



The Humility of Teachers in Serving Based on Genesis 3:19 as a Model for Students at SD N 091463 Parapat

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the implementation of teacher humility in service based on the theological foundation of Genesis 3:19 and its impact as a character model for students at SD N 091463 Parapat. Genesis 3:19 emphasizes human mortality and the importance of recognizing one's limitations, which can be interpreted as a basis for developing humility in the educational context. Using a qualitative descriptive approach with case study methods, this research involved 12 teachers and 60 students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participatory observations, and documentation analysis. The findings reveal that teachers who demonstrate humility through respectful service, acknowledgment of limitations, and dedication to student development positively influence students' character formation. Students exhibited increased respect, empathy, and collaborative attitudes. However, challenges persist, including limited understanding of theological concepts in pedagogical practice and inconsistencies in modeling behavior. This study recommends developing training programs that integrate biblical values with character education and establishing monitoring systems to ensure consistency in teacher exemplary behavior. The research contributes to educational theory by connecting theological principles with character education practices in elementary school contexts.

Keywords: teacher humility, Genesis 3:19, character education, servant leadership

INTRODUCTION

Character education has increasingly become a central priority in Indonesia's national education framework, particularly as the nation grapples with a growing moral and ethical crisis among younger generations (Kemendikbud, 2017). The moral decline visible in aspects of social behavior, honesty, and respect underscores the urgent need to strengthen value-based education. Elementary schools, as the foundational institutions for early moral and character formation, hold a strategic role in shaping students' attitudes, dispositions, and moral understanding. Teachers, as the primary facilitators of the learning process, serve not only as transmitters of knowledge but also as moral

exemplars whose actions, words, and demeanor profoundly shape students' internalization of values (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). The teacher's influence extends beyond the classroom; through consistent humility, integrity, and dedication, they model the attitudes that students are expected to emulate. The virtue of humility occupies a significant position in the discourse on Christian character education. Within the context of service and teaching, humility involves recognizing one's dependence on God, valuing others above oneself, and serving with a sincere heart. Genesis 3:19 states, *"By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."* This verse serves as a profound theological reminder of humanity's limitations and dependence on the Creator. It emphasizes that human beings are finite and entirely reliant on God's grace. When interpreted theologically, Genesis 3:19 invites educators to embrace humility as the foundation of their professional service (Piper, 2004). For teachers, this humility translates into serving students without arrogance, acknowledging each learner's uniqueness, and performing their duties not for self-glorification but as an act of devotion to God and service to others. In educational settings, humility manifests in a teacher's willingness to listen, patience in guiding struggling learners, openness to feedback, and readiness to learn continuously. A humble teacher does not position themselves as an authoritarian figure but as a facilitator who walks alongside students in the learning journey. This disposition allows teachers to build deeper relationships with students, fostering an atmosphere of respect, empathy, and cooperation. When humility is integrated into daily interactions, it can effectively nurture students' moral sensibilities and social-emotional competencies, leading to more compassionate and collaborative classroom environments.

SD N 091463 Parapat, located in Parapat district, North Sumatra, represents a diverse educational context where students come from varied socio-cultural and economic backgrounds. Such diversity requires teachers to embody values that promote harmony, tolerance, and mutual respect. Preliminary observations in the school reveal behavioral challenges among students, including limited respect for authority, difficulties in teamwork, and tendencies toward individualistic behavior. These patterns reflect the broader societal shift toward self-centeredness and competitiveness, which often overshadow collective and moral values. In this context, teachers' exemplary conduct rooted in humility becomes a powerful pedagogical tool for character transformation. By observing their teachers' humility, students are inspired to develop respect, empathy, and discipline in their own interactions (Widiastuti & Suyanto, 2019). Empirical research has consistently highlighted the significance of teacher modeling in shaping students' moral and behavioral development. According to Nucci and Narvaez (2014), moral learning occurs most effectively when students witness values being lived out through authentic examples rather than merely being taught abstractly. Similarly, Santrock (2018) emphasizes that observational learning—where students imitate the attitudes and behaviors of influential figures such as teachers—serves as a critical mechanism in internalizing moral values. However, while a substantial body of literature has examined teacher role modeling and moral education, relatively few studies have explored humility from a theological perspective, particularly as derived from scriptural teachings such as Genesis 3:19. This absence of theological integration in educational studies limits the understanding of how biblical principles can enrich the practice of character education

