



The Spiritual Example of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Upholding Obedience like Noah (Genesis 6:9) for Students at SDN 078564 Orahuahili

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ABSTRACT

This research examines how Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SDN 078564 Orahuahili demonstrate spiritual exemplarity through obedience modeled after Noah in Genesis 6:9. The study explores the implementation of biblical obedience principles in character education and moral development among elementary students. Using a qualitative descriptive approach with phenomenological design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with five CRE teachers, classroom observations, and document analysis of lesson plans and school policies. The findings reveal three major themes: (1) teachers manifest Noah-like obedience through consistent faithfulness in teaching duties despite challenges, (2) pedagogical strategies integrate biblical narratives with practical character-building activities, and (3) students demonstrate improved moral behavior and spiritual awareness through modeling. The study concludes that CRE teachers' spiritual exemplarity significantly influences student character formation, with obedience serving as a foundational virtue. Challenges include limited institutional support and diverse religious backgrounds among students. Recommendations include enhanced teacher spiritual formation programs, integration of character education across curricula, and stronger collaboration between school and Christian communities.

Keywords: *Christian Religious Education, spiritual exemplarity, obedience, Noah*

INTRODUCTION

Character education remains a critical concern in Indonesian elementary education, particularly in developing moral foundations and spiritual values among young learners. The 2013 Curriculum emphasizes character building as an integral component of education, requiring teachers to serve not merely as knowledge transmitters but as moral exemplars (Kemendikbud, 2017). Within this framework, Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers occupy a unique position, bridging theological instruction with practical character formation. The biblical narrative of Noah in Genesis 6:9 presents a compelling model of obedience: "Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time,

and he walked faithfully with God." This passage highlights three dimensions of exemplary character—righteousness, integrity, and faithful obedience—that resonate with contemporary educational goals. Noah's unwavering obedience to God's commands, despite societal opposition and seemingly impossible circumstances, offers a powerful paradigm for moral education in pluralistic contexts. SDN 078564 Orahuhili, located in a predominantly Christian area of North Sumatra, presents an interesting case study for examining how CRE teachers translate biblical principles into educational practice. The school serves approximately 250 students, with 60% identifying as Christian, creating both opportunities and challenges for religious education. Preliminary observations indicate that CRE teachers at this institution actively incorporate biblical narratives into character education, with Noah's story featuring prominently in moral instruction. Limited empirical research examines how CRE teachers specifically model biblical obedience in Indonesian elementary schools. Previous studies have explored general character education implementation (Lickona, 2018; Santrock, 2019) and the role of teachers as moral exemplars (Berkowitz & Bier, 2017), but few investigate the intersection of biblical narrative, teacher spirituality, and student character formation in Indonesian contexts. This research addresses three primary questions: (1) How do CRE teachers at SDN 078564 Orahuhili demonstrate spiritual exemplarity through obedience modeled after Noah? (2) What pedagogical strategies do teachers employ to transmit obedience values to students? (3) How does teacher spiritual exemplarity influence student character development? Understanding these dynamics can inform both theological education and pedagogical practice in Indonesian Christian schools. The significance of this study extends beyond the immediate context. First, it contributes to discourse on faith integration in public education within Indonesia's diverse religious landscape. Second, it provides empirical evidence of how biblical narratives function as moral education tools. Third, it offers practical insights for CRE teacher formation and professional development. Finally, it enriches theoretical understanding of moral exemplarity in education through the lens of biblical theology.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of CRE teachers in modeling obedience. Phenomenology was selected because it enables deep investigation of how individuals experience and make meaning of specific phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018), in this case, embodying and teaching biblical obedience in educational contexts. The research was conducted at SDN 078564 Orahuhili, Gunungsitoli, North Sumatra, from August to October 2024. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on specific criteria: (1) certified CRE teachers, (2) minimum three years teaching experience, (3) active church membership, and (4) willingness to participate. Five CRE teachers (three females, two males) with teaching experience ranging from 5 to 18 years participated in the study. All participants held bachelor's degrees in Theology or Christian Education, with two possessing master's degrees. Data collection utilized three methods to ensure triangulation. First, semi-structured interviews lasting 60-90 minutes were conducted with each participant, focusing on their understanding of biblical obedience, personal spiritual practices, teaching philosophies, and pedagogical approaches. Interview

