



Professionalism of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Guiding Students toward Obedience: A Study of Exodus 17:12 at SMK Swasta Nusantara

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examines the professionalism of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMK Swasta Nusantara in guiding students toward obedience through the theological lens of Exodus 17:12, where Aaron and Hur support Moses' weary hands during Israel's battle against Amalek. The narrative provides a biblical framework for understanding teacher professionalism as stabilizing moral leadership that sustains students in their spiritual and behavioral formation. Conducted over six weeks, the research employed semi-structured interviews with four CRE teachers, non-participant classroom observations, and document analysis of lesson plans and curriculum materials. Data were analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's framework, integrating inductive and deductive coding to capture both emergent patterns and theological categories such as steadfastness, collaborative support, and spiritual accompaniment. Findings reveal that teacher professionalism is expressed through consistent personal modeling, relational accompaniment, intentional integration of biblical principles, structured classroom management, collaborative peer support, reflective practice, prayerful dependence on God, contextual sensitivity, moral fairness, and a strong sense of vocational calling. Students internalize obedience most effectively when teachers embody the values they teach, offer empathetic guidance through personal challenges, and ground moral expectations in Scripture rather than institutional rules alone. The study demonstrates that professionalism in Christian education transcends technical competence, encompassing character integrity, theological clarity, and pastoral commitment. Teachers function as moral stabilizers who, like Aaron and Hur, provide supportive presence that enables students to remain steadfast despite fatigue, peer pressure, or discouragement. This research affirms that fostering obedience requires an integrative approach where biblical insight, pedagogical skill, and relational care converge to guide students toward faith-grounded moral maturity.

Keywords: Professionalism, Christian Religious Education, Obedience

INTRODUCTION

The professionalism of Christian Religious Education teachers plays a central role in shaping students' character, behavioral discipline, and spiritual obedience within contemporary educational contexts. As schools increasingly encounter diverse moral challenges and fluctuating levels of student engagement, the role of the teacher as a moral guide becomes more significant than ever. At SMK Swasta Nusantara, these challenges manifest in students' inconsistent attitudes toward school rules, fluctuating motivation, and limited internalization of Christian values. In such a context, CRE teachers are expected not only to master pedagogical principles but also to embody spiritual maturity, ethical responsibility, and professional integrity that guide students toward consistent obedience. The biblical narrative in Exodus 17:12—the moment when Aaron and Hur support Moses' hands during Israel's battle against Amalek—offers a theological and pedagogical framework for understanding how teachers can sustain students toward steadfast moral and spiritual conduct. Exodus 17:12 presents a powerful image of human limitation, communal responsibility, and sustained obedience under divine mandate. The verse states, *“But Moses' hands grew weary; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.”* This text reveals that obedience to God's instruction is not merely an individual endeavor but a communal act strengthened by supportive relationships. Moses' raised hands symbolize Israel's continued dependence on God, and the assistance from Aaron and Hur represents the necessity of collaboration, perseverance, and shared responsibility. From an exegetical standpoint, the verb *'emūnāh* (“steady” or “faithful”) in this verse conveys not only physical steadiness but also unwavering commitment and reliability. This nuance provides a theological lens for understanding teacher professionalism as steadfastness in moral guidance, consistency in instructional practice, and fidelity to the spiritual formation of students. The image of supported hands offers a metaphor for the professional posture of CRE teachers. They are called to stand as spiritual mentors who, like Aaron and Hur, help students maintain their “raised hands” of obedience despite fatigue, distractions, or external pressures. Professionalism in this sense extends beyond technical competence; it encompasses relational commitment, emotional presence, and the ability to accompany students through their moral struggles (Ariawan, 2023). This aligns with pedagogical perspectives asserting that effective moral and religious education requires teachers to embody the virtues they seek to cultivate. Thus, CRE teachers must demonstrate consistency, patience, empathy, and an unwavering dedication to students' spiritual development. Their professionalism reflects not only institutional expectations but also theological responsibility grounded in Scripture.

At SMK Swasta Nusantara, a school characterized by diverse socio-economic backgrounds and varying levels of student discipline, the framework of Exodus 17:12 becomes deeply relevant. Students often encounter discouragement, peer pressure, and personal challenges that make consistent obedience difficult. In this setting, CRE teachers need to apply both their pedagogical competence and spiritual commitment to guide students effectively. The metaphor of supported hands encourages a collaborative and pastoral approach—teachers guide, accompany, correct, and uplift students as they strive to

