



## Christian Religious Education and Indonesia's Poverty Paradox: Toward a Transformative Christian Education

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### ABSTRACT

This paper explores the rebuilding of Christian Religious Education (CRE) as a transformative public pedagogy to address multidimensional poverty in Indonesia. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method with critical literature analysis to explore the confluence of public theology, liberation theology, and critical pedagogy of the socioeconomic context. The results suggest a marked poverty paradox in Indonesia, where, despite falling national poverty figures, structural inequality and economic fragility continue to be widespread. CRE in Indonesia is also generally doctrinal, cognitive, and ecclesiastical, frequently divorced from social realities such as poverty, inequality, and marginalization. Based on Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy and public theology perspectives, this study offers a transformative theological-pedagogical paradigm which emphasizes critical consciousness, ethical economic formation, community empowerment, and public advocacy. This study indicates that CRE must go beyond doctrinal transmission and enter into the terrain of emancipatory praxis, which can nurture socially active, critically conscious, and ethically responsible Christian citizens devoted to justice, freedom, and human flourishing.

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## INTRODUCTION

Poverty is one of the most persistent and complicated concerns in the present global development discourse. Poverty has traditionally been characterized in economic terms as the inability to meet basic material requirements such as food, shelter, healthcare, and education. However, contemporary approaches increasingly view poverty as a complex and multidimensional state of social exclusion, lack of access to opportunity, political marginalization, vulnerability, and lower human dignity. The World Bank's new global poverty threshold for upper-middle-income countries, set at USD 8.30 PPP per capita per day, is another signal that poverty is not just about acute deprivation but also incorporates broader forms of economic insecurity and social vulnerability.

Poverty remains a key national issue in Indonesia despite reasonably consistent economic growth and declines in extreme poverty experienced by the country in the past two decades. The country's national poverty rate has dropped to around 8.57 percent, according to figures from the state statistics agency Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS). The World Bank's revised poverty definition shows that nearly 68% of Indonesians are economically insecure by international upper-middle-income norms. This difference indicates that poverty in Indonesia cannot be determined only by narrow-sighted income-based statistics. Instead, it reflects structural inequalities in education, healthcare access, work prospects, digital inclusion, and social participation (Sibarani et al., 2025).

CRE is more than a pedagogical process of the transmission of doctrinal information and ecclesiastical traditions. CRE is also a transformative educational praxis for the formation of human character, ethical consciousness, spiritual maturity, and social responsibility in its wider theological concepts. CRE should ideally help learners internalize Christian principles of social, political, economic, and cultural life. CRE thus has a real capacity to contribute to social transformation and public participation, particularly in circumstances of injustice and inequality (Dwi Asmara, Alexander, 2020).

Although CRE has the potential to be transformative, in many Indonesian Christian educational institutions is often practiced limited to individual spirituality. These approaches generally emphasize privatized piety and pay little attention to the structural components of poverty, institutional injustice, environmental degradation, labor exploitation, corruption and social inequality. Christian communities might then cultivate strong personal religiosity without generating a critical knowledge of the reality of injustice and marginalization in society (Mofu, n.d.).

This is more troublesome in the context of Indonesian current socioeconomic condition. Rapid economic progress, technological revolution, and urban expansion have provided new opportunities, and social inequities have increased. While macroeconomic indicators have improved, many parts of society still feel economically precarious. In this setting, educational institutions, particularly Christian educational communities, cannot be detached from the greater societal reality. Theological education and religious pedagogy must

therefore be reimagined such that faith development is organically tied to social justice, human dignity, and public accountability (Darmadi, 2025).

Research on CRE in Indonesia is mostly associated with curriculum, moral education, spirituality, character building, and digital learning adaptation. These topics are still relevant but there has been relatively minimal literature on CRE as emancipatory public education that may critically react to multidimensional poverty utilizing modern global poverty frameworks. This intellectual gap emphasizes the need for a more contextual and transformative approach that combines theology, education, and social analysis in the changing social realities of Indonesia (Purwanto & Kristiawan, 2025).

