

Article History

Received: 15 Sept' 2025/ Revised: 30 Oct' 2025/ Accepted: 30 Oct' 2025/Published: 31 Oct' 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54170/harati.v5i2.1232>

Perceptions, Learning Attitudes, and Cultural Contexts in Christian Religious Education: An Empirical Study of Students' Learning Engagement

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Corresponding Author: pestarian@gmail.com**Abstract**

This study examines the relationship between students' perceptions and learning attitudes in Christian Religious Education (CRE), with particular attention to the cultural context in which religious learning takes place. A quantitative correlational approach was employed to analyze data from 32 respondents. Students' perceptions were treated as the independent variable, while learning attitudes constituted the dependent variable. Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation and simple linear regression. The results indicate a moderate positive relationship between students' perceptions and learning attitudes, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.5432$. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.295$) indicates that students' perceptions statistically accounted for 29.5% of the variance in learning attitudes. The regression model was expressed as $Y = 10.918 + 0.437X$, with a t value of 3.5432 and a significance level of 0.00132, indicating a statistically significant relationship. The findings suggest that students who hold more positive perceptions of the learning process tend to demonstrate more positive learning attitudes. Within CRE, this relationship should be understood in connection with students' cultural experiences, local values, social relationships, and everyday realities. Culture was not tested as an independent statistical variable; rather, it functioned as a contextual lens for interpreting the findings. The study highlights the importance of culturally responsive and contextual CRE that connects Christian teachings with students' lived experiences while supporting meaningful learning and character formation.

Keywords: christian religious education; cultural context; learning attitude**Introduction**

Christian Religious Education (CRE) occupies an important position in the formation of students' faith, character, attitudes, and capacity to live responsibly within society. In the Indonesian educational context, however, CRE cannot be separated from the cultural realities in which students learn and develop. Indonesia is characterized by substantial cultural, social, and religious diversity, requiring religious education to move beyond the transmission of doctrinal knowledge toward forms of learning that are meaningful within students' lived contexts. Triposa and Kolibu (2024) argue that Christian education in a plural society needs to recognize cultural and religious diversity while simultaneously nurturing Christian identity

and national unity. Thus, CRE should not be understood merely as the transfer of biblical concepts, but also as an educational process through which students interpret faith in relation to their social and cultural experiences. The relevance of cultural context becomes particularly important because students do not enter the classroom as culturally neutral individuals. Their attitudes toward learning are shaped through experiences, relationships, language, values, traditions, and patterns of interaction that develop within families and communities. In this sense, culture can provide a meaningful context through which Christian teachings are understood and practiced. Mithunayon and Waruwu (2024) emphasize that local culture has implications for the acceptance and relevance of Christian religious education, particularly when cultural values are incorporated into the learning process. Such an approach enables students to connect Christian teachings with everyday life rather than perceiving religious education as knowledge that exists separately from their cultural environment.

Contextuality is therefore essential in developing effective CRE. Yedija et al. (2024) explain that contextual learning connects Christian teachings with students' real-life experiences and strengthens the relevance of religious values in cognitive, character, and spiritual development. Similarly (Hutapea, Sahertian, & Tarumaselly, 2024), demonstrate the potential of local cultural expressions as learning resources in CRE. Their discussion of the Giring-Giring dance illustrates how cultural elements can be incorporated into Christian learning so that students encounter religious values through forms that are closer to their social environment. Such integration does not imply replacing Christian teaching with cultural traditions. Rather, culture can function as a pedagogical context through which students critically understand, interpret, and apply Christian values in their own lives. Within this framework, students' perceptions of learning become an important issue. Perception influences how learners interpret the subject matter, the teacher, the learning environment, and the relevance of educational experiences. When students perceive learning as meaningful, relevant, and connected with their experiences, they may be more inclined to develop positive attitudes toward the learning process. Conversely, when learning is perceived as distant from students' realities, religious education may become predominantly cognitive and less connected to personal engagement. Research on CRE has likewise identified students' learning interest and engagement as important concerns. Ginting et al. (2023), for example, found that students' interest in CRE may remain less than optimal, indicating the need for educational approaches that respond to students' learning conditions and experiences.

