must provide coaching programs relevant to contemporary challenges, create small groups for accountability, teach holistic theology, provide non-judgmental discussion space, avoid excessive achievement pressure while providing honesty exemplary. Future researchers are advised to conduct comprehensive empirical studies, comparative research across contexts, assessment instrument development, longitudinal studies, and exploration of dimensions such as digital technology and social media role in honesty internalization.

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