The study incorporates concepts from liberation theology, public theology, Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, and the sustainable development discourse. The paper contends that CRE should evolve beyond the confines of doctrinal instruction towards transformative educational engagement that empowers individuals and communities actively combating poverty and social injustice through this interdisciplinary framework. The purpose of this study is to give a theoretical and practical contribution to the development of contextual Christian education, which is still socially relevant in modern Indonesia (Sibarani et al., 2025).

Studies on poverty in Indonesia have traditionally been dominated by economic, public policy and social development perspectives. Several studies have covered the income indicators, economic inequality, social protection, infrastructural development, and the effectiveness of government policies in reducing poverty. In contrast, studies on CRE in Indonesia have been more focused on spiritual formation, character education, curriculum development, individual morality, biblical literacy, and the application of digital learning to the current educational setting. These approaches have played a part in the development of Christian education but left gaps in the interaction between CRE and socio-structural issues (Missa & Bilo, 2026a).

First, there is currently a lack of studies that conceive of CRE as a transformational educational practice that directly responds to the multi-dimensional problem of poverty. Most PAK studies conceptualize religion education in private and church terms, with very less attention to public issues such as social injustice, economic exploitation, marginalization of vulnerable groups, and structural inequality. Thus, CRE is often deployed as a vehicle for nurturing individual piety without critical consciousness of oppressive social conditions.

Research on poverty in Indonesia is rarely associated with a theological-pedagogical perspective, especially in the context of CRE. Perspectives from political economy, development, or social welfare still dominate most studies of poverty, and the role of theological education in social transformation has yet to be fully investigated. However, religion is influential in shaping social values, public morals, and communal consciousness in the setting of religious Indonesia (Ligawan, n.d.).

Few studies have integrated current global poverty standards, such as the updated World Bank poverty benchmark for 2025, into CRE discourse. Most of

the prior studies still have a traditional view on poverty, focusing only on material dimensions. Thus, aspects of the multidimensional character of poverty, such as education, health, social involvement, digital technology, and human dignity, have not been a key aspect in the creation of the CRE paradigm.

Past research on CRE in Indonesia has not used the theoretical integration of liberation theology, public theology, Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, and sustainable development perspectives as an integrated conceptual framework. This interdisciplinary convergence is important for the reconstruction of CRE to be more contextual, emancipatory, and responsive to modern social concerns (Herbst, 2020).

This research innovates by attempting to recreate CRE not just as a vehicle for the transmission of doctrine and the shaping of individual morals but also as a transformational public pedagogy for social justice and human liberation from multidimensional poverty. This research proposes a new paradigm that expands the function of the CRE from an ecclesiastical-centered area to an emancipatory and contextual social engagement.

The originality of this study also lies in its attempt to position CRE as an emancipatory public pedagogy that aims to develop critical consciousness in relation to unjust social institutions. In this sense, students are not merely the objects of religious learning but the subjects of social transformation, invited to active engagement in the struggle for justice, solidarity, and human flourishing.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Poverty and Public Theology*

Public theology stresses the responsibility of religious communities to be actively involved in social issues beyond the borders of the church. Public theology is not an attempt to restrict theology to private spirituality or internal church concerns but rather to present Christian faith as a power for change in public life, particularly in the face of injustice, marginalization, and human suffering. Christian theology, as argued by Moltmann (2019), should be actively engaged in the public sphere for the promotion of justice, peace, and human dignity. For Moltmann, theology cannot be divorced from social responsibility since the Kingdom of God has ethical consequences for political, economic, and cultural structures.

In a similar vein Bosch (2011) argues that Christian mission cannot be reduced to solely proclaiming the gospel. Instead, the mission encompasses comprehensive reform of spiritual, social, political, economic, and cultural facets of human life. Bosch's missiological paradigm alters the perception of the church from being an institution that is primarily concerned with preserving doctrine to a community involved in God's redeeming activity in society. Hence, Christian communities are called not just to charitable help, but also to oppose those structures that perpetuate poverty and inequality.

