

The Concept of Being for Others in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christian Ethics as a Foundation for Religious Tolerance Character Education among High School Students in Sintang

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine Dietrich Bonhoeffer's concept of being for others in Christian ethics and explore its relevance as a foundation for developing religious tolerance character among high school students. Employing a descriptive qualitative research design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation involving a school principal, a Christian Religious Education teacher, and three high school students. The data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, consisting of data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification, with source triangulation employed to enhance the credibility of the findings. The findings reveal that Bonhoeffer's concept of being for others, reflected in the values of love, care, responsibility, solidarity, respect for human dignity, and willingness to serve others, provides a meaningful ethical foundation for cultivating religious tolerance among high school students. These values encourage students to recognize differences, respect individuals from different religious backgrounds, develop empathy, and promote harmonious relationships within a multicultural environment. The study contributes theoretically by extending the application of Bonhoeffer's Christian ethical thought to the contemporary discourse on religious tolerance and character education. Practically, it provides an ethical framework that can inform Christian Religious Education and school-based character education programs aimed at fostering inclusive, respectful, and peaceful interreligious relations among students. The study therefore demonstrates that the principle of being for others has significant relevance for strengthening religious tolerance character education in multicultural educational contexts such as Sintang Regency.

Keywords: Bonhoeffer's Christian Ethics; Being for Others; Religious Tolerance; Character Education; Christian Religious Education

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INTRODUCTION

Religious diversity is a social reality that cannot be separated from the lives of Indonesian people, including in Sintang Regency, known as a multicultural region where people live side by side with various religious, cultural, and ethnic identities (Sakallı et al., 2021) this context, high school students constitute a strategic group because adolescence is a critical period for character formation, moral identity development, and the internalization of social values that influence prosocial behaviour and civic engagement in diverse communities (Killen & Rutland, 2022). Although living in diversity has become part of students' daily lives, challenges in developing a character of religious tolerance continue to be encountered. The

influence of the social environment, the rapid development of information technology, and extensive exposure to digital media have significantly shaped adolescents' attitudes, identity formation, and social interactions. Without adequate critical digital literacy and ethical guidance, these developments may reinforce stereotypes, social polarization, and intolerant attitudes among young people (Orben, 2020), (Benjamin et al., 2020). Based on interviews with teachers and students, and supported by field observations, it is known that students at high schools in Sintang Regency have demonstrated fairly good practices of tolerance through interfaith cooperation, respect for religious practices, and participation in various school social activities. However, the existence of digital spaces saturated with provocative information demonstrates that strengthening religious tolerance remains an urgent need (Berkowitz, 2022). This situation demonstrates that character education cannot simply focus on knowledge but must also foster ethical awareness and social responsibility in students in a pluralistic society.

Various studies have shown that tolerance-based character education plays a significant role in building harmonious social relationships in multicultural educational environments. Character education that integrates the values of respect for differences, empathy, cooperation, and respect for human dignity has been shown to strengthen students' tolerant attitudes in everyday life (Icela, 2022). Recent international studies have demonstrated that values-based education and tolerance-oriented learning play an important role in cultivating mutual respect, strengthening students' appreciation of religious and cultural diversity, and fostering inclusive attitudes through classroom practices and school culture (Tadege et al., 2022), (Sirry et al., 2024). On the other hand, Dietrich Bonhoeffer's thoughts on being for others offer an ethical perspective that positions humans as individuals responsible for others through love, solidarity, and respect for human dignity (Saepurokhman et al., 2025). However, studies specifically linking the concept of being for others with religiously tolerant character education for high school students in a pluralistic society like Sintang are still very limited. This gap indicates an academic need to develop studies that can bridge Bonhoeffer's Christian ethical thinking with the need for religiously tolerant character education in the school environment.

Based on these problems, this study aims to analyze and describe the concept of being for others in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christian ethics and its relevance as a foundation for religiously tolerant character education for high school students in Sintang (Kung, 2025). More specifically, this study aims to describe Bonhoeffer's understanding of the concept of being for others along with the theological and ethical foundations that underlie it (Huber, 2020). In addition, this study also aims to identify the character values contained in the concept, such as love, caring, responsibility, solidarity, respect for human dignity, and openness to differences (Sitanggang, 2025). The next objective is to formulate the conceptual contribution of the concept of being for others as a foundation for religiously tolerant character education for high school students in Sintang so that it can foster mutual respect, appreciation of differences, and harmonious relationships among religious communities. This objective is consistent with recent studies emphasizing that character education should promote inclusive school environments, reduce prejudice, and strengthen students' moral responsibility toward others (Rutland et al., 2024). By achieving these objectives, this research is expected to be able to provide conceptual recommendations that can be used by schools in developing character education that is more inclusive, humanistic, and relevant to the challenges of living in a pluralistic society.

