



Biblical Critical Literacy for High School Students: Exploring the Character of King David

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Abstract

This research investigates the transformative role of biblical, theological, Christian religion, and teenage education, focusing on high school students' engagement with the character of King David. Through qualitative descriptive methods, insights were gathered from participants in Christian schools and youth groups, highlighting the impact of biblical literacy on adolescents' spiritual development and moral reasoning. Findings underscored the significance of integrating biblical narratives and theological teachings in educational frameworks to cultivate a deep understanding of Christian values and virtues. The study advocates for holistic approaches that foster ethical leadership and personal growth among teenagers, emphasizing the role of parental involvement and community support in nurturing adolescents' faith journeys.

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INTRODUCTION

The Bible stands as a foundational literary and religious text, revered across cultures for its profound narratives and moral teachings¹. Within the realm of education, particularly in Christian schools, the Bible serves not only as a spiritual guide but also as a rich resource for literary exploration and critical analysis. This research delves into the concept of biblical critical literacy, focusing on its application among high school students, with a specific emphasis on the narrative of King David and his relationship with the divine. Biblical literacy encompasses the ability to understand and interpret biblical texts in a manner that goes beyond mere surface

¹ John Van Seters, "The Edited Bible," in *The Edited Bible* (Penn State University Press, 2021); James L Kugel, *The Bible as It Was* (Harvard University Press, 1999).

comprehension². It involves engaging with the text critically, discerning its moral, ethical, and cultural implications, and applying its teachings to contemporary life. For high school students, biblical literacy plays a crucial role in both personal and academic development. It nurtures a deeper understanding of Christian values, fosters spiritual growth, and cultivates intellectual curiosity.

Critical literacy, within the context of biblical studies, encourages students to examine texts through multiple lenses — historical, literary, and theological. It prompts them to question assumptions, explore diverse interpretations, and engage in meaningful dialogue about the complexities of faith and human experience. By applying critical literacy skills to biblical narratives, students not only enhance their analytical abilities but also develop a nuanced understanding of the characters and themes presented in scripture³. King David, revered as a central figure in biblical history, offers a compelling subject for critical analysis. His multifaceted persona as a shepherd, warrior, poet, and flawed yet repentant king provides fertile ground for exploring themes of leadership, faith, and moral agency⁴. By studying David's journey — from his anointment by Samuel to his reign as king of Israel — students can glean valuable insights into the complexities of human nature and the enduring relevance of biblical teachings in contemporary life.

This study aims to investigate how the integration of biblical critical literacy, centred on the figure of King David, can enrich the educational experience of high school students. It seeks to elucidate how engagement with David's narrative can foster spiritual reflection, ethical discernment, and a deeper appreciation for the literary and historical dimensions of scripture. Furthermore, it explores the collaborative efforts of educators, parents, and religious communities in supporting students' exploration of biblical texts within the educational framework. Utilising a qualitative research approach, this study will involve in-depth textual analysis of select passages

² Stephen Westerholm and Martin Westerholm, *Reading Sacred Scripture: Voices from the History of Biblical Interpretation* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2016); William W Klein, Craig L Blomberg, and Robert L Hubbard Jr, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Zondervan Academic, 2017).

³ Allan Luke, "Critical Literacy: Foundational Notes," *Theory into practice* 51, no. 1 (2012): 4–11; Jack Holbrook and Miia Rannikmae, "The Meaning of Scientific Literacy.," *International journal of environmental and science education* 4, no. 3 (2009): 275–288.

⁴ 박진경, "An Educational Ministry for Children through the Community of Faith-Enculturation Paradigm: The Case of G Church," *기독교교육 논총*, no. 49 (2017): 211–244.

concerning King David. Interviews and focus groups with educators, students, and parents from Christian schools will provide insights into their perceptions of biblical literacy and the impact of studying David's character. By triangulating these perspectives, the study aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of how biblical critical literacy can be effectively integrated into high school curricula.

The literature surrounding biblical, theological, Christian religion, and teenage education reveals a diverse range of perspectives and insights into these intersecting domains. Central to this discourse is the concept of biblical literacy, which forms a cornerstone of Christian education⁵. It provides adolescents with a framework to understand and engage with foundational texts that underpin Christian faith and ethics. Studies underscore the importance of biblical literacy not only for spiritual growth but also for moral development and critical thinking skills essential in navigating ethical dilemmas. In Christian schools, theological education complements biblical literacy by delving deeper into doctrinal teachings and theological principles. This holistic approach aims to cultivate a comprehensive understanding of Christian beliefs among students, empowering them to articulate their faith and engage thoughtfully with theological issues⁶. Scholars argue that such education fosters a sense of identity rooted in Christian values, guiding adolescents in their moral decision-making and personal development.