Students' learning attitudes are significant because learning in CRE involves more than the acquisition of religious information. CRE seeks to cultivate dispositions that are reflected in students' responses, relationships, responsibilities, and everyday practices. Sirait et al. (2023) describe Christian education as contributing to the development of children's attitudes through biblical teaching, exemplary behavior, spiritual discipline, and loving communication. In school settings, this perspective suggests that students' attitudes toward learning should be considered as part of the broader process of Christian formation. Positive learning attitudes may provide an important foundation for students to participate actively in learning and to internalize Christian values. The empirical basis of the present study is the relationship between students' perceptions and their learning attitudes. Based on the research data, the study involved 32 respondents. The statistical analysis produced a correlation

coefficient of 0.5432, indicating a moderate positive relationship between perception (X) and learning attitude (Y_1). The coefficient of determination was 0.295, suggesting that perception statistically accounted for 29.5% of the variance in students' learning attitudes. The regression coefficient was also statistically significant, with a t value of 3.5432 and a significance value of 0.00132. These findings provide an empirical basis for examining how students' perceptions relate to their attitudes toward learning within CRE. The statistical relationship should be interpreted within the broader cultural and educational context. The present study does not statistically measure culture as an independent variable; therefore, culture is positioned as a contextual lens rather than as a causal factor in the tested model. This distinction is important because the incorporation of cultural realities into CRE requires educational interpretation rather than unsupported statistical claims. A culturally responsive approach allows teachers to consider students' experiences, local values, communal practices, and social realities when designing learning experiences. Such an orientation is consistent with the argument of Triposa and Kolibu (2024) that Christian education in a plural society should embrace cultural diversity while maintaining its theological and educational identity. Accordingly, this study seeks to examine the influence of students' perceptions on their learning attitudes while interpreting the findings within the cultural context of Christian Religious Education. The study contributes to the discussion of CRE by bringing together an empirical examination of students' perceptions and learning attitudes with a contextual understanding of culture. This perspective positions CRE not only as a medium for transmitting Christian knowledge but also as a space in which faith, learning, identity, and culture interact. The integration of these dimensions is expected to contribute to a more contextual, meaningful, and culturally responsive understanding of Christian Religious Education.

Methods

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational explanatory design to examine the relationship between students' perceptions and their learning attitudes in the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE). The quantitative design was selected because the primary purpose of the study was to determine whether variation in students' perceptions was statistically associated with variation in their learning attitudes and to estimate the extent to which perception could explain differences in learning attitudes. The cultural dimension was incorporated as a contextual perspective in interpreting the findings, rather than being treated as an additional statistically tested variable. This distinction was maintained because the available research data contain the variables perception (X) and learning attitude (Y_1), but do not provide a separate numerical measurement of culture.

The analysis was based on data from 32 respondents. The research dataset identifies the respondents from R01 to R32 and provides individual scores for perception (X), learning attitude (Y_1), predicted learning-attitude scores, and residual values. The available research document does not provide sufficient information to establish additional demographic characteristics of the participants, such as age, gender, grade level, school location, or sampling frame. Therefore, these characteristics are not inferred or added to the methodological description. The independent variable in the analysis was students' perception (X), while the dependent variable was learning attitude (Y_1). The statistical model was expressed through a

simple linear regression equation: $Y = 10.918 + 0.437X$. The regression coefficient of 0.437 indicates the direction and estimated magnitude of the relationship between perception and learning attitude within the observed dataset. The positive coefficient indicates that higher perception scores were associated with higher predicted learning-attitude scores. The study therefore focused on a single-predictor regression model rather than a multivariable model.

The data were analyzed using correlation and simple linear regression. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between perception and learning attitude. The analysis produced a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.5432$, indicating a positive relationship of moderate magnitude. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.2950$) was subsequently used to estimate the proportion of variance in learning attitude statistically accounted for by perception. Thus, perception explained approximately 29.5% of the observed variance in learning attitude, while the remaining variance was associated with other factors that were not included in the model. The significance of the regression coefficient was evaluated using a t -test at the 0.05 significance level. With 32 observations, the residual degrees of freedom were 30. The obtained t value was 3.5432, exceeding the critical value of 2.0423, while the two-tailed significance value was 0.00132. The regression model also generated an F value of 12.5540, compared with an F critical value of 4.1709, with the same significance value of 0.00132. These results indicate that the relationship represented in the regression model was statistically significant. Although culture was not operationalized as a separate quantitative variable, it was retained as an interpretive dimension of the study because CRE takes place within particular social and cultural environments. Consequently, the discussion of the statistical findings considers how students' perceptions and learning attitudes may be understood within culturally situated educational experiences. This approach avoids attributing a direct statistical effect to culture that was not tested in the present dataset, while still allowing the study to address the broader educational significance of culturally contextualized Christian Religious Education.