This research is based on the argument that the concept of being for others in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christian ethics has significant potential to serve as a foundation for religiously tolerant character education for high school students in Sintang. Bonhoeffer's ideas emphasizing living for others, social responsibility, solidarity, and respect for humanity provide a relevant ethical framework to address the challenges of intolerance, exclusivism, and social polarization that are growing in modern society (Kung, 2025). These values align with the needs of character education that not only shapes students' cognitive abilities but also develops moral awareness and the ability to live together in diversity (Sitanggang, 2025). Initial findings from interviews, observations, and documentation indicate that the school environment in Sintang already has a fairly good foundation of tolerance through various forms of interfaith social interaction. However, this foundation requires deeper conceptual strengthening to prepare

students with the competencies needed to respond constructively to increasingly complex social and digital challenges, including collaboration, critical thinking, and responsible engagement in multicultural environments (Icela, 2022). Therefore, this research is important to conduct because it seeks to present a synthesis between Bonhoeffer's Christian ethical thinking and the needs of contemporary character education so that it can produce a pedagogical foundation that supports the formation of a young generation that is tolerant, inclusive, and able to live side by side peacefully in a pluralistic society (Orben, 2020).

METHOD

This study focuses on the phenomenon of religious tolerance character formation among senior high school students in Sintang Regency who live in a multicultural and multireligious society. This phenomenon is important because, although diversity has become an integral part of students' daily experiences, the rapid development of digital media and the demands of twenty-first-century education require schools to strengthen students' intercultural competence, collaborative skills, and responsible citizenship to navigate increasingly diverse social environments (Icela, 2022). On the other hand, schools have a responsibility to shape students' character so they can live peacefully together in a pluralistic society (Sitanggang, 2025). In this context, this study examines the concept of being for others in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christian ethics as a foundation for religious tolerant character education for high school students in Sintang (Kung, 2025), (Huber, 2020). The focus of this research is directed at understanding the values contained in the concept of being for others, its relevance to the formation of religiously tolerant character, and its implementation in school life characterized by religious diversity (Setiawan, 2024). Thus, the object of this research is not only related to the conceptual aspects of Bonhoeffer's Christian ethics, but also concerns the social reality of education that develops in the high school environment in Sintang Regency of education that develops in the high school environment in Sintang Regency.

This study employed a qualitative research approach to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences within their natural social context. Qualitative inquiry emphasizes interpreting meanings, exploring participants' perspectives, and understanding complex social phenomena through contextually rich data (Cleland, 2017), (Lim, 2025). The types of data used in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly through interviews with informants related to the phenomenon under study, particularly regarding the practice of religious tolerance, character education, and the implementation of values of caring and respect for others in the school environment (Dys Malti & Sebastian P, 2017). Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained through a review of various scientific literature relevant to the overall research keywords, namely Christian ethics, education, and tolerance. This literature includes journal articles, scientific books, academic documents, and various other scientific sources that support the analysis of the concept of being for others from a character education perspective (Hameleers, 2022).

The sources of information in this study came from five participants who were purposively selected based on their involvement and understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Palinkas et al., 2016). The first participant was Mr. Wan, the Principal, who provided information regarding school policies, the conditions of student diversity, and the implementation of character education in the school environment. The second participant was Ms. Yunita, a Christian Religious Education Teacher, who provided an explanation of the learning process, strengthening character values, and the challenges faced in fostering a tolerant attitude in students. Next, the third participant was Ester, a student, who provided a perspective on the experience of tolerance in everyday school life. The fourth participant was Fajar, a student, who provided information on the practice of interfaith cooperation and the formation of social solidarity in the school environment (Nurman, Yusriadi & Hamim, 2022). The fifth participant was Santi, a student, who explained her experience regarding harmonious relationships between students of different religions. The selection of these participants was based on the consideration that they were individuals who had direct experience and relevant knowledge regarding the phenomenon of religious tolerance and the implementation of the

values of being for others in school life (Oldham et al., 2026).