The liberation theology, especially Gustavo Gutiérrez (1973), develops this perspective by introducing the notion of God's "preferential option for the poor." For Gutiérrez, poverty is not simply a matter of lack of material resources, but the expression of systemic oppression based on unjust political and

socioeconomic systems. Therefore, poverty is caused by dehumanizing mechanisms that prevent people from having access to dignity, education, participation, and justice. Theology, in this context, should spring from actual social circumstances and be in solidarity with oppressed groups. Theological reflection that is disassociated from human suffering becomes ethically insufficient and socially meaningless.

These theological viewpoints offer a critical critique of actions of the church that are typically limited to the benevolent and consumptive in the Indonesian context. Philanthropic efforts such as contributions, relief programs, and social help are still relevant, but often do not address the structural causes of multidimensional poverty. Indonesia is still plagued by severe socioeconomic challenges such as educational disparity, labor exploitation, corruption, marginalization of the rural population, environmental degradation, and unequal access to economic possibilities. These situations require a more radical theological engagement.

Public theology, then, poses a challenge to the churches and Christian educational institutions in Indonesia to transcend beyond clerical inwardness and to engage actively in social development. CRE, therefore, cannot remain just theological or liturgical; it must also promote public ethics, social responsibility, and critical knowledge of mechanisms that perpetuate poverty and injustice. In this connection, public theology offers an important theological basis for the reconstruction of CRE as a praxis of human freedom and social justice that transforms (Kurniawan, n.d.).

### *Critical Pedagogy and Transformative Teaching*

Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy provides a valuable conceptual tool for the reconstruction of CRE in circumstances of poverty and inequality. Freire (1970) attacks the "banking model of education", a pedagogical approach in which pupils are viewed as passive recipients of deposits made by teachers. Such educational techniques reproduce supremacy, as learners are not given the opportunity to critically interrogate social reality. So education becomes an apparatus to sustain oppressive regimes rather than reform them.

Freire offers dialogical and emancipatory education for the development of conscientization, that is, critical consciousness about social, political, and economic oppression. Conscientization enables learners to recognize the institutions that sustain injustice and empowers them to act to change society. Education is thus a process of intellectual transmission and a transformational praxis that involves contemplation and action (Santosa & Jura, 2023).

Freire's theory continues to be very relevant in today's educational discourse, particularly in cultures that have ongoing social inequality. Giroux (2020) develops Freire's ideas, continuing the focus on education as a democratic public activity that may empower oppressed populations. According to Giroux, schools and other educational institutions are not neutral sites but rather sites of cultural and political contestation where relations of power are negotiated and reproduced. Education then must serve to promote democratic involvement,

ethical responsibility, and social critique rather than passive obedience to dominant ideologies.

Critical pedagogy in the framework of CRE provides a transformative strategy linking biblical reflection to concrete human situations. Learning processes should stimulate critical engagement with topics such as poverty, corruption, social injustice, religious intolerance, ecological degradation, and exploitation of labor. Biblical stories and theological doctrines are consequently dialogical resources for the interpretation and transformation of social reality and are not simply objects of doctrinal memorization (Setiawan et al., 2025).

Also, the pedagogical models of transformational education in CRE should be based on participation, dialogue, reflection, and contextual engagement. Students are challenged to gain cognitive understanding of religious concepts as well as ethical awareness and social commitment. This method situates learners as active agents of social transformation informed by Christian principles of justice, compassion, solidarity, and human dignity.

In the context of Indonesia, where religious education generally takes a formalistic and examination-oriented approach, critical pedagogy questions prevailing methods that value rote learning at the expense of critical inquiry. Thus, the transformation of CRE through transformational pedagogy becomes a must for the development of socially active Christian citizens who can contribute meaningfully to a pluralistic and democratic society (Bulan & Simangunsong, 2025).

### *CRE and Societal Change*

CRE is basically not just about the transmission of doctrinal knowledge but also about forming people who can incarnate Christian faith in the context of everyday social life. Thomas Groome (1980) contends that real Christian education must mix spiritual reflection with human experience carried out. Groome's concept of 'shared Christian praxis' highlights that theological learning occurs in critical interplay between Christian tradition and the reality of modern society. Education is thus a participative process that allows learners to interpret life experiences in the context of faith and to respond responsibly to societal concerns.