Findings and Discussion

The analysis examined the relationship between students' perceptions of learning and their learning attitudes in the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE). The dataset consisted of 32 respondents, identified from R01 to R32, with each respondent having a perception score (X) and a learning-attitude score (Y_1). The analysis also generated predicted scores and residual values for each respondent. The descriptive structure of the dataset indicates variation in both perception and learning-attitude scores. Perception scores ranged from 9 to 30, while learning-attitude scores ranged from 13 to 28. The variation demonstrates that the respondents did not have identical perceptions or learning attitudes toward the learning process. This variation provided an adequate basis for examining whether differences in perception were systematically associated with differences in learning attitudes. The Pearson correlation analysis produced a coefficient of $r = 0.5432$. The positive direction of the coefficient indicates that students with higher perception scores tended, on average, to demonstrate higher learning-attitude scores. The magnitude of the coefficient represents a moderate positive relationship. Thus, the finding does not indicate a perfect or deterministic

relationship. Rather, students' perceptions constituted one factor associated with their learning attitudes, while other factors remained relevant.

The regression analysis strengthened this finding. The estimated regression equation was: $Y = 10.918 + 0.437X$. The positive regression coefficient of 0.437 indicates that an increase of one unit in the perception score was associated with an estimated increase of 0.437 units in the learning-attitude score. The intercept of 10.918 represents the estimated value of learning attitude when the perception score is zero within the mathematical model. Because a zero perception score does not necessarily represent an actual respondent condition, the intercept should be interpreted primarily as a statistical component of the regression equation rather than as a substantive educational condition. The coefficient of determination was $R^2 = 0.2950$. This means that approximately 29.5% of the variance in learning attitudes was statistically accounted for by students' perceptions in this simple regression model. The remaining 70.5% was not explained by perception and may be associated with other variables that were not included in the present analysis. These could include instructional practices, teacher-student relationships, family environment, motivation, peer interaction, learning resources, previous learning experiences, or other contextual factors. However, because these factors were not measured in the present dataset, they should not be interpreted as empirically established determinants of the respondents' learning attitudes.

The significance test provided further evidence concerning the relationship between perception and learning attitude. With 32 observations, the residual degrees of freedom were 30. The calculated t value for the regression coefficient was 3.5432, while the critical t value at the 0.05 significance level was 2.0423. Because the calculated value exceeded the critical value, the null hypothesis that the regression coefficient was equal to zero was rejected. The two-tailed significance value was 0.00132, which is substantially below the 0.05 criterion. The overall regression test produced an F value of 12.5540, compared with an F critical value of 4.1709, with a significance value of 0.00132. The consistency between the t -test and F -test supports the statistical significance of the simple regression model. Therefore, the empirical result supports the proposition that students' perceptions are significantly associated with their learning attitudes in the studied CRE context. The finding, however, should be expressed carefully. Because the design is based on an observational quantitative relationship rather than an experimental manipulation, the result establishes a statistically significant association and predictive relationship in the model, but it should not be interpreted as definitive evidence that changing perception alone will necessarily cause a corresponding change in learning attitude.