The research process was carried out through several stages, including data collection, data organization, and data interpretation. Data collection was carried out using three main techniques: interviews, observation, and documentation (Lim, 2025). In-depth interviews were conducted with all research informants to gain a comprehensive understanding of their experiences, views, and interpretations of religious tolerance and the values of being for others (Snyder, 2019). In addition to interviews, researchers also conducted direct observations of activities and social interactions that took place in the school environment. Observations were made in classrooms, learning activities, extracurricular activities, religious activities, and various forms of student social interactions related to the practice of religious tolerance. Furthermore, documentation techniques were used to collect various relevant documents such as learning tools, teaching modules, photos of school activities, school program reports, character education policies, and various archives related to the development of religious tolerance (Snyder, 2019). The use of these three techniques enabled researchers to obtain richer, more in-depth data, in accordance with the characteristics of qualitative research that emphasizes a holistic understanding of social phenomena.

The data analysis in this study used the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model, which consists of four main stages: data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing, and data verification (Miles et al., 2020). The data reduction stage was carried out by selecting, focusing, simplifying, and grouping data relevant to the research objectives. Next, the reduced data was presented in narrative form, making it easier for researchers to understand the patterns, relationships, and meanings contained within. The next stage was drawing conclusions through a process of interpreting the systematically organized data (Miles et al., 2020).

To ensure the validity and credibility of the research findings, a continuous verification process was conducted throughout the study. Furthermore, this study utilized data source triangulation to test the validity of the information obtained. Triangulation was conducted by comparing, correlating, and confirming data from interviews, observations, and documentation to obtain a more objective understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The use of data source triangulation enabled researchers to minimize bias and increase the level of confidence in the research results.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Christian Ethics in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Concept of Being for Others

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and research documentation, it was found that Christian ethical values related to the concept of being for others have been present in school life through various forms of social interactions that emphasize caring, respect for others, and a willingness to live side by side harmoniously amidst religious diversity. Interview data showed that the school views humanitarian values as an important foundation in the formation of student character. The principal explained that the atmosphere of diversity in the school environment has developed positively because students are accustomed to interacting without distinction of religious background.

These findings are supported by observations that demonstrate harmonious social relationships in various school activities, both in the classroom and outside of class. Students appear capable of collaborating, discussing, and participating in various activities without any religious grouping. Meanwhile, documentation shows that values of caring for and respecting others are also reflected in various school programs, learning materials, and social activities involving students of various religions. Overall, these data demonstrate that Christian ethics, emphasizing love, social responsibility, and respect for human dignity, have become part of the educational culture developing within the school environment (Sitanggang, 2025).

"Mr. Wan believes that the concept of being for others is highly relevant as a vision for character education. If students are taught to be aware of living for the benefit of others, a climate of tolerance will be organically and firmly embedded in the school." (*Mr. Wan, Principal*).

Research data shows that the meaning of Christian ethics in the context of being for others is not only understood as a normative concept, but is also realized through daily life practices in the school environment. Based on the results of interviews with Christian Religious Education teachers, the values of love, social responsibility, and respect for others are part of the consistent instilled in the learning process. Reinforcement of these values is not only done through the delivery of learning materials, but also through the habituation of attitudes and behaviors that encourage students to care for the needs of others. Observations show that students demonstrate mutual respect when friends of different religions carry out their worship or religious activities. Furthermore, the inclusive classroom atmosphere shows that there is an open interaction without questioning differences in belief. Documentation findings also show that the Christian Religious Education learning tools contain indicators oriented towards developing the values of love, universal concern, and social responsibility. Thus, data obtained through various data collection techniques indicate that Christian ethics in the concept of being for others is present in the form of social practices that place fellow human beings as parties who must be respected, cared for, and treated with dignity in communal life.

"Mrs. Yunita explained that character education at her school consistently emphasizes the values of love, respect for others, and social responsibility. She witnessed firsthand how students respected each other when their peers of different faiths were worshipping." (Mrs. Yunita, Christian Religious Education Teacher)

The results of this study demonstrate that the Christian ethical values embedded in the concept of being for others are related to the reality that is the focus of this research, namely the need to strengthen religious tolerance among high school students in Sintang Regency. Observational data indicate that although tolerance in the school environment has developed well, students remain in a social situation influenced by the development of information technology and digital media. Field observations revealed that students actively access various information through social media, potentially exposing them to various narratives that can influence their perspectives on diversity. At the same time, documentation data indicates that the school has endeavored to develop various character education programs that emphasize the importance of respect for others and living together in diversity. Interview findings also indicate that the values of caring, solidarity, and respect for human dignity are seen as essential in maintaining harmonious relationships between students from different religious backgrounds. Therefore, data obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation indicate that Christian ethics in the concept of being for others are present in the real context of school life, which faces the challenges of diversity and the need to continue maintaining mutual respect amidst ongoing social change.