Likewise, Seymour and Miller (2014) argue that religious education should promote active participation in social reform, rather than simply reinforcing ideological compliance. Christian education needs to foster moral agency, social responsibility, and dedication to justice. From this approach, faith development is not just a private matter of spirituality but also a public engagement with issues that influence human flourishing and the common good. Hence, CRE has a profoundly social and transformative character.

Positioning CRE in the rhetoric of public theology and transformational education, this study contributes to contemporary scholarly debates on the social significance of religious education in Indonesia. In particular, it suggests that CRE can be a key tool to empower students to actively contribute to solving multidimensional poverty, promoting social justice, and enhancing human dignity in present-day Indonesian society.

## METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative descriptive research design and a library research approach. The research is focused on conceptual analysis, theological interpretation, and interdisciplinary synthesis on poverty, education, and social transformation. The main sources of data include publications from the World Bank, Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reports, and literature of liberation theology, public theology, CRE, and critical pedagogy. Secondary sources include peer-reviewed academic papers, theological monographs, educational philosophy literature, and empirical investigations on religion and poverty reduction.

Data analysis was carried out in three stages: data reduction, thematic classification, and critical interpretation. The study employed Freirean critical pedagogy and liberation theology lenses to identify and evaluate themes on multidimensional poverty, transformational pedagogy, public theology, social inequality, and ecclesial participation. The study uses theological hermeneutics in interpreting biblical tales on justice, liberty, solidarity, and human dignity in the context of the current Indonesian socio-economic environment.

## RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### *The Indonesian Paradox of Poverty*

Indonesia is often touted as one of Southeast Asia's economic success stories. Official national data show that fast economic growth, expanding infrastructure, and macroeconomic stabilization have resulted in a sharp decrease in the rate of extreme poverty during the previous two decades. Data from the Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) indicates that the national poverty rate has dropped to around 8.57%, marking a significant improvement in poverty reduction and economic development. From a developmental standpoint, such metrics seem to support the efficacy of the state policies, budgetary reforms, and market-led growth methods since the post-Reformation era.

But behind the surface of this positive macroeconomic story is a more nuanced and dangerous social reality. The new framework of the World Bank for upper-middle-income nations demonstrates that when more comprehensive socioeconomic measures are implemented, close to 68% of Indonesians are still economically insecure. The World Bank framework includes vulnerability to inflation, insecure employment, lack of access to healthcare, educational marginalization, limited social protection, and digital inequality, as opposed to the BPS measurement, which is mainly focused on minimal subsistence consumption. Hence, millions of Indonesians, who are numerically classified as "non-poor," continue to live in conditions of great insecurity and instability.

This gap exemplifies what this study calls Indonesia's "poverty paradox." On one level, economic expansion has raised aggregate income and strengthened the middle class. On the other hand, structural inequality is still so rooted in Indonesian life. The economic boom has not automatically translated into equitable human wellbeing. Instead, the daily lives of many people are still dictated by the accumulation of money, precariousness of work, inequalities in education, ecological destruction, and unequal digital access.

This paradox is better understood when looking at multidimensional poverty alongside income-based measures. Poverty is not just the absence of financial resources, but the absence of fundamental human capabilities. Amartya Sen's capabilities approach is thus particularly relevant as it defines poverty as the lack of access to opportunities required for meaningful social involvement. And human flourishing is not about economic possession. It's about the freedom to pursue education, healthcare, social mobility, political involvement, access to technology, dignified existence (Barros & Diniz, 2025).

Multidimensional deprivation in Indonesia takes several interrelated manifestations. Most of the rural communities have deficient educational infrastructure and health facilities. Urban informal workers are still subject to unpredictable salaries and economic shocks. "In an increasingly technological society, digital inequality serves to further marginalize populations from opportunities for education and economic participation. Ecologically destructive and extractive industrial practices tend to disproportionately impact impoverished communities whose livelihoods depend on vulnerable natural systems. This suggests that poverty should be seen as a systemic situation that is embedded in wider political, economic and cultural structures.

