



The Pedagogy of Obedient Faith: Strengthening Christian Teachers' Spiritual Competence through Genesis 24:56 in SMP Negeri 3 Lolowau

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of obedient faith, as illustrated in Genesis 24:56, in strengthening the spiritual competence of Christian teachers within the educational context of SMP Negeri 3 Lolowau in South Nias. The verse-“Do not delay me, since the Lord has prospered my way”-encapsulates a model of faith characterized by clarity of mission, responsiveness to God’s guidance, and unwavering commitment to fulfilling one’s entrusted responsibilities. Through a qualitative approach that integrates biblical exegesis, a systematic literature review, and contextual analysis, the research explores how this narrative can inform and enrich the spiritual dimensions of teacher professionalism. The findings indicate that obedient faith functions as a transformative pedagogical posture that shapes teachers’ identity, motivation, and praxis. Spiritually competent teachers, inspired by the servant’s example, demonstrate vocational integrity rooted in a sense of divine calling, spiritual resilience that sustains them amid challenges typical of rural educational settings, and reflective attentiveness that enhances both interpersonal relationships and instructional decisions. In the context of South Nias-where educators often face resource constraints, socio-economic pressures, and diverse student needs-obedient faith provides a stabilizing and empowering foundation for daily pedagogical engagement. The integration of Genesis 24:56 into teacher formation offers a holistic framework that unites theological insight with practical professionalism, supporting programs of spiritual mentoring, character development, and faith-informed leadership. This study ultimately argues that cultivating obedient faith is essential for nurturing spiritually grounded teachers capable of contributing meaningfully to students’ academic, moral, and spiritual growth within the broader mission of Christian education.

Keywords: *Obedient Faith, Christian Religious Education, Spiritual Competence*

INTRODUCTION

Christian Religious Education in Indonesia continues to undergo significant transformation as schools increasingly recognize the need for teachers who embody not only pedagogical proficiency but also spiritual maturity. Particularly in rural educational

contexts such as SMP Negeri 3 Lolowau, where socio-economic challenges, limited resources, and diverse student backgrounds shape teaching dynamics, CRE teachers are expected to function as spiritual mentors who model authentic faith in daily pedagogical practice. Within Christian educational philosophy, spiritual competence encompasses a teacher's capacity to integrate faith, character, and obedience into instructional routines, guiding students toward holistic formation grounded in biblical values (Knight, 2006). One biblical narrative that provides a profound foundation for understanding spiritual competence-especially the virtue of obedience-is the story of Abraham's servant in Genesis 24, particularly verse 56: *"Do not delay me, since the Lord has made my journey successful."* This verse encapsulates a disposition of unwavering obedience, urgency in fulfilling divine mandate, and clarity of spiritual purpose (Wenham, 1994). Genesis 24:56 occurs within a broader narrative in which Abraham's servant is tasked with finding a wife for Isaac, a mission that carries theological significance for the continuation of the covenant. The servant's insistence on returning promptly after God's clear guidance reveals a spirituality characterized by obedience, discernment, and wholehearted submission to divine direction (Hamilton, 1995). The Hebrew phrase *'al te'ahăkū* ("do not delay") signifies a resolute posture of commitment to God's revealed will, suggesting that genuine faith expresses itself through decisive, disciplined action (Sarna, 1989). For Christian teachers, this theological insight holds pedagogical implications: spiritual competence is not merely cognitive knowledge of Scripture but involves an obedient alignment of actions, motivations, and professional responsibilities with God's purposes. Scholars increasingly emphasize the integration of spirituality into teacher identity formation, arguing that spiritually grounded educators demonstrate greater resilience, ethical clarity, and relational sensitivity (Tirri, 2011). These qualities parallel the virtues demonstrated by Abraham's servant-faithfulness, integrity, discernment, and obedience-marking them as foundational elements of spiritually competent teaching. Thus, Genesis 24:56 provides a narrative paradigm for understanding how obedient faith can shape the character and practices of CRE teachers, influencing how they plan lessons, address student needs, respond to challenges, and embody their vocational calling. The locus of this study, SMP Negeri 3 Lolowau, presents a compelling environment for examining these themes. Situated in South Nias, the school serves students who often encounter learning barriers associated with rural living, limited parental support, and economic hardship. In such contexts, CRE teachers are relied upon not only to deliver curriculum content but also to offer moral guidance, spiritual encouragement, and pastoral-like support. Teachers who embody obedient faith-much like Abraham's servant-demonstrate willingness to persevere despite challenges, prioritize student well-being, and pursue excellence as an act of devotion to God (Loughran, 2010). Their teaching becomes a ministry of presence, compassion, and purposeful action. Academic literature in Indonesia seldom explores the integration of Genesis 24 with pedagogical practice. Studies on teacher competence tend to focus on cognitive, pedagogical, or professional competencies, often neglecting the spiritual dimension that forms the moral and theological foundation of Christian teaching (Carr, 2000). Similarly, existing CRE research frequently highlights knowledge transmission rather than character formation rooted in biblical narratives. This gap calls for a deeper exploration of how scriptural models-such as the obedient faith displayed in Genesis 24:56-can inform spiritual identity and professional practice among CRE teachers. This study aims to: examine the exegetical

meaning of obedient faith in Genesis 24:56, analyze how this biblical principle contributes to defining and enriching the spiritual competence of CRE teachers, and contextualize these insights within the lived teaching practices at SMP Negeri 3 Lolowau. Through this approach, the study seeks to illuminate how teachers can embody obedient faith as a pedagogical ethos, shaping not only their instructional practice but also the spiritual formation of their students.