"Therefore, he believes that Dietrich Bonhoeffer's thoughts on being for others—especially the manifestation of the value of love in concrete actions without distinguishing between religions—are very urgent to be used as a pedagogical foundation to fortify students from the negative impacts of social media." (Mrs. Yunita, Christian Religious Education Teacher)

Education as a Medium for Implementing the Value of Being for Others

Based on interviews, observations, and documentation, it was found that education in high schools in Sintang Regency not only serves as a means of developing students' academic abilities but also serves as a space for character building that supports living together in diversity. Interview data shows that the school consistently develops character education through various learning activities and school activities that emphasize the values of love, respect for others, and social responsibility. In practice, students not only gain an understanding of the importance of respecting differences but are also given the opportunity to implement these values through daily social interactions. Observations show that the learning process takes place in an inclusive manner, particularly in group discussions and collaborative activities involving students from various religious backgrounds. Furthermore, documentation of learning tools indicates that character education has been integrated into the learning objectives and assessment indicators used by teachers. Various school documents also show the existence of programs that support strengthening student character through social activities, community service, commemoration of national holidays, and other humanitarian activities.

These data indicate that education in schools has provided a space for students to develop social values that align with the spirit of living for others as embodied in the concept of being for others.

"Mrs. Yunita explained that character education at her school consistently emphasizes the values of love, respect for others, and social responsibility." (Mrs. Yunita, Christian Religious Education Teacher)

The research findings indicate that character education in schools takes place through various learning experiences that enable students to interact directly with the diversity around them. Observational data demonstrates that group work, sports activities, school organizational activities, and various social programs provide spaces that bring together students from different religious backgrounds in an atmosphere of equality. Through these activities, students become accustomed to building communication, working together, and completing various tasks together without questioning their respective religious identities. Interview data with students indicates that these experiences of togetherness have become part of their daily school life. Meanwhile, documentation reveals various school activities that collectively involve all students, including mutual cooperation activities, camping, humanitarian fundraising, and commemorations of national holidays. These documents demonstrate that character education takes place not only in the classroom but also through various activities that provide opportunities for students to learn to respect others through real-life experiences. These findings demonstrate that the education implemented in schools has provided various social learning spaces that enable students to develop attitudes of caring, cooperation, and respect for others.

"Ester said that meeting spaces such as group work in class and sports activities were important moments where she and her friends mingled without regard for religious barriers." (Ester, Student)

The research data shows that the implementation of character education in schools is related to the reality that is the focus of the research, namely the need to strengthen religious tolerance among high school students in Sintang Regency. Observations indicate that school life, characterized by religious diversity, provides many opportunities for students to interact with individuals of different beliefs. At the same time, interview results indicate that the school is aware of the challenges arising from the development of social media and the flow of digital information that can influence students' perspectives on diversity. School documentation also shows the existence of various policies and programs designed to strengthen character values through education that emphasizes respect for others and harmonious living together. Various documented activities demonstrate student involvement in activities that encourage interfaith cooperation and social solidarity. Furthermore, field data shows that character education has become part of the school culture, implemented through both learning and non-academic activities. Thus, the research results indicate that education in high schools in Sintang Regency takes place in a social context that is relevant to the need to strengthen religious tolerance and provides various experiences related to living together in diversity.

