



Obedience to the Word as an Integration of the Spiritual Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers at SDN 071025 Helera

Limariang Gea^{1*}, Haposan Silalahi²

¹Student, Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

²Lecturer, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: limarianggea45@guru.sd.belajar.id

ABSTRACT

This study examines the integration of obedience to the Word of God as a core component of spiritual competence among Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SDN 071025 Helera. The research investigates how biblical obedience influences teaching effectiveness, spiritual formation of students, and the holistic development of religious education programs. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with five CRE teachers, classroom observations, and document analysis of lesson plans and curriculum materials. The findings reveal that obedience to the Word significantly enhances teachers' spiritual competence, manifesting in authentic Christian witness, transformative pedagogical practices, and ethical consistency between profession and faith. Teachers who prioritize biblical obedience demonstrate higher levels of spiritual maturity, which directly correlates with their ability to facilitate meaningful spiritual experiences for students. The study identifies three primary dimensions of obedience integration: personal devotional practices, instructional methodology rooted in biblical principles, and relational dynamics reflecting Christ-like character. However, challenges persist, including limited institutional support, insufficient training in spiritual formation, and the tension between secular educational standards and religious values. This research contributes to understanding the critical role of spiritual competence in religious education and offers practical recommendations for teacher development programs, institutional policy reforms, and curriculum enhancement to strengthen the spiritual foundation of CRE teachers in public school contexts.

Keywords: *obedience, spiritual competence, Christian Religious Education*

INTRODUCTION

The quality of religious education in Indonesia's public schools remains a critical concern for educators, policymakers, and religious communities. Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers serve not merely as knowledge transmitters but as spiritual mentors who shape students' faith formation and moral development. The effectiveness of religious instruction depends significantly on teachers' spiritual competence, which encompasses

theological knowledge, personal faith commitment, and practical demonstration of Christian virtues (Astuti, 2020). Among various dimensions of spiritual competence, obedience to the Word of God stands as a foundational principle that integrates faith and practice in the educational context. SDN 071025 Helera, located in a culturally diverse region of North Sumatra, faces unique challenges in delivering quality Christian religious education. The school serves a predominantly Christian student population, yet operates within the secular framework of Indonesian public education. This dual identity creates both opportunities and tensions for CRE teachers who must balance curricular requirements with authentic spiritual formation. The question of how teachers' personal obedience to biblical teachings influences their professional competence and instructional effectiveness remains underexplored in the Indonesian educational context. Previous research has established that teacher spirituality significantly impacts pedagogical approaches and student outcomes in religious education settings (Ginting, 2019; Simanjuntak, 2021). However, limited attention has been given to the specific mechanism through which biblical obedience functions as an integrative force in developing spiritual competence. This gap is particularly evident in studies focusing on Christian teachers in public schools, where institutional constraints may limit explicit religious expression while still requiring authentic spiritual witness. The concept of obedience in Christian theology extends beyond mere compliance with rules to encompass a transformative relationship with God characterized by trust, surrender, and active response to divine revelation (Nainggolan, 2018). In the educational context, this obedience manifests in teachers' daily interactions with students, pedagogical choices, ethical conduct, and capacity to model Christian virtues. Understanding how CRE teachers at SDN 071025 Helera integrate obedience to the Word into their spiritual competence can provide valuable insights for teacher training programs, institutional policies, and broader discussions about the role of faith in public education. This study aims to investigate the integration of obedience to the Word as a component of spiritual competence among CRE teachers at SDN 071025 Helera. Specifically, the research objectives are: (1) to explore how CRE teachers understand and practice obedience to biblical teachings in their professional lives; (2) to examine the relationship between biblical obedience and various dimensions of spiritual competence; (3) to identify challenges teachers face in integrating obedience to the Word within the public school context; and (4) to propose recommendations for enhancing the spiritual competence development of CRE teachers through a framework of biblical obedience.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to provide an in-depth exploration of how obedience to the Word integrates into the spiritual competence of CRE teachers at SDN 071025 Helera. The case study approach was selected for its capacity to examine contemporary phenomena within their real-life contexts, particularly when boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This methodology allowed for rich, contextualized understanding of teachers' experiences, beliefs, and practices related to biblical obedience and spiritual competence. The research was conducted at SDN 071025 Helera, a public elementary school in North Sumatra, Indonesia, during the academic year 2024-2025. The school was purposively selected