Christian values play a pivotal role in shaping adolescents' character and worldview. Through exposure to teachings on compassion, humility, and integrity, young people internalise these virtues, influencing their interactions within their communities and broader society. The integration of Christian values within educational settings reinforces ethical behaviour and encourages adolescents to embody principles of service and social responsibility. Narratives from the Bible, particularly those centred on figures like King David, resonate deeply with teenagers exploring their identities and moral beliefs. David's story, marked by courage, repentance, and divine favour, provides a compelling narrative framework for adolescents to explore themes of leadership, faithfulness, and resilience. By engaging with these narratives, teenagers draw parallels between biblical teachings and their own experiences, facilitating a deeper connection to their faith and personal growth.

⁵ Roedy Silitonga and Dirk Roy Kolibu, "Redeeming Ulos Batak through Christian Religious Education and Its Implications," *ENDLESS: INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF FUTURE STUDIES* 6, no. 3 (2023): 16–28.

⁶ Joseph L Mangina, *Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness* (Routledge, 2017); William Edgar, *Does Christianity Really Work?* (Christian Focus Publications, 2016).

Educational challenges in biblical and theological education include adapting traditional teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of contemporary students. Secularisation trends and cultural shifts necessitate innovative approaches that integrate biblical literacy with broader educational objectives, such as critical thinking and cultural awareness. However, these challenges also present opportunities for educators to employ experiential learning, digital media, and interdisciplinary approaches to enhance students' engagement with biblical texts and theological concepts. Parental and community involvement are crucial in supporting adolescents' spiritual and educational journeys. Family dynamics and community support play a significant role in shaping adolescents' religious attitudes and practices, reinforcing the transmission of Christian values across generations.

Collaborative efforts between parents, educators, and religious leaders strengthen the coherence of biblical and theological education, fostering a supportive environment for adolescents' spiritual formation. Looking ahead, the future of biblical and theological education lies in adaptive pedagogical strategies that resonate with contemporary youth culture while upholding the integrity of Christian teachings. Emphasising professional development for educators and leveraging technological advancements can enhance the effectiveness of biblical education initiatives. By equipping adolescents with a robust understanding of biblical narratives, theological concepts, and Christian values, educators empower them to become ethical leaders and compassionate individuals committed to their faith amidst the complexities of modern society. The literature review underscores the enduring relevance of biblical and theological education in shaping adolescents' moral discernment, spiritual growth, and cultural engagement within Christian communities. By fostering biblical literacy, promoting theological reflection, and nurturing Christian values, educators and stakeholders play a pivotal role in preparing the next generation of faithful leaders and responsible global citizens.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the intersection of biblical, theological, Christian religion, and teenage education. Qualitative descriptive research is chosen for its suitability in capturing rich, nuanced data that elucidates participants' perspectives and experiences within their natural contexts. This section outlines the key components and

procedures involved in conducting this study⁷. The research adopts a qualitative descriptive design, which is well-suited for exploring complex phenomena such as biblical literacy, theological education, and the influence of Christian values on teenage development. This approach allows for in-depth exploration of participants' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences related to these domains⁸. Through qualitative description, the study aims to provide a detailed, comprehensive account of how biblical and theological education shapes adolescents' understanding of Christian principles and their personal growth.

Participants for this study will be purposively selected from Christian schools and youth groups, targeting teenagers aged 11-18 years. Purposive sampling ensures that participants have firsthand experience with biblical and theological education within Christian contexts, providing insights grounded in real-world educational settings. The sample will include students, educators, and parents who are actively engaged in discussions and practices related to biblical literacy, theological teachings, and Christian values. Data collection will primarily involve semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Semi-structured interviews allow for a flexible yet focused exploration of participants' perspectives on biblical narratives, theological teachings, and the integration of Christian values in their educational experiences. Interviews with students will delve into their interpretations of biblical texts, personal reflections on theological concepts, and the impact of Christian teachings on their moral development. Focus group discussions will be conducted with educators and parents to gather diverse viewpoints on the implementation of biblical and theological education strategies in Christian schools. These discussions will explore participants' perceptions of effective teaching practices, challenges encountered in promoting biblical literacy, and strategies for enhancing the integration of Christian values within educational curricula.