"However, Ms. Yunita is also realistic about the challenges of the times. She acknowledges that the biggest challenge today is exposure to social media, which often carries a stream of provocative information." (Ms. Yunita, Christian Religious Education Teacher)

DISCUSSION

The Relevance of the Concept of Being for Others to Religious Tolerance Character Education

The results of the study indicate that the concept of being for others in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christian ethics has a strong connection with the formation of religious tolerance in high school students in Sintang. The research findings are in line with the findings (Huber, 2020) which show that the values of love, care, social responsibility, solidarity, and respect for human dignity are present in school life through various forms of social interactions that take place in the educational environment. Interview data shows that the principal, teachers, and students view the importance of living for others as a foundation for building harmonious

relationships amidst religious diversity. Bonhoeffer viewed human existence as finding meaning through responsible relationships with others rather than through a self-centered orientation. This perspective is consistent with, who argues that Bonhoeffer's ethics reconceptualizes responsibility beyond individual actions by emphasizing relational accountability, concrete engagement with others, and ethical participation in addressing the realities of an increasingly interconnected world. Bonhoeffer viewed human existence as finding meaning through relationships of love and responsibility mediated by Christ rather than through a self-centered orientation. This perspective is supported by (Verhagen, 2020), who argues that Bonhoeffer's theology understands human existence as fundamentally relational, where responsibility for others is grounded in Christ's mediation and expressed through concrete acts of love and service (Verhagen, 2020).

Observational findings show that interfaith interactions occur inclusively through school learning, sports, and social activities. Meanwhile, documentation shows that these character values have been integrated into learning materials and various school programs. Thus, this study found that the concept of being for others not only has theological and ethical dimensions but also has pedagogical relevance as a foundation for religiously tolerant character education in the context of schools living in a pluralistic society.

Relationship of Research Findings with Previous Research

The findings of this study are related to various previous studies that position education as a crucial tool in building religious tolerance. Several studies have shown that education that provides space for dialogue, respect for differences, and positive social interactions can strengthen students' tolerant attitudes and reduce stereotypes about groups of different religions (Sitanggang, 2025). However, most previous studies have emphasized multicultural education, citizenship education, or tolerance education as pedagogical instruments without specifically linking them to specific ethical foundations (Setiawan, 2024).

This study demonstrates excellence because it presents the concept of being for others as a philosophical and ethical basis that provides a deeper moral orientation to the education of religiously tolerant character (Huber, 2020). This finding is also in line with Bonhoeffer's thinking, which emphasizes that the relationship between humans and God cannot be separated from responsibility for fellow human beings, so that respect for others is part of the ethical calling of Christian life (Kung, 2025). In this context, this study expands the discourse of character education by showing that tolerance can be built not only through educational strategies but also through the internalization of ethical values oriented towards living for others.

Reflection on the research results shows that the research objective of identifying character values within the concept of being for others and analyzing their relevance to religiously tolerant character education has received empirical support from field data. The presence of mutual respect, interfaith cooperation, social awareness, and appreciation for diversity found in school life demonstrates that these values have real utility in building harmonious social relationships. These findings demonstrate that character education based on an orientation toward living for others can strengthen students' awareness to view differences as part of shared life, not as a source of separation. Furthermore, the research results indicate that the social experiences students have through various school activities have become a space for the actualization of these values (Berkowitz, 2021). Therefore, the concept of being for others functions not only as a normative ethical idea, but also as a reflective framework that helps students understand the importance of responsibility towards others in a pluralistic life.

The implications of this research lie in its contribution to the development of character education in schools. The research findings indicate that the concept of being for others can serve as a conceptual foundation for designing character education programs that promote tolerant, inclusive, and socially responsible attitudes. This finding is consistent with previous studies demonstrating that tolerance education, intercultural learning, and inclusive educational practices contribute significantly to fostering respect for diversity, social cohesion, and responsible citizenship in multicultural societies (Sakallı et al., 2021). The research findings indicate that the concept of being for others can be used as a conceptual foundation in designing

character education programs oriented toward the formation of tolerant, inclusive, and socially responsible attitudes. This finding is consistent with (Sakallı et al., 2021), who argue that tolerance education plays a crucial role in developing students' capacity to respect diversity, manage differences constructively, and foster harmonious relationships within multicultural educational settings. In the educational context, the results of this study provide a basis for schools to strengthen learning that emphasizes not only academic achievement but also character development capable of responding to the challenges of life in a multicultural society (Muhammad Japar, Asep Rudi Casmana, 2021). Another implication is the need to integrate the values of love, solidarity, and respect for human dignity into various learning activities and non-academic activities (Bulan & Simangunsong, 2025). This finding also shows that character education based on relationships with others has the potential to strengthen students' moral resilience in responding to the challenges posed by social media and digital environments. Developing students' critical thinking, news media literacy, and ethical awareness enables them to evaluate online information more responsibly, resist misinformation, and cultivate respectful interactions within increasingly diverse digital communities (Purinton Drake et al., 2023); (Hameleers, 2022). Thus, the results of this study provide practical direction for the development of character education that is more contextual and relevant to the needs of a pluralistic society.

