

Existentialism and Moral Responsibility in Christian Religious Education: A Philosophical and Pedagogic Analysis

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Abstract

Existentialism is a philosophical movement that emphasizes human freedom, choice, and responsibility for one's existence. In the context of modern education, particularly Christian Religious Education (CRE), an existentialist approach is relevant for shaping students as conscious, reflective, and morally responsible individuals in faith. This article aims to analyze the basic concepts of existentialism, the thoughts of its major figures, and their implications for general education and Christian Religious Education. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method through library research. The findings indicate that existentialism contributes positively to the development of authentic faith and personal responsibility among students; however, its application must be critically filtered to remain consistent with Christian theology and biblical values.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education in the modern era faces increasingly complex challenges, particularly in shaping students' character and faith. Globalization, technological advancements, and individualism often lead students to become pragmatic and materialistic, losing fundamental values. In this context, education is required not only to transfer knowledge but also to shape individuals with integrity, faith, and the ability to navigate the dynamics of life with wisdom (Hutabarat et al., 2023).

Christian Religious Education (PAK) plays a strategic role in addressing these challenges. PAK is not sufficient to simply convey the doctrine of faith cognitively; it must also help students live that faith in a personal, existential, and responsible way. Thus, faith does not stop at the theoretical level but becomes a real-life experience that shapes attitudes, behavior, and daily moral decisions (Boiliu, 2025).

In this context, existentialist philosophy offers a relevant approach. Existentialism positions humans as free, conscious, and responsible subjects for their life choices. Human freedom is not a directionless freedom, but rather a freedom that demands deep reflection on the meaning of life, the purpose of existence, and the consequences of every action. Existentialist-based education encourages students not to simply accept values dogmatically but to internalize them through personal reflection and real-life experiences (Siswadi, 2024).

With this approach, students are invited to ask critical questions: What does life mean to me? How does my faith influence my moral decisions? How am I accountable for the choices I make before God and others? These existential questions become the entry point for the formation of authentic faith, not just a formality or tradition.

Furthermore, education influenced by existentialism can foster an awareness that the Christian faith is not merely a cultural heritage or moral code, but rather a personal relationship with God that demands responsibility and commitment. Thus, Christian Religious Education serves as a learning space that integrates human freedom with the call of faith, enabling students to become reflective, critical individuals rooted in biblical values in facing the challenges of the modern era (Rendi Rendi et al., 2024).

2. METHOD

This research employed a library research method with a qualitative-descriptive approach. Data were obtained from books on existentialist philosophy, educational scientific journals, and Christian theological literature. Analysis was conducted through critical interpretation of the concepts and implications of existentialism in Christian Religious Education.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Contribution of Existentialism in Education

Existentialism contributes significantly to the development of students' moral awareness and faith. The concepts of freedom and responsibility encourage students not to be passive in the process of learning about faith, but rather to take an active role in determining attitudes and actions based on Christian values. Thus, education serves not only as a means of transferring knowledge but also as a platform for developing individuals with faith and character (Ixfina & Rohma, 2025).

Furthermore, existentialism emphasizes that every individual has the freedom to determine the direction of their life. In an educational context, this means encouraging students to recognize that they are active participants in the learning process, not simply objects receiving information. This awareness fosters a sense of personal responsibility for the decisions and actions taken, making learning more meaningful and life-oriented (Ningrum et al., 2025).

Furthermore, existentialism helps students develop a reflective attitude toward life experiences. They are encouraged to critically question the meaning of existence, the purpose of life, and the relevance of faith in facing modern challenges. This reflective process strengthens the affective dimension of education, where faith is not only understood intellectually but also experienced emotionally and spiritually (Jonius Halawa et al., 2024).

Another important contribution is the development of a critical and responsible character. By emphasizing freedom accompanied by responsibility, existentialism encourages students not to simply follow trends or traditions mindlessly, but to boldly take a stand based on authentic faith. This makes education a process that shapes whole people—those who think, feel, and act in accordance with Christian values (Nainggolan et al., 2024).

Ultimately, existentialism broadens educational horizons by emphasizing the integration of cognitive, affective, and practical aspects. Education does not stop at mastering theory, but is directed toward developing individuals capable of living out their faith in concrete actions. In this way, existentialism contributes to developing a reflective, critical, and responsible generation, while also being rooted in biblical values (Nasrudin et al., 2024).