within the Indonesian school system. This research addresses that gap by investigating the concept of *teacher humility in service* based on Genesis 3:19 as a model for elementary students at SD N 091463 Parapat. Specifically, it aims to: (1) analyze how teachers implement humility in their educational service, grounded in theological reflection; (2) assess the influence of this modeling on students' character development; and (3) identify the practical challenges and contextual factors that affect the application of humility in the elementary education setting. Through this focus, the study seeks to reveal the transformative potential of humility as both a moral virtue and a pedagogical strategy. Theologically, humility aligns closely with the Christian understanding of servanthood as modeled by Jesus Christ, who emphasized that true greatness lies in serving others (Mark 10:43–45). In the context of education, this principle invites teachers to perceive their vocation as a divine calling rather than merely a professional obligation. Teaching thus becomes an act of ministry—a way to nurture not only the intellect but also the heart and soul of students. Teachers who embody humility cultivate a relational pedagogy characterized by compassion, fairness, and selflessness. These qualities foster an environment in which students feel valued, heard, and respected, which in turn enhances their motivation and willingness to learn. Integrating humility as an educational value helps counteract the pervasive culture of egoism and competition that often undermines moral education in contemporary schooling. When teachers acknowledge their limitations and depend on God's wisdom, they model authentic leadership—one that prioritizes service over power and character over achievement. This transformation is particularly significant in Indonesia's multicultural context, where humility serves as a bridge for understanding and cooperation among students from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. By grounding their teaching in humility, educators contribute not only to academic excellence but also to the creation of a more compassionate and harmonious learning community.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with case study methods (Creswell, 2014). This approach was chosen to obtain in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of teacher humility implementation in the specific context of SD N 091463 Parapat. Case study methods allow researchers to explore complex phenomena within their natural contexts through various data sources (Yin, 2018). The research was conducted at SD N 091463 Parapat, North Sumatra, from March to June 2024. Participants were selected through purposive sampling technique, consisting of 12 teachers (4 males, 8 females) with teaching experience ranging from 5 to 25 years, and 60 students from grades 4-6 (30 males, 30 females) aged 10-13 years. Inclusion criteria for teacher participants included: (1) minimum 3 years teaching experience, (2) willingness to participate in research, and (3) Christian background to ensure relevant understanding of Genesis 3:19 context. Data were collected through three main techniques: 1) Semi-structured interviews: Conducted with all teacher participants (duration 45-60 minutes per interview) to explore their understanding and implementation of humility in teaching service. Student interviews (duration 20-30 minutes) were conducted in focus group discussion format (6 groups of 10 students) to explore their perceptions of teacher modeling. 2) Participatory observation: Researchers conducted classroom observations