questions included: "How do you understand Noah's obedience in Genesis 6:9?" and "How do you model obedience in your daily teaching?" Second, non-participant classroom observations (15 sessions, 70 minutes each) documented teaching practices, teacher-student interactions, and character education integration. Third, document analysis examined lesson plans, school policies, and student assessment records related to character development. Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis procedure. Interview transcripts were coded inductively, with codes grouped into categories and refined into themes through iterative review. Observations and documents provided contextual understanding and triangulation. The analysis employed constant comparison to identify patterns and divergences across data sources. NVivo 12 software facilitated data organization and coding. Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board. Written informed consent was secured from all participants, with assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw without penalty. Pseudonyms are used throughout this report to protect privacy. Trustworthiness was established through several strategies. Credibility was ensured through prolonged engagement (three months), triangulation of data sources, and member checking with participants. Dependability was maintained through detailed audit trails of research procedures. Transferability was supported by thick descriptions enabling readers to assess applicability to other contexts. Confirmability was achieved through reflexive journaling and peer debriefing with two experienced qualitative researchers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

CRE teachers demonstrated obedience through three primary dimensions: faithfulness in duty, perseverance amid challenges, and integrity in conduct. Participant Ruth described her understanding: *"Noah obeyed God completely, not partially. As a teacher, this means I must be faithful in preparing lessons thoroughly, arriving punctually, and teaching with full dedication, even when tired."* Observations confirmed this commitment; all teachers arrived 15-30 minutes before class, used well-prepared materials, and maintained consistent teaching schedules. Teachers particularly emphasized obedience in the face of difficulties, mirroring Noah's persistence despite mockery. Participant Daniel shared: *"Sometimes students are disrespectful, or parents complain about grades. Like Noah who continued building despite ridicule, I must remain faithful to my calling."* Field notes documented instances where teachers maintained composure and professionalism when confronting challenging student behaviors or administrative pressures. Integrity emerged as a crucial component of obedience. Participant Grace noted: *"Noah was blameless among his people. This means my private life must align with my teaching. Students observe everything—if I teach honesty but act dishonestly, my lessons become meaningless."* Document analysis revealed that three teachers volunteered additional time for student remedial sessions without compensation, exemplifying selfless service.

Pedagogical Strategies for Teaching Obedience

Teachers employed multiple strategies to transmit obedience values. Narrative pedagogy formed the foundation, with Noah's story presented through storytelling, role-play, and multimedia presentations. Participant Martha explained: *"I tell Noah's story dramatically,*

emphasizing his choices at each step. Then students act out scenes, experiencing the difficulty of obeying when others mock." Observations showed students actively engaged during these narrative activities, asking questions and making connections to personal experiences. Modeling constituted the second major strategy. Teachers deliberately demonstrated obedience in classroom interactions. Participant Samuel stated: *"I model obedience to school rules, respect for authority, and keeping promises to students. When I say I'll check homework by Friday, I do it. Students learn obedience by watching, not just listening."* Field notes documented teachers consistently following stated procedures, honoring commitments to students, and demonstrating respect for school administration. Practical application activities formed the third strategy. Teachers assigned projects requiring obedience, such as completing household chores, following parental instructions, or maintaining personal devotions. Participant Ruth described: *"After teaching about Noah, students keep 'obedience journals' for two weeks, recording daily acts of obedience and reflecting on challenges."* Document analysis of student journals revealed meaningful reflections, with many students connecting biblical concepts to daily life. Discussion-based learning enabled critical thinking about obedience. Teachers facilitated dialogues exploring questions like "When is obedience difficult?" and "What helps us obey?" Observations showed teachers skillfully guiding discussions, validating student perspectives while steering conversations toward constructive conclusions. This approach helped students internalize obedience as a personal value rather than external imposition.