The positive relationship found in this study provides an important insight into the educational dynamics of CRE. Students' perceptions are not merely passive impressions of the learning process. Perception determines how learners interpret the meaning, relevance, accessibility, and value of what they encounter in the classroom. When students understand a subject as meaningful and connected to their experiences, they are more likely to develop an affirmative orientation toward participation in learning. This interpretation is consistent with the broader understanding of contextual learning in religious education. Yedija, Arifianto, and Triposa (2024) argue that contextual strategies in Christian Religious Education connect Christian teachings with students' real-life experiences and are relevant to cognitive, character,

and spiritual development. Such a perspective helps explain why perception can be associated with learning attitude: the way students perceive educational content is partly related to whether they can recognize its relevance to their own lives. The present finding is particularly relevant to CRE because religious learning has a distinctive objective. It is not limited to the accumulation of information about biblical teachings, doctrines, or religious practices. CRE also seeks to shape students' character, faith, responsibility, and relationships with others. Consequently, students' attitudes toward learning are themselves educationally significant. If students perceive CRE as disconnected from their experiences, learning may become an exercise in memorization. If they perceive it as relevant to their identity and daily life, the learning process can become more participatory and reflective.

This interpretation is supported by research on contextual Christian education. Kurniawati (2019) reported that Contextual Teaching and Learning in Christian Religious Education could contribute to the development of Christian character, including love, honesty, discipline, and responsibility. Although that study examined a different outcome and educational setting, it supports the broader proposition that contextualization can make Christian learning more closely connected with students' attitudes and character formation. The present study therefore adds an empirical dimension to this discussion. Rather than examining the effectiveness of a particular instructional model, the present analysis identifies a statistically significant relationship between perception and learning attitude. The result suggests that attention to students' perceptions should be an important component of CRE planning and evaluation.

Culture as a Context for Christian Religious Education

One of the distinctive contributions of this study is the interpretation of the statistical finding through a cultural perspective. Culture was not measured as an independent quantitative variable in the dataset. Therefore, the study does not claim that culture statistically caused changes in learning attitudes. Instead, culture is used as a contextual lens for understanding why students may develop particular perceptions of learning. This distinction is important in the Indonesian context. Students experience education within families, communities, languages, traditions, social relationships, and local value systems. Their understanding of Christian teachings is consequently influenced by the cultural environment in which faith is practiced. Triposa and Kolibu (2024) emphasize that Christian education in a plural society needs to engage cultural and religious diversity while maintaining Christian identity and contributing to social unity. Their argument suggests that Christian education should not isolate faith from the cultural realities in which students live.

Culture can therefore function as a bridge between religious teaching and students' lived experiences. Local stories, communal traditions, forms of cooperation, respect for elders, patterns of hospitality, concern for nature, and other culturally embedded practices can become starting points for critical reflection on Christian values. Such integration does not mean that every cultural practice is automatically accepted as compatible with Christian teaching. Rather, students can be encouraged to examine cultural values through biblical and theological reflection, identifying dimensions that can support Christian virtues while critically evaluating practices that conflict with the principles being taught. This approach is

particularly relevant to the finding that perception is positively related to learning attitude. If students encounter CRE through examples and learning activities that resonate with their cultural experiences, the subject may become more intelligible and meaningful. The relationship between perception and learning attitude can consequently be interpreted within a broader process of contextualization. Recent scholarship on Christian education in Indonesia supports this direction. Pangondian (2024) discusses Godly Play as a contextual approach to Christian Religious Education in Indonesia and emphasizes the importance of nurturing Christian identity within a religiously plural social environment. Similarly, Triposa and Kolibu (2024) argue for a reconceptualization of Christian teaching that embraces cultural diversity rather than treating cultural difference as an obstacle to Christian education.

Cultural Context and Meaningful Learning

The cultural dimension also helps explain why the 29.5% coefficient of determination should not be interpreted narrowly. The model indicates that perception explains a meaningful but limited proportion of differences in learning attitudes. The relatively large unexplained proportion reminds educators that students' attitudes emerge from a complex educational environment. From a contextual perspective, perception may itself be shaped by the degree to which classroom experiences correspond with students' social and cultural worlds. A teacher who uses examples exclusively from contexts unfamiliar to students may unintentionally create psychological distance between the subject and the learner. Conversely, teachers who connect Christian teachings with students' everyday realities can create opportunities for interpretation and dialogue.