Research findings demonstrating the strong relationship between the concept of *being for others* and religious tolerance can be understood through the characteristics of social life developing within the school environment and the Sintang community. A school environment that provides continuous opportunities for interfaith dialogue, collaborative learning, and shared participation enables students to develop mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation across religious differences. Such educational experiences reflect the growing emphasis on values education in religious education, which seeks to cultivate respect, inclusion, and responsible citizenship within pluralistic societies (McDonnell & McDonnell, 2023). This condition is reinforced by school policies that consistently encourage the implementation of character education through various academic and non-academic activities. Furthermore, the values embodied in the concept of *being for others* align with the needs of a pluralistic society because they encourage students to develop character, collaboration, ethical responsibility, and social awareness, which are essential competencies for living and working in diverse societies. This perspective is consistent with the Education 4.0 framework proposed by (Icela, 2022), Bonhoeffer understood human existence as fundamentally relational, emphasizing that authentic Christian life is expressed through responsible action, solidarity, and commitment to the well-being of others rather than self-centered autonomy. His theological ethics highlights that responsibility is inseparable from faithful participation in God's work for the transformation of society and the common good (Radler, 2020), (Santrac & Adventists, 1997). Therefore, when these values are integrated into the educational process, students develop a moral framework that encourages them to perceive diversity as an opportunity for service, social responsibility, and mutual respect rather than as a source of division. Previous studies have shown that moral identity and moral emotions are important predictors of prosocial behaviour and ethical decision-making, enabling individuals to respond constructively to social diversity (Tissol, Scale, 2023), (Christner et al., 2022).

Based on the research findings, several steps need to be taken to strengthen religiously tolerant character education in schools. First, schools need to develop character education programs that explicitly integrate the values of being for others into the curriculum and extracurricular activities. Second, teachers need to be empowered to develop learning that encourages students to internalize the values of caring, solidarity, and respect for others through real-life experiences. Third, schools need to expand the space for interfaith interaction through collaborative activities that enable students to build positive relationships with peers of different faiths (Pajarianto et al., 2022). Fourth, digital literacy needs to be strengthened so that students have the critical ability to respond to information that has the potential to trigger exclusive or intolerant attitudes. Fifth, collaboration between schools, families, and communities is needed to create a social environment that supports the sustainable development of tolerant character (Gossum Benjamin et al., 2020). Through these steps, the

values embodied in the concept of being for others can be continuously actualized as the foundation of character education that supports the creation of a peaceful, inclusive, and harmonious life amidst religious diversity.

The findings of this study indicate that the concept of being for others provides a meaningful ethical foundation for designing character education programs that promote tolerance, inclusiveness, and social responsibility. The implementation of these values should not be limited to classroom instruction but should also be integrated into the overall school culture through authentic learning experiences, collaborative activities, and positive social interactions. This finding is supported by previous studies demonstrating that value-based education is most effective when students experience moral values in authentic contexts, integrate local cultural values into everyday learning, and participate in supportive school environments that consistently reinforce positive behaviour and mutual respect (Gunawardena Brown, 2021), (Goodman-Scott, 2018), (Nurasiah et al., 2022). Therefore, the concept of being for others not only serves as a theological and ethical principle but also provides a practical framework for strengthening students' character and fostering harmonious relationships in multicultural and multireligious school communities.

The novelty of this study lies in its integration of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's concept of *being for others* into the discourse of religious tolerance character education within the context of multicultural secondary education in Sintang. While previous studies have primarily examined religious tolerance through multicultural education, citizenship education, or pedagogical approaches, this study demonstrates that Bonhoeffer's ethical concept provides a deeper philosophical and moral foundation for character formation by emphasizing love, social responsibility, solidarity, and respect for human dignity as the basis for interreligious relationships. The findings reveal that religious tolerance is not merely cultivated through knowledge of diversity or instructional strategies but is more sustainably developed through the internalization of an ethical commitment to live for and serve others regardless of religious differences. This perspective extends existing scholarship by repositioning tolerance from a pedagogical objective to an ethical way of life, thereby offering a new conceptual framework for designing character education that is more humanistic, inclusive, and responsive to the challenges of religious diversity and digital-era social polarization.