Impact on Student Character Development

Evidence suggested positive influence on student character, manifested in three areas: behavioral changes, moral reasoning development, and spiritual awareness. Participant interviews and classroom observations revealed improved student compliance with school rules, increased respectfulness toward teachers, and enhanced peer cooperation following CRE instruction on obedience. Participant Grace reported: *"After our unit on Noah, I noticed students more willing to accept difficult assignments without complaints. Several told me they remembered Noah's obedience when tempted to cheat or disobey parents."* Observations confirmed behavioral improvements, with documented decreases in disciplinary incidents among students enrolled in CRE classes over the semester. Student moral reasoning developed greater sophistication. When asked about obedience, younger students initially provided rule-based responses ("We should obey because it's the rule"), but after instruction, demonstrated principle-based thinking ("Obedience shows respect and builds trust"). Document analysis of student written reflections showed progression from concrete to abstract moral thinking. Enhanced spiritual awareness emerged as students connected obedience to relationship with God. Participant Daniel observed: "Students began understanding obedience not as burden but as response to God's love, like Noah who obeyed because he walked with God." Student artifacts (drawings, essays) frequently depicted themes of faithfulness, trust, and divine relationship, indicating internalization of spiritual dimensions of obedience. However, challenges existed. Teachers noted difficulties with students from non-Christian backgrounds who struggled to relate to biblical content. Participant Martha acknowledged: *"Some Muslim or non-religious students feel disconnected from Noah's*

story. I try emphasizing universal values of integrity and responsibility, but the spiritual dimension remains challenging for them."

The findings illuminate how CRE teachers translate biblical narrative into lived pedagogy, serving as moral exemplars who embody the values they teach. This aligns with Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which posits that individuals learn behaviors through observation and modeling. CRE teachers at SDN 078564 function as "significant others" whose consistent demonstration of obedience provides powerful learning experiences beyond explicit instruction. The threefold manifestation of obedience—faithfulness, perseverance, and integrity—reflects the multidimensional nature of moral character described by Lickona (2018). These dimensions correspond to moral knowing (understanding right conduct), moral feeling (emotional commitment to right conduct), and moral action (performing right conduct). Teachers who embody all three dimensions offer holistic moral education more effective than cognitive instruction alone. The pedagogical strategies identified—narrative pedagogy, modeling, practical application, and critical discussion—constitute a comprehensive approach to character education. Narrative pedagogy leverages what Bruner (1991) termed "narrative intelligence," the human capacity to construct meaning through stories. Biblical narratives like Noah's flood provide memorable, emotionally resonant frameworks for moral instruction that abstract principles cannot achieve. The dramatic structure—obedience tested, obedience vindicated—creates compelling moral exemplars. Modeling remains the most powerful pedagogical tool observed. This corroborates Berkowitz and Bier's (2017) meta-analysis demonstrating that teacher moral exemplarity significantly influences student character development. In Indonesian cultural contexts, where respect for teachers runs deep, teacher modeling carries particular weight. Students observe not merely what teachers say but how they live, making personal integrity indispensable for effective moral education. The integration of practical application addresses the persistent gap between moral knowledge and moral action. Kohlberg's (1984) research revealed that moral reasoning does not automatically translate into moral behavior. By assigning obedience projects requiring concrete actions, teachers bridge this gap, helping students develop what Aristotle termed "habitual virtue"—character formed through repeated practice rather than mere intellectual assent. The study's evidence of positive impact on student character aligns with research demonstrating the effectiveness of integrated character education programs (Berkowitz & Bier, 2017). Behavioral improvements, enhanced moral reasoning, and deepened spiritual awareness suggest that CRE, when taught by spiritually exemplary teachers, achieves educational goals extending beyond religious instruction to comprehensive character formation. However, the challenges with non-Christian students highlight tensions inherent in religious education within pluralistic contexts. Indonesia's Pancasila philosophy affirms religious pluralism while mandating religious education, creating complex pedagogical situations. CRE teachers must balance fidelity to Christian teachings with sensitivity toward religious diversity. Some teachers effectively emphasized universal moral values while maintaining biblical foundations, suggesting that particularist religious education and pluralist respect need not be mutually exclusive. Theological reflection reveals important insights. Noah's obedience in Genesis 6:9 was not mere rule-compliance but relational faithfulness—"walking with God." This relational dimension distinguishes biblical obedience from legalistic conformity. Effective CRE teachers understood this distinction, presenting obedience as response to divine love