Yedija et al. (2024) specifically emphasize the relevance of contextual learning for connecting Christian teachings with real-life situations and social challenges. This principle has direct implications for the interpretation of the present findings. A positive learning attitude should not be pursued simply by making lessons entertaining; it can be strengthened by making learning meaningful, recognizable, and applicable. Evidence from contextual learning research in Christian Religious Education also points in this direction. Hutagalung et al. (2024), in a quantitative study of Christian Religious Education and Character Education, found a positive and significant relationship between the Contextual Teaching and Learning model and students' learning motivation. Their analysis reported $r = 0.397$ and $R^2 = 15.8\%$, with a statistically significant regression model. Although motivation is conceptually different from learning attitude and the research designs are not identical, the finding provides a useful comparative indication that contextualized religious learning may be associated with more positive learner responses. Simbolon et al. (2024) likewise investigated contextual learning in Christian Religious Education and Character Education in relation to students' learning interest. Together, these studies and the present findings indicate that the learner's interpretation of the learning experience deserves greater attention in CRE research.

The findings have several implications for teachers of Christian Religious Education. First, teachers should identify how students perceive the subject before assuming that a particular instructional strategy will be effective. Simple diagnostic activities, reflective questions, classroom conversations, or formative assessments can help teachers determine whether students perceive CRE as relevant, difficult, meaningful, repetitive, or disconnected

from their experiences. Second, teachers should consider cultural context when selecting examples and learning activities. Cultural integration should be undertaken critically and pedagogically. Local cultural practices can be introduced as objects of reflection, comparison, and dialogue with biblical principles. For example, values such as communal solidarity, mutual assistance, respect, responsibility, care for creation, and reconciliation can provide entry points for discussing Christian teachings. The objective is not to turn CRE into cultural studies, but to allow Christian teachings to be understood through situations that students recognize. Third, culturally responsive CRE should encourage dialogue rather than impose a simplistic opposition between Christianity and culture. In a plural Indonesian society, students need the capacity to articulate their Christian identity while respecting people from different cultural and religious backgrounds. Triposa and Kolibu (2024) place this balance between Christian identity and respect for diversity at the center of Christian education in plural societies. This implication is also consistent with research on multicultural religious education in Indonesia. A study of schools in Poso found that multicultural religious education could facilitate cooperation among students and teachers across religious, ethnic, and cultural differences, particularly when educational processes incorporated values of humanity and peacebuilding (see *The Building Sustainable Peace through Multicultural Religious Education*, 2024). The implication for CRE is that cultural responsiveness should not be restricted to the selection of teaching materials; it should also be reflected in classroom interaction, respect, cooperation, and the social practices cultivated through learning.

The value of $R^2 = 0.295$ deserves particular attention. The finding indicates that perception has a meaningful statistical contribution to learning attitude, but perception is clearly not the sole explanation. The remaining 70.5% indicates the complexity of students' learning attitudes and cautions against reductionist explanations. This result can be interpreted positively. It demonstrates that students' perceptions are sufficiently important to warrant deliberate educational attention, while simultaneously recognizing that learning attitudes are multidimensional. Teachers should therefore avoid assuming that improving perceptions automatically resolves all learning problems. Positive perceptions need to be supported by appropriate pedagogy, supportive relationships, relevant learning materials, meaningful assessment, and an environment that allows students to participate actively. The residual analysis also illustrates this variation. Several respondents had relatively large residuals, indicating that their observed learning-attitude scores differed substantially from the scores predicted by perception. For example, R26 had a perception score of 18 and an observed learning-attitude score of 28, whereas the predicted score was 18.79, producing a residual of 9.21. In contrast, R29 had a perception score of 25 and an observed learning-attitude score of 13, compared with a predicted score of 21.85, producing a residual of -8.85. These cases demonstrate that students with similar or relatively high perceptions may nevertheless display substantially different learning attitudes. Educationally, such variation is important. It suggests that individual students may respond differently to the same perceived learning conditions. Factors beyond perception may intervene in the formation of learning attitudes. The present dataset does not permit identification of those factors, but the variation itself provides a rationale for future research incorporating motivation, teacher support, classroom climate, family context, cultural background, learning interest, and other relevant variables.