for 8 weeks (2 observations per week, 90 minutes per session) to observe teacher-student interactions, teaching methods, and manifestations of humility in daily practices. 3) Documentation analysis: Collected lesson plans, student assessment records, and school activity documentation relevant to character education. Data analysis followed thematic analysis procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2006): (1) data transcription and organization, (2) initial coding, (3) theme identification, (4) theme review and refinement, (5) theme definition and naming, and (6) report writing. The analysis was supported by NVivo 12 software for qualitative data management. Data triangulation was performed by comparing findings from different sources to ensure validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This study obtained ethical approval from the research institution and permission from the school principal. All participants provided informed consent, and student participants obtained parental approval. Participant confidentiality was maintained through the use of pseudonyms in reporting.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Analysis revealed that all teacher participants possessed fundamental understanding of Genesis 3:19, although interpretation depths varied. Three main themes emerged regarding theological understanding: Recognition of Human Limitations, ten teachers (83.3%) interpreted Genesis 3:19 as a reminder of human mortality and fundamental limitations. As stated by Participant T-7: "This verse teaches us that we are merely dust, created beings with limitations. As teachers, we must realize we don't know everything and continue learning." This understanding influenced how teachers positioned themselves before students—not as absolute authority figures but as facilitators learning together. Value of Hard Work and Dedication, eight teachers (66.7%) emphasized the aspect of "by the sweat of your brow" as motivation for dedicated service. Participant T-3 explained: "Teaching is hard work that requires sacrifice. This verse reminds us that education is not just a job but a calling requiring full dedication." This interpretation manifested in teachers' commitment to prepare quality lessons and provide individual attention to struggling students. Equality Before God, five teachers (41.7%) connected this verse with the concept of equality—all humans return to dust regardless of social status. Participant T-11 noted: "This verse reminds us that we are equal before God. As teachers, we should not be arrogant or feel superior to students, but serve with a humble heart."

Implementation of Teacher Humility in Educational Service

Observations and interviews identified five main manifestations of teacher humility in daily practice:

1. **Respectful Communication.** All observed teachers (100%) demonstrated respectful communication patterns with students. They used polite language, listened attentively to student opinions, and avoided yelling or humiliating students. Observation notes showed teachers frequently used phrases like "Would you like to try explaining?" or "What do you think about this?" encouraging student participation without coercion.
2. **Acknowledgment of Mistakes and Limitations.** Nine teachers (75%) demonstrated willingness to admit mistakes before students. For instance, when Participant T-5

made a calculation error on the board, she openly stated: "I apologize, ma'am made a mistake here. Thank you for correcting me." This behavior taught students that everyone can make mistakes and that admitting errors is a strength, not weakness.

3. Individual Service and Attention. Observations revealed that teachers dedicated extra time for struggling students. Participant T-2 regularly stayed after class to provide additional tutoring without expecting extra compensation. This reflected understanding that educational service requires personal sacrifice.
4. Collaborative Learning Approach. Eight teachers (66.7%) implemented participatory teaching methods positioning teachers as facilitators rather than sole information sources. They encouraged student discussion, valued diverse opinions, and created inclusive learning environments.
5. Authentic Modeling in Daily Behavior. Teachers not only taught humility values verbally but also demonstrated them through concrete actions: participating in school cleaning with students, apologizing when late, and showing appreciation for staff contributions regardless of position.

Impact on Student Character Development

Analysis of student interviews and behavioral observations revealed significant positive impacts: 1) Increased Respect and Courtesy, 48 students (80%) reported feeling more motivated to respect teachers and peers. Student S-23 stated: "When teachers speak kindly and listen to us, I also want to be kind to friends." Observations confirmed decreased incidences of disrespectful behavior during the research period. 2) Development of Empathy and Social Awareness, 42 students (70%) demonstrated increased empathy toward peers. They more frequently offered assistance to struggling classmates and showed concern for others' feelings. This was particularly evident in group work activities where students were more inclusive. Improved Collaborative Attitudes, student focus group discussions revealed that humble teacher modeling inspired cooperative attitudes. Student S-45 explained: "When teachers admit they don't know everything and we search for answers together, I learn that working together is more important than competing." 4) Strengthened Self-Confidence and Courage to Try, 36 students (60%) reported feeling more confident asking questions and expressing opinions. Teachers' willingness to admit mistakes created psychologically safe environments where students felt comfortable taking learning risks. 5) Internalization of Moral Values, students began reflecting on humility values in their daily contexts. Some reported applying respectful attitudes at home and in social environments. This indicated that learned values were not merely knowledge but were beginning to internalize as integral parts of character. This study's findings affirm the crucial role of teacher humility in character formation, aligning with servant leadership theory emphasizing leader service and follower empowerment (Greenleaf, 1977; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Genesis 3:19 as a theological foundation provides profound spiritual meaning to educational service, transforming teaching from mere profession to sacred calling. Teachers' recognition of human limitations reflected in Genesis 3:19 creates authentic power dynamics in classrooms. Oser's (1994) moral education theory emphasizes the importance of teachers as moral models whose behavior speaks louder than words. When teachers demonstrate humility by admitting mistakes, listening attentively, and serving