rather than arbitrary authority. This approach cultivates intrinsic moral motivation, associated with more stable, resilient character development (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The study also reveals limitations in institutional support for CRE. Teachers expressed frustration with limited resources, insufficient professional development opportunities, and marginalization of religious education in school priorities. This reflects the challenges in Indonesian education, where character education, despite curricular emphasis, often receives inadequate implementation support (Kemendikbud, 2017). Enhanced institutional commitment—including better resources, teacher training, and administrative support—would strengthen CRE effectiveness. Comparative analysis with international contexts reveals both similarities and differences. Like Christian schools in Western contexts (Cooling, 2010), Indonesian CRE emphasizes faith integration and moral formation. However, Indonesia's public school setting, religious diversity, and cultural distinctives create unique challenges and opportunities. The communal orientation of Indonesian culture potentially enhances moral modeling's impact, as collectivist societies place greater emphasis on social exemplarity than individualist cultures.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that CRE teachers at SDN 078564 Orahuahili effectively embody and transmit biblical obedience modeled after Noah in Genesis 6:9. Through faithfulness in duty, perseverance amid challenges, and personal integrity, teachers manifest spiritual exemplarity that profoundly influences student character development. Their pedagogical approaches—narrative pedagogy, personal modeling, practical application, and critical dialogue—constitute comprehensive character education integrating cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. The study confirms that teacher spiritual exemplarity serves as the most powerful pedagogical tool in moral education. Students learn values not merely through instruction but through observing and emulating teachers who embody those values. In contexts where CRE teachers consistently demonstrate Noah-like obedience, students develop stronger moral character, enhanced spiritual awareness, and improved behavioral conduct. However, several challenges require attention. Limited institutional support constrains CRE effectiveness, necessitating enhanced resources, professional development, and administrative commitment. The religious diversity of student populations requires pedagogical sensitivity, balancing Christian distinctives with inclusive respect for religious difference. Teachers need training in culturally responsive pedagogy that honors both faith commitments and pluralistic contexts. Future research should explore several directions. Longitudinal studies tracking students over time would assess the lasting impact of CRE teacher exemplarity on character development. Comparative studies examining CRE in diverse Indonesian contexts—urban versus rural, Christian-majority versus pluralistic settings—would illuminate contextual factors influencing effectiveness. Research investigating the relationship between teachers' personal spiritual practices and pedagogical effectiveness would enhance understanding of spiritual formation's role in teaching. Finally, studies exploring how CRE teachers navigate religious pluralism while maintaining faith commitments would offer valuable insights for religiously diverse educational contexts. This study's limitations should be acknowledged. The small sample size and single-site focus limit generalizability. The three-month duration provides only a

snapshot of long-term processes. Self-reported data from teacher interviews may reflect social desirability bias. Future research with larger, more diverse samples and extended timeframes would strengthen findings. Despite limitations, this research makes important contributions to understanding how biblical narratives inform contemporary character education in Indonesian contexts. It demonstrates that ancient wisdom—exemplified in Noah's obedience—remains profoundly relevant for twenty-first-century moral formation when embodied by dedicated teachers who understand their calling as spiritual and pedagogical. In an era of moral confusion and character crisis, such teachers offer hope that education can still effectively form not merely knowledgeable but truly good persons.

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