The principal contribution of this study lies in bringing together three dimensions: perception, learning attitude, and cultural context in CRE. The statistical findings establish a significant positive relationship between perception and learning attitude, while the cultural discussion provides a contextual interpretation of why relevance and lived experience matter in Christian education. The finding also supports a broader shift from purely transmissive religious education toward contextual and dialogical learning. In such a model, students are not treated simply as recipients of theological information. They are learners who interpret Christian teaching through their experiences, identities, relationships, and cultural environments. Contextual Christian education therefore requires teachers to maintain theological integrity while making learning accessible to students' real worlds. At the same time, the study demonstrates the importance of methodological discipline. Because culture was not independently measured, the present study cannot statistically establish that cultural integration increases learning attitudes. The contribution of culture is interpretive and conceptual. Future studies could strengthen this dimension by operationalizing cultural relevance as a measurable construct, examining whether culturally responsive teaching predicts students' perceptions and learning attitudes, or employing mixed methods to explore how students describe the role of culture in their CRE experiences.

Overall, the results demonstrate that students' perceptions are significantly and positively associated with their learning attitudes. The correlation of 0.5432, coefficient of determination of 29.5%, and statistically significant regression tests provide empirical support for the importance of perception within the studied CRE context. The findings become more educationally meaningful when interpreted through a cultural lens: CRE is most likely to become meaningful when students can connect Christian teachings with their lived experiences and cultural realities. Consequently, culturally responsive CRE should seek not merely to communicate Christian knowledge, but to create learning experiences in which faith, culture, identity, and everyday life can be critically and constructively connected.

Implications

The findings of this study have several important implications for the implementation of Christian Religious Education (CRE). The positive and statistically significant relationship between students' perceptions and learning attitudes indicates that teachers need to give greater attention to how students perceive, experience, and interpret the learning process, rather than focusing solely on the delivery of religious content. Learning experiences that are meaningful, relevant, participatory, and connected to students' everyday realities can contribute to the development of more positive learning attitudes. Therefore, CRE teachers are encouraged to create learning environments that foster students' active involvement, appreciation, responsibility, and openness toward learning. Furthermore, the cultural context should become an important consideration in designing CRE learning experiences. Although culture was not examined as an independent variable in this study, students' perceptions are formed within particular social and cultural environments. Consequently, the integration of local cultural values, traditions, and lived experiences can strengthen the relevance of CRE when these elements are critically examined in dialogue with Christian teachings. Such an approach positions culture not merely as supplementary learning material but as a contextual

space through which students can reflect on faith, character, responsibility, and relationships with others. In this regard, the findings imply that effective CRE should integrate theological content, students' perceptions, learning experiences, and cultural contexts to support not only cognitive development but also the formation of positive learning attitudes and Christian character.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between students' perceptions and learning attitudes in the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE), while interpreting the findings within a broader cultural context. Based on the analysis of 32 respondents, students' perceptions demonstrated a positive and statistically significant relationship with their learning attitudes. The correlation coefficient of $r = 0.5432$ indicates a moderate positive relationship, while the regression coefficient of 0.437 demonstrates a positive direction of the relationship. The regression model was expressed as $Y = 10.918 + 0.437X$. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.2950$) indicates that students' perceptions statistically accounted for 29.5% of the variance in learning attitudes. The significance tests further confirmed the statistical relevance of the model, with $t = 3.5432$ exceeding the critical value of 2.0423 and a significance value of 0.00132. The overall regression test also produced $F = 12.5540$, which exceeded the critical value of 4.1709. These findings demonstrate that perception is an important dimension associated with students' learning attitudes in the studied CRE setting. From an educational perspective, the findings indicate that teachers need to pay attention not only to the content delivered in CRE but also to how students perceive and experience the learning process. Learning that is perceived as meaningful, relevant, and connected to students' realities may provide a stronger foundation for positive learning attitudes. This is particularly significant for CRE because its educational purpose extends beyond the transmission of religious knowledge toward the formation of character, faith, responsibility, and attitudes toward others. The cultural dimension strengthens this interpretation. Although culture was not measured as an independent variable in the present statistical model, it provides an important contextual framework for understanding students' perceptions. Christian Religious Education takes place within particular communities and cultural environments; therefore, teachers should consider students' lived experiences, local values, traditions, and social realities when developing learning experiences. Cultural integration should be approached critically, allowing students to examine cultural values in dialogue with Christian teachings rather than treating culture merely as supplementary teaching material.

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