From a theological standpoint, these phenomena can be interpreted as expressions of structural sin. Structural sin is not simply personal sin but systemic injustice, built into social mechanisms that continue to promote exclusion, exploitation, and dehumanization. These types of structures normalize inequality and, at the same time, conceal their moral ramifications. Liberation theology is a severe critique of these conditions, demanding that Christian faith cannot be neutral to oppression. Gutiérrez (1973) calls poverty a "scandalous condition" that violates God's plan for justice, communion, and human dignity.

This theological stance opposes spiritualized readings of poverty, in which suffering is understood only as a test from God, a personal destiny, or an individual failure. Such readings risk legitimizing indifference towards injustice and hiding structural culpability. Public theology, however, emphasizes that poverty is a social, ethical, and political dilemma that calls for transformative engagement. Moltmann (2019) contends that Christian hope is not a passive optimism that is removed from history, but an active participation in God's liberating action in the world. Hope is a historical praxis, a practice of solidarity with the downtrodden and opposition to dehumanizing regimes.

In biblical traditions, the Kingdom of God is always associated with emancipation, justice, mercy, and restoration of human dignity. The prophetic literature is full of condemnation of the exploitation of the poor and denunciation of religious activities detached from social ethics. Amos accuses those who ruin the poor (Amos 8:4), while Isaiah condemns ritualistic religiosity without justice and compassion (Isaiah 58). Likewise, Jesus' mission is a paradigm of extreme solidarity with marginalized communities such as the poor, widows, tax collectors, sinners, and social outcasts. Jesus' goal is spelled out in Luke 4:18: to preach good news to the poor, release the prisoners, and bring freedom to the downtrodden.

Hence, Indonesia's poverty paradox is not merely an economic problem but also a religious and educational dilemma. CRE cannot be immune to these social realities. If theology and religious education do not address structural injustice, they risk being intellectually complicit in the reproduction of unequal social structures. Therefore, the reconstruction of CRE as transformational public pedagogy is an important need in current Indonesian society (Sibarani et al., 2025).

### *Review of the Existing Orientation of CRE in Indonesia*

The results of this research show that CRE in Indonesia is still doctrinal, ecclesiastical, and cognitive. CRE often stresses Bible memorization, theological conformity, liturgical participation, and individual virtue within formal educational institutions and church-based learning contexts. While these components remain necessary in Christian formation, such approaches often do not attend to larger structural socioeconomic issues such as poverty, corruption, labor exploitation, ecological damage, educational disparity, and political injustice.

In this way, religious education risks losing its connection to the actual realities of human suffering and to public ethical responsibility. Students may have significant theological knowledge but lack critical awareness of systematic inequalities and the societal ramifications of Christian discipleship. This state facilitates the privatizing of spirituality, confining Christian faith to issues of personal piety, devotional practice, and individual salvation, isolated from transformative social involvement.

It is emblematic of larger trends in religious education today in which prophetic social critique is often secondary to the maintenance of institutional stability and doctrinal preservation. CRE can unintentionally reinforce passive kinds of religiosity that support and do not challenge extant institutions of inequity. Faith becomes interior and individual rather than socially transformational and publicly engaged.

Such trends are very similar to Paulo Freire's "banking model of education" (Freire, 1970), from the standpoint of critical pedagogy. In this concept students are passive recipients of information deposited by authoritative educators. Knowledge transfer is a one-way process without discussion, contextual inquiry or critical reflection. Education in this way encourages compliance and reliance rather than independence and critical consciousness.

The practice of the banking model is visible in the strict catechetical practices in CRE, which emphasize accurate doctrinal replies rather than contextual theological interaction. Students are expected to remember theological principles and biblical stories without critically examining the social conditions in which they find themselves. Poverty, corruption, exploitation, injustice on the basis of gender, the ecological crisis, and public ethics are often marginal rather than core to Christian learning.

Freire argues that education is never neutral: it either domesticates or liberates. Educational systems necessarily are constitutive of consciousness, social imagination, and power relations. CRE's failure to take a critical stance on

structural injustice has the unintended consequence of legitimating the status quo by normalizing inequity and dissuading prophetic resistance. Conversely, dialogic teaching allows students to become historical subjects who read reality critically and who actively participate in social transformation.