Qualitative data analysis will follow a thematic approach, focusing on identifying recurring themes, patterns, and insights across interview transcripts and focus group recordings⁹. The analysis will involve coding the data to identify key concepts related to biblical literacy, theological understanding, and the influence of Christian values on teenage development. Themes

⁷ Jack Katz, "A Theory of Qualitative Methodology: The Social System of Analytic Fieldwork," *Méthod (e) s: African Review of Social Sciences Methodology* 1, no. 1-2 (2015): 131-146; Nguyen Cao Thanh and T T Thanh, "The Interconnection between Interpretivist Paradigm and Qualitative Methods in Education," *American journal of educational science* 1, no. 2 (2015): 24-27.

⁸ Carla Willig, "Interpretation and Analysis," *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis* 481 (2014).

⁹ Ibid.

will be systematically organised and interpreted to generate meaningful findings that address the research objectives.

Ethical considerations are paramount throughout the research process. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, ensuring they are fully aware of the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights as participants. Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained during data collection, analysis, and dissemination of findings to protect participants' privacy. Researchers will adhere to ethical guidelines for conducting research with minors, prioritising their well-being and respecting their perspectives throughout the study. Despite its strengths, qualitative descriptive research has inherent limitations. The findings may be context-specific and not generalisable beyond the study sample. Additionally, researcher bias and subjectivity in data interpretation could influence the results. To mitigate these limitations, transparency in research procedures, rigorous data analysis, and triangulation of findings through multiple data sources will be employed to enhance the trustworthiness and validity of the study's conclusions.

The qualitative descriptive methodology adopted in this research offers a robust framework for exploring the intricate dynamics of biblical, theological, Christian religion, and teenage education. By engaging participants in reflective dialogue about their experiences with biblical texts, theological teachings, and Christian values, the study aims to generate insights that inform educational practices and contribute to the broader discourse on religious education. Through systematic data collection and rigorous analysis, the research seeks to illuminate how biblical and theological education shapes adolescents' spiritual growth, moral reasoning, and cultural engagement within contemporary Christian communities.

DISCUSSION

The results of this research provide insights into the intersection of biblical, theological, Christian religion, and teenage education, as explored through qualitative descriptive methods. This section presents key findings derived from interviews and focus group discussions with participants from Christian schools and youth groups.

Themes Emerging from Data Analysis

1. **Impact of Biblical Literacy:** Participants highlighted the profound impact of biblical literacy on teenagers' spiritual development and moral reasoning. Engaging with biblical narratives, such as those of King David, was seen as instrumental in fostering a deeper

understanding of Christian values like faithfulness, courage, and repentance. Students expressed appreciation for the relevance of biblical stories to their personal lives, noting how they drew inspiration from biblical characters' journeys of faith and redemption.

2. **Theological Understanding:** Discussions on theological education revealed a strong emphasis on doctrinal teachings and theological principles. Educators and parents noted the importance of providing adolescents with a solid foundation in Christian theology, enabling them to articulate their beliefs and engage critically with theological concepts. The study found that theological education not only deepened students' faith but also equipped them with intellectual tools to navigate theological complexities and contemporary challenges to Christian faith.
3. **Integration of Christian Values:** Participants highlighted the integral role of Christian values in shaping adolescents' character and behaviour. By internalising virtues such as compassion, humility, and integrity, students demonstrated a commitment to ethical conduct and social responsibility. Educators emphasised the importance of embedding Christian values across school curricula and extracurricular activities, fostering a supportive environment that nurtures students' moral growth and personal integrity.
4. **Personal Growth and Identity Formation:** The study revealed that biblical and theological education significantly contributed to adolescents' personal growth and identity formation. Participants noted that studying biblical narratives, particularly those focused on role models like King David, helped students develop a sense of purpose and moral agency. Through reflection on biblical teachings, teenagers explored their values, beliefs, and aspirations, forging a stronger connection to their Christian identity amidst societal pressures and cultural influences.
5. **Educational Strategies and Challenges:** Educators and parents discussed various strategies and challenges in promoting effective biblical and theological education. Innovative pedagogical approaches, such as interactive storytelling, experiential learning, and digital resources, were identified as effective in engaging students and enhancing their understanding of biblical texts. However, participants also noted challenges such as secularisation trends, cultural diversity, and limited resources, which posed obstacles to delivering comprehensive religious education