The results and discussion contain the research findings and their scientific discussion. Write down the scientific findings (*scientific findings*) obtained from the results of research that has been conducted, but must be supported by adequate data. The scientific findings referred to here are not the data from the research results obtained. These scientific findings must be explained scientifically, including: What are the scientific findings obtained? Why did this happen? Why is the variable trend like that? All of these questions must be explained scientifically, not only descriptively, and if necessary, supported by adequate scientific basic phenomena. In addition, comparisons with the results of other researchers on almost the same topic must also be explained. Research results and findings must be able to answer the research hypothesis in the introduction (Setiyowati & Arifianto, 2020).

Kierkegaard and Faith as Existential Commitment

Christian existentialists such as Søren Kierkegaard emphasized that faith is not simply the acceptance of teachings, but rather an individual's existential commitment to God. Kierkegaard emphasized that true faith arises from a risky personal decision, in which humans dare to take a "leap of faith" (*leap of faith*) as a form of surrender to Allah (Prayudi, 2018).

For Kierkegaard, faith cannot be forced or simply passed down through tradition. True faith demands personal involvement, where each individual must courageously make the decision to believe in God despite the uncertainty. This demonstrates that faith is not simply the result of rationality or logic, but rather an existential act that involves the entire human being.

Kierkegaard's concept of the "leap of faith" emphasizes that faith always carries risks. This risk arises because humans must confront the paradox between the limitations of reason and the mystery of the divine. However, it is precisely in the courage to take risks that faith becomes authentic. Christian Religious Education (CHE) can utilize this idea to help students understand that faith is not sterile or free from struggle, but rather a journey that demands courage and commitment.

Kierkegaard's perspective is relevant to Christian Religious Education because it helps students understand faith as a conscious response to God's call, not simply a tradition or institutional obligation. Thus, faith is viewed as an authentic, personal experience that demands the individual's full involvement. Students are encouraged to see faith not merely as a family or church-institutional inheritance, but as a personal decision to be lived out in their daily lives (Insany & Robandi, 2023).

In educational practice, Kierkegaard's ideas can be applied through reflective activities that encourage students to connect the teachings of faith to their life experiences. Teachers can engage students in discussions about faith struggles, write reflective journals, or simulate moral decision-making based on Christian values. In this way, faith is not only understood theoretically but also experienced as a concrete, existential commitment (Tio, 2025).

Application of Existentialism in Educational Practice

In educational practice, the application of existentialism can be realized through reflective learning methods, values discussions, faith journals, and service projects. Through reflection, students are encouraged to assess their life experiences in light of Christian faith. Values discussions open up a space for critical dialogue that fosters moral awareness.

Faith journals provide students with the opportunity to write about personal spiritual struggles and experiences, while service projects connect faith teachings with concrete actions in their communities. In this way, Christian teachings are not only understood theoretically but also lived out in the context of everyday life.

Limitations of Existentialism and the Need for Theological Integration. However, existentialism has limitations if applied without a strong theological foundation. Excessive emphasis on subjectivity and individual freedom can lead to moral relativism, where truth is seen solely as the result of personal interpretation without objective reference (Tolanga et al., 2025).

Therefore, Christian Education needs to critically integrate existentialism with biblical teachings, which affirm that human freedom is under God's sovereignty. True freedom is not unlimited, but rather freedom with responsibility before God and others. With proper integration, existentialism can be an effective pedagogical tool for fostering authentic faith, moral awareness, and personal responsibility.

4. CONCLUSION

Existentialism makes a significant contribution to Christian Religious Education by fostering students' awareness, freedom, and moral responsibility. With a critical and integrative approach, existentialism can enrich the study of the Christian faith without neglecting the authority of the Bible. Therefore, this approach deserves consideration as a philosophical framework for developing contextual and meaningful Christian education.

5. SUGGESTION

The application of existentialist philosophy in Christian Religious Education (PAK) should be conducted critically and selectively. Teachers and educators need to ensure that the freedom and responsibility emphasized in existentialism remain within the framework of Christian faith, grounded in the Bible. Thus, students are not only encouraged to think reflectively and critically but also guided to position their freedom as an act of obedience to God (Purwoto et al., 2020).

Furthermore, further research on the integration of existentialism into Christian education in Indonesia is urgently needed. In-depth studies can help identify contextual learning models that are relevant to local cultures and able to address the challenges of globalization and individualism. With further research, Christian Education (PAK) can continue to develop as a means of forming authentic faith and responsible character (Tio, 2025).

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