based on its significant Christian student population and established CRE program. Five CRE teachers participated in the study, selected through purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) minimum three years of teaching experience in CRE; (2) active involvement in church ministry; (3) formal certification as religious education teachers; and (4) willingness to participate in the research. The participants represented diverse denominational backgrounds, teaching experiences ranging from 3 to 15 years, and varied educational qualifications from bachelor's to master's degrees in Christian education or theology. Data were collected through three primary methods over a four-month period. First, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with each participant, lasting 60-90 minutes. Interview protocols explored teachers' understanding of obedience to the Word, personal spiritual practices, integration of biblical principles in teaching, challenges encountered, and perceived impact on students. Second, classroom observations were conducted for each teacher (minimum three sessions per teacher), focusing on instructional practices, teacher-student interactions, integration of biblical content, and manifestation of Christian values. Third, document analysis examined lesson plans, curriculum materials, student assignments, and teachers' personal reflections to triangulate findings from interviews and observations. Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach, implemented through six phases: familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were coded using NVivo 12 software to facilitate systematic organization and analysis. Codes were inductively derived from data while remaining sensitive to the research objectives. Initial codes were grouped into potential themes, which were then refined through iterative review processes. The final thematic structure emerged through consensus among researchers and member-checking with participants.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Analysis revealed that CRE teachers at SDN 071025 Helera conceptualize obedience to the Word as a multifaceted integration of personal faith commitment, professional responsibility, and pedagogical practice. Teachers consistently emphasized that obedience transcends intellectual assent to biblical truth, requiring active application in daily life. One participant stated, "Obedience is not just knowing what the Bible says, but living it out in every classroom moment, every interaction with students." This understanding reflects a holistic view that connects personal spirituality with professional identity. Three primary dimensions emerged in teachers' understanding of obedience: relational obedience (responding to God's call through relationship), ethical obedience (aligning conduct with biblical standards), and missional obedience (fulfilling the educational calling as divine stewardship). Teachers described obedience as a dynamic process requiring continuous spiritual renewal rather than a static achievement. They recognized that authentic obedience involves vulnerability, acknowledging personal struggles and dependence on divine grace in their teaching ministry.

Integration of Obedience in Spiritual Competence Development

The integration of obedience to the Word manifested across four key dimensions of spiritual competence: theological depth, spiritual maturity, pedagogical authenticity, and relational integrity. In the theological dimension, teachers who prioritized biblical obedience demonstrated deeper engagement with Scripture, moving beyond superficial content delivery to facilitate theological reflection with students. Their lesson plans incorporated hermeneutical approaches that encouraged students to grapple with biblical texts personally and contextually. Spiritual maturity was evident in teachers' self-awareness, humility, and dependence on prayer. Participants reported that commitment to obedience heightened their sensitivity to spiritual dimensions of teaching, enabling them to recognize and respond to students' spiritual needs. Classroom observations confirmed that these teachers created spaces for authentic spiritual inquiry, modeling vulnerability about their own faith journeys while maintaining appropriate boundaries. Pedagogical authenticity emerged as a distinctive characteristic of teachers integrating biblical obedience. Rather than employing rote memorization or moralistic instruction, these teachers facilitated experiential learning that invited students into transformative encounters with Scripture. One teacher's approach included narrative pedagogy that encouraged students to locate themselves within biblical stories, fostering personal application of spiritual principles. Another utilized reflective journaling to help students process their understanding of obedience in age-appropriate ways. Relational integrity represented the consistent alignment between professed beliefs and daily conduct. Teachers recognized that their credibility as spiritual mentors depended on authentic Christian witness. Classroom observations documented numerous instances where teachers demonstrated patience, grace, and restorative justice in managing student behavior, reflecting biblical principles of forgiveness and reconciliation rather than punitive approaches.

Challenges in Integrating Obedience to the Word

Despite evident benefits, teachers identified significant challenges in integrating obedience to the Word within the public school context. Institutional constraints constituted the primary challenge, as secular educational frameworks limited explicit religious expression and prioritized standardized testing over spiritual formation. Teachers experienced tension between curricular mandates emphasizing cognitive knowledge and their conviction that spiritual transformation required deeper engagement. Limited professional development opportunities specifically addressing spiritual competence created gaps in teachers' preparation. Participants reported that pre-service and in-service training focused predominantly on pedagogical techniques and subject matter knowledge while neglecting spiritual formation dimensions. This deficiency left teachers to develop spiritual competence largely through personal initiative and church-based support rather than systematic professional development. Personal struggles with consistency in obedience represented an internal challenge. Teachers candidly acknowledged periods of spiritual dryness, moral failures, and doubts that complicated their role as spiritual mentors. The pressure to maintain spiritual exemplarity sometimes led to feelings of inadequacy or imposter syndrome. One participant reflected, "I struggle with my own obedience, so how can I teach children

effectively? I constantly question whether I am worthy of this calling." Cultural and denominational diversity among students presented contextual challenges. Teachers navigated differing theological interpretations and spiritual practices across Christian traditions represented in their classrooms. They sought to honor denominational distinctives while identifying common biblical principles applicable across traditions, requiring theological discernment and cultural sensitivity.