The findings of the present study are consistent with a growing body of international empirical research demonstrating that character education based on ethical values, empathy, social responsibility, and respect for diversity contributes significantly to strengthening students' religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence in multicultural educational settings. For instance, (Aderibigbe et al., 2023) found that character education is most effective when moral values are embedded within the daily culture and relationships of the school rather than taught solely as cognitive content. Similarly, (Lavy, 2020) reported that teachers' caring relationships and prosocial values significantly enhance students' empathy, respect, and positive social behaviour toward peers from diverse backgrounds. Research by Zych et al. (2020) further demonstrated that empathy and moral engagement are essential predictors of tolerance and prosocial behaviour among adolescents, while (Dys Malti & Sebastian P, 2017) argued that moral development is strengthened through the internalization of compassion, responsibility, and concern for others in everyday social interactions. Likewise, (Pang et al., 2022) concluded that empathy-based educational interventions significantly improve interpersonal relationships and reduce prejudice in culturally diverse contexts. More recently, (Oldham et al., 2026), through a comprehensive thematic review of empirical character education research, emphasized that sustainable character development depends on integrating moral values into students' lived experiences and school culture. While these previous studies explain tolerance primarily from the perspectives of character education, empathy development, and moral education, the present study extends the existing literature by demonstrating that Dietrich Bonhoeffer's concept of *being for others* provides a distinctive theological and ethical foundation for religious tolerance character education. Rather than viewing tolerance merely as a social competence or educational outcome, this study conceptualizes tolerance as an ethical vocation grounded in

love, solidarity, responsibility, and respect for human dignity. This theoretical perspective represents a significant contribution by bridging Christian ethics and contemporary character education within the context of multicultural secondary schools in Indonesia.

The findings of the present study demonstrate substantial agreement with previous international studies, particularly regarding the importance of ethical values, empathy, social responsibility, and respect for diversity in fostering students' tolerance and prosocial behaviour. Similar to the findings of (Aderibigbe et al., 2023), this study confirms that religiously grounded moral values can serve as a powerful foundation for promoting mutual respect and peaceful coexistence within culturally diverse educational settings. Likewise, the present findings support (Lavy, 2020) conclusion that character education becomes more effective when virtues are cultivated through students' everyday experiences and school culture rather than through cognitive instruction alone. Consistent with Malti and (Dys Malti & Sebastian P, 2017), (Pang et al., 2022) ,and(Zycha Izabela ,, Maria M. Ttofib, Vicente J. Llorenta, David P. Farringtonb & AUniversidad, 2018) , this study also found that empathy, caring, solidarity, and concern for others are essential dispositions that encourage prosocial behaviour and strengthen harmonious relationships among students from different religious backgrounds. Furthermore, the findings align with (Oldham et al., 2026), review, which emphasizes that sustainable character education requires the integration of moral values into authentic educational experiences. The similarity between the present study and these previous investigations may be explained by their shared assumption that character formation is fundamentally a relational process developed through meaningful social interaction, moral habituation, and supportive school environments. Nevertheless, the present study differs from previous research in its philosophical orientation. While earlier studies primarily interpret tolerance through the perspectives of character education, empathy development, prosocial behaviour, or religious education, the present study conceptualizes religious tolerance through Dietrich Bonhoeffer's ethical principle of *being for others*. This theological perspective shifts the focus from developing individual competencies to cultivating an ethical vocation characterized by responsibility, self-giving love, and commitment to the dignity of others. Such differences are likely influenced by variations in theoretical framework, research context, and methodology. Previous studies generally employed psychological, educational, or quantitative approaches across diverse cultural settings, whereas the present study adopted a qualitative approach within the multicultural context of Indonesian secondary education, enabling a deeper exploration of how theological ethics can inform character education in religiously pluralistic schools. The principal contribution of this study lies in its development of a novel conceptual perspective that integrates Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christian ethical concept of *being for others* into the discourse of religious tolerance character education. Unlike previous studies, which have predominantly examined tolerance through multicultural education, civic education, empathy development, or character education frameworks, the present study demonstrates that Bonhoeffer's ethical thought provides a deeper philosophical and theological foundation for cultivating students' religious tolerance. Rather than conceptualizing tolerance merely as an educational outcome or social competence, this study redefines it as an ethical vocation grounded in self-giving love, responsibility for others, solidarity, and respect for human dignity. Furthermore, this study contributes to the literature by bridging Christian ethics and contemporary character education within the context of Sintang multicultural secondary schools, where religious diversity represents both a social reality and an educational challenge. Consequently, the findings enrich existing scholarship by proposing *being for others* as a normative framework that strengthens students' moral awareness to embrace religious diversity through authentic interpersonal relationships and shared social responsibility, thereby extending current approaches to tolerance education beyond pedagogical strategies toward a more comprehensive ethical paradigm.