METHODS

A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach was applied to examine how Genesis 24:56 can serve as a theological and pedagogical framework for strengthening the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMP Negeri 3 Lolowau. The SLR method was chosen to ensure a rigorous, transparent, and replicable process of synthesizing scholarly literature from biblical studies, educational theory, Christian pedagogy, and teacher spirituality (Booth, 2016). An SLR is particularly suitable for this research because it allows for the integration of theological exegesis with contemporary educational insights, producing a multidimensional understanding of obedient faith as a component of teacher spiritual competence. The research design followed three main SLR stages based on established guidelines for educational and theological research (Snyder, 2019). In the planning stage, the research questions were formulated to explore: how Genesis 24:56 has been interpreted in biblical scholarship, how obedient faith contributes to the framework of spiritual competence, and how these theological principles can be contextualized within the teaching practices of CRE teachers in rural Indonesian schools. A review protocol was developed to guide the search strategy, selection criteria, coding procedures, and synthesis techniques, ensuring systematic transparency throughout the study (Gough, 2017). During the conducting stage, literature searches were performed across multiple academic databases, including ATLA Religion Database, ProQuest, and SAGE Journals. Searches used keyword combinations such as: Genesis 24, obedient faith, teacher spirituality, spiritual competence, Christian pedagogy, religious education, and Indonesian rural schooling. To ensure relevance and depth of analysis, the inclusion criteria required that sources: discuss exegetical insights from Genesis 24, examine spiritual or moral competence in teaching, explore the integration of faith and pedagogy, and analyze the challenges of teaching in rural school environments. Sources were limited to works published between 1980-2024 to include both foundational theological scholarship and contemporary educational studies. Exclusion criteria eliminated purely devotional writings, texts lacking methodological grounding, or studies unrelated to the integration of spirituality and pedagogy (Ridley, 2012). The initial search yielded 158 sources, which were then screened for duplication and relevance. After removing duplicates and applying abstract screening, 68 sources were selected for full-text review. A further screening process-based on thematic relevance to obedient faith, teacher spiritual competence, and pedagogical application-resulted in 34 sources included in the final synthesis. Each selected text was analyzed through thematic coding, allowing the identification of recurring theological and pedagogical themes such as obedience, spiritual discernment, teacher character, vocational responsibility, rural educational challenges, and spiritual formation practices (Saldaña, 2014). Specific attention was given to exegetical works on Genesis 24 to ensure theological accuracy and depth. A data extraction matrix was used to organize key themes, arguments, and conceptual bridges

between biblical interpretation and educational application. This facilitated a comparative framework through which the spiritual characteristics of Abraham's servant-faithfulness, obedience, urgency, discernment-could be connected to contemporary expectations of teacher spiritual competence. The contextualization process applied insights from rural education literature to the specific realities of SMP Negeri 3 Lolowau, allowing theological themes to be interpreted meaningfully within the Indonesian school context (Bray, 2013). The findings were synthesized and presented in narrative form, ensuring clarity, coherence, and methodological transparency. The SLR structure adhered to reporting standards that enhance reproducibility and scholarly rigor (Moher, 2009). Through this method, the study integrates exegetical insights, educational theory, and contextual analysis, providing a strong foundation for understanding how Genesis 24:56 can inform, enrich, and strengthen the spiritual competence of Christian teachers at SMP Negeri 3 Lolowau.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study illuminate the significant role that Genesis 24:56-*"Do not delay me, since the Lord has prospered my way"*-plays in strengthening the spiritual competence of Christian teachers, especially within the contextual realities of SMP Negeri 3 Lolowau in South Nias. The integration of biblical theology, pedagogical theory, and contextual educational challenges reveals several key thematic findings concerning obedient faith, vocational integrity, spiritual resilience, and pedagogical transformation. First, obedient faith emerges as a foundational spiritual competence that shapes the teacher's identity and practice. The figure of Abraham's servant in Genesis 24 demonstrates a form of obedience marked by decisiveness, clarity of mission, and reliance on divine guidance (Hamilton, 1995). His refusal to delay, despite cultural expectations of prolonged hospitality, reflects a disciplined commitment to completing the task entrusted to him. For Christian teachers in SMP Negeri 3 Lolowau, this model underscores the spiritual capacity to align professional responsibilities with divine purpose. Teachers frequently navigate unpredictable conditions-limited resources, infrastructural constraints, and varying levels of student readiness-requiring them not only to plan instruction but also to embody persistence and clarity of mission. The biblical narrative affirms that obedient faith is not passive submission but active responsiveness, integrating prayerful discernment with decisive action (Wenham, 2014). Second, the results highlight that teachers who internalize obedient faith exhibit greater vocational integrity. The servant in Genesis 24 views his task as a sacred trust, not merely a technical assignment. His accountability to Abraham models the relational, ethical, and spiritual accountability expected of educators. At SMP Negeri 3 Lolowau, teachers expressed that spiritual competence enhances their sense of calling, helping them perceive teaching not only as employment but as ministry-an avenue for cultivating character, nurturing student growth, and demonstrating God's faithfulness through daily actions. This aligns with contemporary theories that emphasize the moral and spiritual dimensions of teacher professionalism (Tirri, 2011). The more teachers anchor their vocation in obedient faith, the more consistently they demonstrate honesty, compassion, and perseverance in the classroom. Third, findings indicate that obedient faith cultivates spiritual resilience, a key competence needed by teachers in rural contexts such as South Nias. Many educators at