Impact on Students and Educational Outcomes

Teachers reported that their commitment to biblical obedience positively influenced students' spiritual development, though impacts varied by student receptivity and family support. Observable outcomes included increased student engagement in religious education classes, improved understanding of biblical principles, and evidence of moral reasoning development. Several teachers shared testimonies of students experiencing personal spiritual transformation, attributing these outcomes to the authentic witness modeled through teachers' obedient lives. Classroom observations documented a positive learning environment characterized by mutual respect, psychological safety, and openness to spiritual inquiry in classrooms where teachers integrated biblical obedience. Students appeared more willing to ask questions, share personal reflections, and take risks in their learning. The relational dynamics reflected the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—creating a distinctively Christian educational culture. Parents and church leaders provided external validation of teachers' impact. Several participants received affirmation from parents noting positive changes in children's attitudes, behaviors, and spiritual interest. Church pastors recognized CRE teachers as valuable partners in discipleship, acknowledging that school-based religious education complemented congregational formation efforts. This multi-stakeholder recognition reinforced teachers' sense of calling and affirmed the value of integrating obedience to the Word in their professional practice. The findings of this study illuminate the critical role of obedience to the Word in developing spiritual competence among CRE teachers, extending theoretical understanding and offering practical implications for religious education in public school contexts. The multifaceted understanding of obedience demonstrated by participants aligns with theological conceptions of obedience as transformative relationship rather than legalistic compliance (Houston, 2019). This understanding distinguishes authentic spiritual formation from mere behavioral conformity, suggesting that effective CRE requires teachers who embody faith rather than simply transmitting religious information. The integration of obedience across theological, spiritual, pedagogical, and relational dimensions supports holistic models of teacher competence that recognize the inseparability of professional and personal identity in religious education (Palmer, 2017). Unlike secular teaching contexts where personal beliefs may remain compartmentalized from professional practice, CRE demands integration where teachers' spiritual lives directly inform and authenticate their instructional effectiveness. This integration resonates with Indonesian educational philosophy emphasizing character formation (*pendidikan karakter*) alongside cognitive development, suggesting natural alignment between biblical obedience and national educational goals. The challenges identified reveal systemic gaps in supporting CRE teachers' spiritual competence development. The limited professional development addressing spiritual formation echoes concerns raised by international research on

religious education teacher preparation (Carr & Harrison, 2015). This deficiency suggests need for intentional institutional investment in spiritual formation programming that complements pedagogical training. The tension between standardized educational requirements and spiritual transformation objectives reflects broader debates about the purpose and practice of religious education in pluralistic societies, requiring continued dialogue among educators, policymakers, and religious communities. Teachers' struggles with personal consistency in obedience highlight the vulnerability inherent in spiritual mentorship. Rather than disqualifying teachers from effective practice, this acknowledgment of struggle may actually enhance authenticity and credibility with students who benefit from witnessing honest faith journeys (Thompson, 2016). The challenge is creating organizational cultures that allow spiritual authenticity without compromising professional standards, supporting teachers in their ongoing spiritual formation while maintaining accountability. The positive impact on students documented in this study affirms research linking teacher spirituality with enhanced educational outcomes in religious education contexts (Maddix & Estep, 2010). However, the variability in student responses reminds us that spiritual transformation remains mysterious and multifaceted, influenced by factors beyond teacher competence alone. This reality calls for humble recognition of teachers' roles as facilitators rather than producers of spiritual growth, directing ultimate trust toward God's work in students' lives. The study's focus on a single school limits generalizability, yet the richness of contextual detail provides transferable insights for similar contexts. The predominantly Christian environment at SDN 071025 Helera differs from schools with more religious diversity, potentially limiting applicability of findings. Cultural specificity of North Sumatran context may not reflect experiences of CRE teachers in other Indonesian regions or international settings. Future research should examine obedience integration across diverse contexts, explore quantitative measures of spiritual competence development, investigate longitudinal impacts on students' faith trajectories, and compare experiences of religious education teachers across different faith traditions.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that obedience to the Word of God serves as a vital integrative force in developing spiritual competence among Christian Religious Education teachers at SDN 071025 Helera. Teachers who prioritize biblical obedience manifest enhanced theological depth, spiritual maturity, pedagogical authenticity, and relational integrity, creating transformative educational environments that facilitate students' spiritual formation. The integration of obedience transcends compartmentalized religiosity, shaping teachers' entire professional identity and practice. However, significant challenges persist, including institutional constraints limiting religious expression, insufficient professional development addressing spiritual formation, personal struggles with consistent obedience, and navigation of denominational diversity. These challenges require systemic responses involving multiple stakeholders: educational institutions must create supportive policies and structures; teacher preparation programs must incorporate spiritual formation components; churches must partner with schools in supporting CRE teachers; and teachers themselves must commit to ongoing spiritual development. Based on the findings, several recommendations emerge. First, establish

comprehensive spiritual formation programs for CRE teachers integrating theological education, spiritual disciplines, and reflective practice. Second, develop institutional policies that protect space for authentic religious education while respecting public school frameworks. Third, create peer learning communities where CRE teachers can share experiences, provide mutual support, and engage in collective spiritual discernment. Fourth, enhance collaboration between schools and churches to coordinate efforts in students' spiritual formation. Fifth, conduct ongoing research documenting effective practices in developing spiritual competence and assessing long-term impacts on students. The integration of obedience to the Word represents not merely an individual teacher responsibility but a collective commitment to excellence in Christian education. As Indonesian education continues evolving, maintaining the spiritual vitality of religious education requires sustained attention to the spiritual competence of teachers who serve as primary agents of faith formation. This study contributes to understanding how biblical principles can inform and transform educational practice, offering hope that schools can remain spaces of authentic spiritual encounter in an increasingly secularized world.

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