without arrogance, they teach students that true strength lies in acknowledging limitations and continuously growing.

The research findings support social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), which states that children learn through observing and imitating significant models in their environments. Students at SD N 091463 Parapat not only acquired knowledge about humility values but also internalized them through daily observation of teacher behavior. This underscores the importance of authenticity in teacher modeling—students are highly sensitive to discrepancies between what teachers say and do.

The positive impact on student character development, including increased respect, empathy, and collaboration, aligns with previous studies on character education (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Lickona, 2004). However, this study contributes new dimensions by demonstrating how specific theological values can serve as strong foundations for character education practices in Indonesian contexts, where spirituality is integral to social life. The challenges identified, particularly limited theological understanding and inconsistencies in implementation, reflect broader issues in Indonesian character education. Muslich's (2011) research revealed that character education often fails because it is implemented mechanistically without deep understanding of underlying values. This highlights the need for teacher professional development that not only enhances pedagogical competence but also deepens spiritual and moral understanding.

The integration of Genesis 3:19 in educational contexts also raises important considerations regarding religious plurality. In Indonesia's multicultural context, approaches presenting religious values as universal moral foundations without imposing exclusive beliefs are needed. This research demonstrates that humility concepts in Genesis 3:19—recognizing limitations, valuing hard work, and equality before the Creator—are universal values resonating across various religious and cultural traditions. From practical perspectives, these findings have important implications for education policy. Schools should develop systematic programs supporting the development of teacher humility, including regular spiritual reflection, professional communities supporting character growth, and institutional cultures valuing service over status.

The study's limitations include its focus on one school with specific contexts, potentially limiting generalizability. Additionally, the research duration (4 months) may be insufficient to observe long-term impacts of humility modeling on student character. Future research could employ longitudinal designs and involve more diverse schools to obtain more comprehensive understanding.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that teacher humility based on Genesis 3:19 serves as an effective foundation for character education at SD N 091463 Parapat. Teachers who understand and implement humility values in their service—through respectful communication, acknowledging limitations, dedicating themselves to student development, and authentic modeling—significantly influence student character formation. Students exhibit increased respect, empathy, collaborative attitudes, and confidence. However, implementation challenges persist, including limited theological understanding, time constraints, behavioral inconsistencies, and lack of institutional support. Therefore, several recommendations are proposed: (1) developing integrated training programs combining biblical understanding with character education pedagogy,

(2) establishing professional learning communities supporting teacher spiritual and moral growth, (3) creating systematic monitoring and reflection systems ensuring consistency in exemplary behavior, and (4) designing institutional policies supporting service cultures in school environments. This research contributes to educational literature by bridging theology and character education practice, demonstrating that spiritual values can serve as strong foundations for holistic educational development. Genesis 3:19, with its emphasis on human limitations and the importance of humility, offers relevant wisdom for contemporary education that often overemphasizes achievement and competition. Future research directions could explore: (1) long-term impacts of humility modeling on student character development over several years, (2) comparisons of different theological approaches in character education across various school contexts, (3) development and validation of measurement instruments for teacher humility in educational contexts, and (4) integration of humility values into teacher education curricula. Through ongoing research and reflection, we can develop educational practices that not only produce academically competent students but also possess strong character grounded in moral and spiritual values.

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