Giroux (2020) expands on Freire's concept and argues that education must be a democratic public practice that fosters civic involvement, ethical agency, and critical citizenship. Thus, educational institutions not only represent a transfer of knowledge but also cultural places for the formation of social values and political consciousness. In this situation, CRE needs to break out of ecclesiastical cocooning into public involvement and contextual relevance.

Theological education should challenge students to question dominant ideas, critique oppressive structures, and live out Christian principles in the world. Conscientization enables learners to reinterpret Christian discipleship as not only a private spiritual devotion, but as an active participation in God's purpose of justice, reconciliation, and emancipation. Faith formation thus becomes inseparable from social responsibility and public witness.

This reconstruction is particularly crucial in the heterogeneous and uneven social setting of Indonesia. Indonesia, one of the world's most religiously diverse democracies, is beset by enduring problems—economic inequity, environmental catastrophes, social disintegration and political polarization. In such conditions, CRE has a great potential to contribute to democratic citizenship, ethical public discourse, social solidarity and communal transformation. But it can only be realized if religious education goes beyond doctrinal rigidity and adopts a transformational pedagogy anchored in public theology and critical consciousness (Pratomo, n.d.).

### ***CRE as Transformative Public Education***

This study finds four transformative features of CRE as a public pedagogy to overcome multidimensional poverty and structural injustice in contemporary Indonesia. These characteristics shift CRE from doctrinal teaching to emancipatory educational action that integrates theology, ethics, and social reform.

Promote a critical theological awareness of structural injustice and multidimensional poverty. Educational processes must stimulate the critical analysis of the political, economic, cultural, and ideological institutions that reproduce inequality in society by the learners. Poverty should no longer be viewed as the outcome of human failure or bad luck but as the outcome of systemic arrangements that include unequal access to resources, education, healthcare, technology, and political engagement.

Today's globalization normalizes consumerism, extreme individualism, exploitative labor practices, and accumulation-oriented economic conduct. Such interactions tend to weaken communal cohesiveness and bolster structural inequality.

Biblical traditions always define ethical economic views based on generosity, solidarity, hospitality and caring for disadvantaged groups.

Prophetic critiques of exploitation and Jesus' teachings on wealth confront economic systems that prioritize profit over human dignity.

Educational practices can promote ethical leadership, responsible stewardship, social entrepreneurship, cooperative economics, and labor ethics with a view toward the common good. This type of formation is especially relevant in the backdrop of the rising social imbalance and the rise of consumer culture in Indonesia.

Churches and Christian educational institutions have a lot of social capital that can be used to support marginalized groups, not just spiritually, but economically and socially as well. Transformative CRE, then, is a shift from a charity-based ministry to an empowerment-based praxis. Initiatives for empowerment may comprise vocational training, scholarship schemes, literacy instruction, digital skills development, cooperatives, microfinance projects, agricultural innovation, and community development partnerships. Unlike short relief strategies, empowerment approaches aim for sustained transformation via the building of community agency, involvement, and resilience.

Significantly, a ministry that is empowerment-oriented mirrors theological understandings of humanity as *imago Dei*. Since all humans are made in the image of God, every human being has dignity, creativity, and transformative potential. Christian education should consequently foster both spiritual formation and social empowerment.

Furthermore, community empowerment is reflective of the ecclesiological vision of the church as a participatory and liberating community. The church is not only a worship institution; it is a transforming social presence, actively working toward justice, inclusivity, and human flourishing in society.

Transformative CRE must inspire vigorous ecclesial engagement in public debate and policy advocacy. Public theology argues that Christian religion necessarily has social and political implications beyond individual morality. Therefore, churches and Christian educational institutions should actively and critically respond to public issues such as labor rights, educational equality, environmental justice, anti-corruption movements, human rights protection, and policies for alleviating poverty.

Public advocacy is also a reflection of the prophetic role of the church in society. Prophetic voices in biblical history have resisted oppressive political regimes and have also spoken for vulnerable people. Thus, contemporary Christian education should cultivate bravery, moral discernment and social responsibility in learners, so that religious communities might serve as agents of justice and reconciliation in public life.