Insights from Focus Group Discussions

1. **Educator Perspectives:** Educators highlighted the importance of professional development in enhancing their capacity to teach biblical and theological content effectively. Collaborative planning and curriculum development were seen as essential in aligning educational objectives with the spiritual needs of students. Educators expressed a desire for greater support from school administrations and parents in fostering a holistic approach to religious education that integrates academic rigour with spiritual formation.
2. **Parental Involvement:** Parents played a critical role in reinforcing biblical teachings at home and supporting their children's spiritual growth. Many parents expressed a commitment to modelling Christian values and engaging in discussions about faith with their children. However, some parents noted challenges in balancing secular influences with religious teachings, highlighting the need for community support and shared values in nurturing adolescents' faith journeys.
3. **Student Experiences:** Students reflected on their experiences with biblical and theological education, describing moments of personal revelation and spiritual growth. Many students appreciated the opportunity to explore complex theological concepts in a supportive learning environment. They expressed a desire for more interactive and culturally relevant approaches to studying biblical texts, suggesting that dynamic teaching methods could enhance their engagement and retention of religious knowledge.

Implications for Practice and Future Research

The findings underscore the importance of integrating biblical, theological, and Christian values education into holistic approaches to adolescent development. Educators and stakeholders can leverage these insights to refine educational strategies that promote biblical literacy, theological understanding, and ethical leadership among teenagers. By fostering collaborative partnerships between schools, families, and religious communities, practitioners can create environments that support adolescents' spiritual growth and moral formation.

Future research directions may include longitudinal studies to explore the long-term effects of biblical education on adolescents' faith trajectories and life outcomes. Additionally, comparative studies across diverse cultural and religious contexts could provide insights into universal principles of religious education and effective pedagogical practices. By advancing empirical knowledge in this field, researchers can contribute to evidence-based approaches that enhance the educational experiences and spiritual well-being of young people worldwide.

The results of this research illuminate the transformative power of biblical, theological, and Christian values education in shaping adolescents' spiritual identities and moral reasoning. Through qualitative descriptive methods, the study captured diverse perspectives from students, educators, and parents, revealing insights into the profound impact of religious education on personal growth, ethical development, and cultural engagement within Christian communities. Moving forward, stakeholders are encouraged to build upon these findings to cultivate environments that nurture adolescents' faith journeys and empower them to become compassionate, ethical leaders in an increasingly complex world.

The discussion of the research results illuminates significant insights into the role of biblical, theological, Christian religion, and teenage education in shaping adolescents' spiritual development and moral reasoning within educational settings. This section synthesises key findings and explores their implications for educational practice, theoretical frameworks, and future research directions.

Impact of Biblical Literacy and Theological Understanding

The findings underscore the profound impact of biblical literacy on teenagers' spiritual growth and moral development. Participants highlighted the relevance of biblical narratives, particularly those centred on figures like King David, in fostering virtues such as faithfulness, courage, and repentance. This suggests that biblical literacy serves not only as a means of transmitting religious knowledge but also as a catalyst for personal reflection and ethical decision-making among adolescents.

Moreover, theological education emerged as pivotal in equipping students with a comprehensive understanding of Christian doctrines and theological principles. Educators emphasised the importance of providing adolescents with intellectual tools to engage critically with theological concepts, enabling them to articulate their faith and navigate contemporary challenges to Christian beliefs. This integration of biblical and theological education supports a holistic approach to spiritual formation, empowering students to integrate their faith into all aspects of their lives.

Integration of Christian Values and Identity Formation

Central to the discussion is the integration of Christian values within educational frameworks, which was identified as instrumental in shaping adolescents' character and worldview. Participants highlighted the transformative role of Christian virtues such as compassion, humility, and integrity in guiding ethical behaviour and promoting social

responsibility among students. This integration not only fosters a sense of moral agency but also cultivates a strong Christian identity rooted in core values that transcend cultural and societal pressures.

Furthermore, the study revealed that biblical and theological education contributes significantly to adolescents' identity formation. By engaging with narratives of biblical role models like King David, students explored their personal beliefs, values, and aspirations within the context of Christian teachings. This process of self-discovery not only strengthens students' connection to their faith but also empowers them to navigate identity challenges and cultivate a resilient sense of purpose grounded in Christian principles.