The findings of this study have important practical, academic, and policy implications for the development of religious tolerance character education in multicultural societies. From a practical perspective, the study suggests that schools should move beyond emphasizing

tolerance as a cognitive learning objective by embedding the ethical values of *being for others*—including self-giving love, social responsibility, solidarity, and respect for human dignity—into classroom instruction, extracurricular activities, school culture, and students' daily interactions. Such an approach may strengthen students' moral resilience in responding to religious diversity and the challenges posed by digital media and social polarization. Academically, this study contributes to the advancement of character education scholarship by demonstrating that theological ethics, particularly Dietrich Bonhoeffer's concept of *being for others*, can serve as a complementary philosophical framework that enriches contemporary theories of character education, multicultural education, and religious tolerance. From a policy perspective, the findings encourage educational policymakers and curriculum developers to incorporate ethical and relational dimensions of character formation into educational policies and character education programs, particularly in multicultural and multireligious contexts. Furthermore, future research should examine the applicability of the proposed conceptual framework across different educational levels, cultural settings, and religious traditions through comparative, longitudinal, or mixed-methods research. Such studies would provide broader empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of *being for others* as a foundational framework for promoting inclusive, peaceful, and socially responsible citizenship in diverse societies.

CONCLUSION

The most important finding in this study shows an interesting and impressive fact, namely that the concept of being for others developed by Dietrich Bonhoeffer is not only relevant as a theological Christian ethical idea, but also has a real transformative power in the formation of religiously tolerant character in the high school student environment. The results of the study revealed that the values of love, care, social responsibility, solidarity, and respect for human dignity contained in the concept of being for others have been present and actualized in school life through various forms of interfaith social interactions. This finding is interesting because it shows that the formation of tolerant character does not solely depend on teaching about diversity or tolerance itself, but can grow more deeply through the internalization of the awareness to live for others. In other words, this study found that when students are guided to view others as subjects who must be respected, served, and cared for regardless of differences in belief, tolerance develops not as a formal obligation, but as part of the moral awareness inherent in everyday life. These findings show that the concept of being for others has very strong potential to be used as a foundation for religiously tolerant character education in the context of a pluralistic society such as Sintang Regency.

This research makes important theoretical and practical contributions to the development of character education and Christian ethics studies. Theoretically, this research expands the dialogue between Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christian ethical thought and contemporary character education studies by demonstrating that the concept of being for others has significant relevance in building a character of religious tolerance. This research also enriches the academic treasury by presenting the perspective that tolerance education can be explained not only through a pedagogical approach or multicultural education, but also through an ethical foundation oriented towards responsibility towards fellow human beings. Practically, this research offers a conceptual framework that can be utilized by schools in designing character education programs that are more contextualized to the challenges of life in a multicultural society. The research findings provide a basis for developing learning that emphasizes the values of love, solidarity, social concern, and respect for human dignity as a means of building a harmonious life amidst religious diversity. Therefore, the results of this research not only have academic value but also provide practical benefits for the world of education in the effort to shape a young generation that is inclusive, tolerant, and able to live side by side peacefully.

This research offers ample scope for further development. The focus of this research, which focused on high school students in Sintang Regency, provides an in-depth overview of the relevance of the concept of being for others in the context of religiously tolerant character education in specific social environments. However, the dynamics of diversity that develop in

various regions have different characteristics, thus opening up opportunities for further research to test and develop these findings in more diverse social, cultural, and educational contexts. Furthermore, this research focused on qualitative studies that emphasized a deep understanding of the meanings and experiences of the participants. Therefore, further research could develop different approaches, such as cross-regional comparative studies, longitudinal research on the development of students' tolerant character, or the development of a character education model based on being for others that can be implemented more broadly at various levels of education. Therefore, this research is expected to serve as a starting point for developing a more comprehensive study of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christian ethics' contribution to character education and the strengthening of peaceful community life in the context of ever-growing diversity.

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