### *Implications for CRE*

The conclusions of this study have important consequences for the reconstruction of Christian Religious Education (CRE) in the future context of modern Indonesian culture. In the face of the existence of multidimensional poverty, structural inequality, and social fragility, religious education cannot be limited to only doctrinal transmission and personal spirituality. CRE must be reimagined as a mode of transformational public education that may cultivate

critical consciousness, ethical responsibility, and active social involvement (Joshua Christian Wenas & Kezia Verana, 2024).

These consequences are educational, theological, ecclesiological, curricular, and socio-political. Christian education must consequently undergo a radical reorientation of its philosophical foundations, its learning objectives, its pedagogical methods, its institutional practices, and its public mission.

Therefore, Christian discipleship must include not only spiritual devotion but also transforming involvement in God's work in the world. This reorientation is in line with the biblical vision of the Kingdom of God, which is always a combination of spirituality with liberation, justice, reconciliation, and restoration of human dignity. Therefore, Christian education is a vehicle for the full development of human beings and not only the continuation of institutional religion (Broer et al., 2025).

Rebuilding the Curriculum for Context-Based and Transformative Learning. This study suggests the need to reshape the CRE curriculum to be more contextual, interdisciplinary, and transformative. Today's courses emphasize cognitive mastery of the biblical material, but they do not provide sufficient attention to present-day social realities. Thus, theological education is often detached from the concrete human experience and is likely to be abstract.

Transformative CRE demands contextual curriculum development that integrates religion with social analysis. Issues such as poverty, corruption, labor exploitation, environmental crises, technological disparity, gender injustice, religious plurality and human rights must be woven into the fabric of Christian instruction. Biblical and theological reflection must consequently speak to the realities of contemporary Indonesia.

Transformative CRE is a dialogical, participatory, praxis-oriented pedagogy. Learning procedures have to promote critical inquiry, collective reflection, contextual interpretation, and active interaction with social realities. Teachers are no longer only authoritative transmitters of knowledge but facilitators of critical theological dialogue and transformative learning.

Churches cannot afford to be secluded behind the ecclesiastical limits when society is suffering from ongoing poverty, injustice, corruption and ecological disasters. Public theology argues that faith communities have an ethical responsibility to effect social change. This consequence reconfigures the church as a community of transformation, not only a worship community.

Religious education often influences moral imagination, social attitudes and civic engagement. Christian education seeks to develop critical consciousness and a sense of public duty in learners so that they can participate positively in the pluralistic society of Indonesia. Christian education can be a significant contribution to solving multidimensional poverty, strengthening of democratic citizenship, promoting social justice, and embodying the liberating values of the Kingdom of God in current Indonesian society (Missa & Bilo, 2026b).

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Indonesia's poverty conundrum shows that macro-economic progress is no guarantee of substantive justice and human dignity. The fall in extreme poverty does not change the fact that the structure of Indonesian society remains vulnerable, according to the World Bank's new poverty guidelines.

In this respect, CRE has the potential to be a revolutionary public pedagogy. CRE must no longer be limited to theological transmission and privatized spirituality. Rather, it has to develop critical consciousness, ethical responsibility, social solidarity, and revolutionary action.

CRE can play a meaningful role in poverty alleviation and social transformation in Indonesia through the integration of views from liberation theology, public theology, critical pedagogy, and sustainable development. Hence, churches and Christian educational institutions are expected to be prophetic communities of justice, strengthening underprivileged groups, and actively participating in societal transformation.

## **ADVANCED RESEARCH**

Future advanced research should critically examine how Contextual Religious Education (CRE) can be operationalized as a transformative framework within Indonesia's socio-economic landscape by integrating interdisciplinary approaches from liberation theology, public theology, critical pedagogy, and sustainable development. Empirical studies are needed to assess CRE's impact on fostering critical consciousness, social agency, and community-based economic resilience among marginalized groups. Furthermore, comparative and longitudinal research could explore how faith-based educational institutions function as agents of structural change, evaluating their effectiveness in promoting social justice, reducing systemic inequality, and contributing to sustainable poverty alleviation.

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