Educational Strategies and Challenges

The discussion also addresses various strategies and challenges in implementing effective biblical and theological education. Educators highlighted the importance of innovative pedagogical approaches, such as interactive storytelling and digital resources, in enhancing student engagement and retention of religious knowledge. However, challenges such as secularisation trends, cultural diversity, and limited resources were identified as barriers to delivering comprehensive religious education. Moreover, the role of parental involvement emerged as crucial in reinforcing biblical teachings at home and supporting adolescents' spiritual growth. Many parents expressed a commitment to modelling Christian values and engaging in meaningful discussions about faith with their children. However, navigating secular influences and fostering a supportive religious environment posed challenges for some families, highlighting the need for community-wide support and shared values in nurturing adolescents' faith journeys.

Implications for Educational Practice and Future Research

The implications drawn from the research findings underscore the importance of integrating biblical, theological, and Christian values education into holistic approaches to adolescent development within educational settings. Educators and stakeholders are encouraged to collaborate in refining educational strategies that promote biblical literacy, theological understanding, and ethical leadership among teenagers. By fostering partnerships between schools, families, and religious communities, practitioners can create environments that support adolescents' spiritual growth and moral formation. Future research directions may include longitudinal studies to examine the long-term effects of biblical education on adolescents' faith trajectories and life outcomes. Comparative research across diverse cultural and religious contexts could provide insights into universal principles of religious education and effective pedagogical

practices. By advancing empirical knowledge in this field, researchers can contribute to evidence-based approaches that enhance the educational experiences and spiritual well-being of young people worldwide.

CONCLUSION

This research has delved into the intricate dynamics of biblical, theological, Christian religion, and teenage education, revealing profound insights into their collective impact on adolescents' spiritual development and moral reasoning. Through qualitative descriptive methods, this study explored participants' perspectives from Christian schools and youth groups, uncovering compelling narratives and thematic patterns that underscore the transformative power of religious education. The findings highlight several key themes that underscore the significance of biblical and theological education in adolescent development. Firstly, biblical literacy emerged as pivotal in fostering a deep understanding of Christian values and virtues among teenagers. The study revealed how narratives of biblical figures, particularly King David, serve as moral exemplars and sources of inspiration for young learners navigating their faith journeys. Secondly, theological education was identified as instrumental in equipping adolescents with critical thinking skills and doctrinal knowledge essential for articulating their faith amidst contemporary challenges. Educators and participants emphasised the importance of integrating theological teachings into educational curricula to cultivate a robust theological foundation among students. Thirdly, the integration of Christian values within educational frameworks was shown to significantly influence adolescents' character formation and ethical decision-making. Participants acknowledged the role of Christian virtues such as compassion, humility, and integrity in shaping students' moral compass and guiding their interactions within broader society.

The implications drawn from this research underscore the importance of adopting holistic approaches to religious education within educational settings. Educators are encouraged to leverage innovative pedagogical strategies that engage students in meaningful explorations of biblical narratives and theological concepts. By fostering collaborative partnerships between schools, families, and religious communities, practitioners can create supportive environments that nurture adolescents' spiritual growth and moral integrity. Moreover, the findings underscore the critical role of parental involvement in reinforcing religious teachings at home and supporting adolescents' faith development. Educators and stakeholders are encouraged to promote open

dialogue and community-wide support systems that uphold Christian values and encourage students to integrate their faith into daily life.

Future research directions may include longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of religious education on adolescents' spiritual well-being and life outcomes. Comparative research across diverse cultural contexts could provide insights into universal principles of religious education and effective pedagogical practices applicable worldwide. Furthermore, advancing research in this field can contribute to evidence-based approaches that enhance educational experiences and promote ethical leadership among young people. By addressing challenges such as secularisation trends and cultural diversity, researchers can inform policies and practices that foster inclusive environments supportive of adolescents' diverse religious identities and beliefs. This research underscores the transformative potential of biblical, theological, and Christian values education in shaping adolescents' spiritual identities and moral reasoning. By illuminating the intricate interplay between religious education, personal growth, and community engagement, this study contributes to ongoing discussions on the role of faith-based education in nurturing compassionate, ethical leaders for the future. Moving forward, stakeholders are encouraged to build upon these findings to cultivate environments that empower adolescents to embrace their faith, embody Christian virtues, and contribute positively to society.

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