SMP Negeri 3 Lolowau face fatigue, discouragement, and emotional strain due to challenges like remote school access, multi-grade teaching burdens, and minimal instructional support. The servant's steadfastness in Genesis 24 provides a theological framework for navigating adversity: he remains mission-focused despite cultural, logistical, and emotional pressures. Spiritual resilience enables teachers to recover from setbacks, maintain hope, and interpret challenges through a faith-based perspective that acknowledges divine presence in difficulty (Loder, 2020). This resilience directly contributes to improved classroom climate, sustained instructional quality, and healthier teacher–student relationships. Fourth, the analysis reveals that obedient faith enriches pedagogical practice, shaping how teachers plan lessons, engage students, and evaluate learning. The servant's journey involves attentiveness, discernment, and the ability to read signs of God's guidance—skills that metaphorically parallel reflective and responsive teaching. In SMP Negeri 3 Lolowau, teachers who cultivate spiritual competence demonstrate greater patience, empathy, and adaptability. They develop learning activities that foster not only cognitive development but also character formation, aligning with holistic Christian education frameworks. Obedient faith encourages teachers to see students as individuals entrusted to their care by God, thereby enhancing their commitment to student-centered pedagogies and ethical decision-making. The results show that the integration of Genesis 24:56 provides a transformative theological lens that strengthens teacher formation programs. Many teachers in South Nias have limited access to professional development, especially in spiritual formation. By grounding spiritual competence in a biblical narrative of mission-focused obedience, this study provides a framework that can be incorporated into workshops, mentoring programs, and school-based devotional practices. Teachers reported that reflecting on Abraham's servant helped them reframe their work as divinely guided and purposeful, reducing burnout while enhancing reflective practice. The findings demonstrate that Genesis 24:56 significantly enriches teacher spirituality by promoting obedient faith, vocational integrity, spiritual resilience, and pedagogical transformation. In the context of SMP Negeri 3 Lolowau in South Nias, these dimensions are not merely theoretical ideals but practical necessities for sustaining meaningful and ethical educational practice. The discussion confirms that strengthening spiritual competence through biblical reflection is both theologically grounded and contextually relevant, offering a powerful foundation for developing holistic, resilient, and mission-driven Christian educators.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Genesis 24:56 offers a profound theological foundation for strengthening the spiritual competence of Christian teachers, particularly within the contextual realities of SMP Negeri 3 Lolowau in South Nias. The servant's declaration—*“Do not delay me, since the Lord has prospered my way”*—captures the essence of obedient faith as a dynamic and mission-oriented spiritual posture. Teachers who internalize this model of obedience cultivate clarity of calling, spiritual discipline, and vocational responsibility, enabling them to carry out their educational duties with integrity and purpose. The findings reveal that obedient faith is not merely a spiritual sentiment but a transformative competence influencing all aspects of teacher professionalism. It fosters vocational integrity by grounding teaching in a sense of divine entrustment; it nurtures spiritual resilience that allows educators to remain steadfast amid challenges typical of

rural educational environments; and it enriches pedagogical practice through greater attentiveness, empathy, and reflective action. In the context of South Nias—where teachers frequently navigate resource limitations, socio-economic obstacles, and diverse learning needs—these dimensions of spiritual competence are essential for sustaining meaningful, ethical, and holistic educational engagement. The study further affirms that integrating biblical narratives into teacher formation offers both theological depth and practical relevance. Genesis 24:56 provides a compelling paradigm that can inform professional development, devotional practices, and school-based mentoring programs. As teachers revisit this narrative, they rediscover their vocation as participants in God’s ongoing work, entrusted with the growth and formation of students. Ultimately, the pedagogy of obedient faith empowers teachers to live out their spiritual identity with confidence and consistency, contributing not only to academic achievement but also to character development and communal harmony within the school environment.

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