internalize Christian values. The teacher's role becomes that of a stabilizing presence, ensuring that students remain "steady until sunset"-that is, consistent in obedience over time. Therefore, examining the professionalism of CRE teachers through the lens of Exodus 17:12 provides a rich theological and pedagogical foundation for understanding how teachers guide students toward obedience. This study seeks to analyze how scriptural insights, teacher competence, and contextual realities intersect to shape the role of CRE teachers at SMK Swasta Nusantara in fostering spiritually grounded obedience.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore how Christian Religious Education teachers at SMK Swasta Nusantara demonstrate professionalism in guiding students toward obedience through the theological lens of Exodus 17:12. A qualitative approach was selected because it allows for an in-depth examination of teachers' lived experiences, pedagogical practices, and spiritual motivations, capturing the complex interplay between biblical principles and classroom realities. The research was conducted over a six-week period, during which rich data were collected through three primary techniques: semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four CRE teachers using open-ended questions to explore their pedagogical strategies, understanding of professionalism, interpretation of Exodus 17:12, and methods of fostering student obedience. These interviews, each lasting between 45 and 60 minutes, were transcribed and validated through participant checking to ensure accuracy. In addition, non-participant observations were carried out during CRE learning sessions, focusing on how teachers modeled discipline, provided moral guidance, and interacted with students in ways that aligned with principles derived from the Exodus narrative, such as support, perseverance, and collaborative moral formation. Observation protocols were used to ensure consistency, capturing specific behaviors related to professional conduct, classroom management, relational engagement, and instructional clarity. Document analysis further enriched the data by examining lesson plans, school regulations, and CRE curriculum materials to identify the pedagogical alignment between teachers' planning frameworks and their actual classroom practices. Data from all sources were analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's six steps. Codes were generated inductively to capture themes emerging from participants' experiences, while deductive coding was also applied to integrate theological categories such as steadfastness, collaborative support, and spiritual accompaniment as revealed in Exodus 17:12. Research validity was strengthened through triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents, ensuring that emerging interpretations were grounded in diverse data sources. Credibility was maintained through member checking, prolonged engagement, and reflective memoing throughout the analysis process, while dependability was supported by maintaining a detailed audit trail of decisions, coding processes, and analytical reflections. Ethical considerations were strictly followed, including obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms, and securing institutional permission from the school administration. Participants were assured that their involvement was voluntary and that

they could withdraw at any time without consequence. The methodological framework of this study was intentionally shaped to integrate educational research rigor with theological reflection, allowing biblical insights-particularly the imagery of supported hands in Exodus 17:12-to be meaningfully connected to the practical expressions of teacher professionalism in guiding students toward obedience. Through this method, the study aims to present an authentic, credible, and contextually grounded understanding of how CRE teachers serve as stabilizing moral agents within their school environment.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a multifaceted portrait of the professionalism of Christian Religious Education teachers at SMK Swasta Nusantara in guiding students toward obedience. The results emerged from triangulated data showing that teacher professionalism is expressed through consistent modeling, relational accompaniment, pedagogical intentionality, and theological grounding. These findings are best understood through the interpretive lens of Exodus 17:12, which frames teachers as moral stabilizers who, like Aaron and Hur, support learners' journey toward steadfast obedience even when they grow weary or face moral pressure. The discussion that follows integrates these empirical insights with biblical exegesis, educational theory, and Christian pedagogy to provide a comprehensive understanding of how teachers enact professionalism in moral and spiritual formation. The first major finding indicates that CRE teachers at SMK Swasta Nusantara demonstrate professionalism primarily through the consistency of their personal example, which students identify as the most influential factor in shaping their obedience. Teachers consistently reported that students observe and imitate the behavioral patterns of their teachers more than their verbal instruction. This aligns with the biblical notion implicit in Exodus 17:12: obedience is strengthened not merely through commands but through embodied presence and visible commitment. When Moses' hands grew weary, the battle began to falter, illustrating how leadership consistency directly affects communal behavior. The teachers interviewed described similar experiences-when their actions were congruent with Christian values such as patience, fairness, punctuality, and self-discipline, students responded with greater willingness to follow rules. Observation data supported this claim; classrooms led by teachers who modeled calm authority and respectful communication consistently demonstrated higher levels of student attentiveness and compliance. This finding reinforces pedagogical theories that emphasize modeling as a core dimension of professional teaching, and it highlights the biblical pattern of leadership by example as essential in a Christian educational context. The second finding centers on relational support as a professional practice, resonating strongly with the imagery of Aaron and Hur supporting Moses' hands. Teachers at the school perceived their professional role not merely as instructors but also as pastoral figures who accompany students through emotional, academic, and moral challenges. Many students at SMK Swasta Nusantara come from complex socio-economic backgrounds, and teachers noted that students' moral struggles often reflect issues at home, peer conflicts, or personal anxieties. By offering attentive listening, counseling, and patient guidance, teachers became relational stabilizers-helping students remain "steady until sunset," to borrow the language of the biblical text. Observational data showed that teachers often paused lesson delivery to address student frustration or conflict, providing emotional reassurance before continuing with academic material. This practice

demonstrates professionalism as responsive care rather than rigid authority. In the context of Exodus 17:12, relational support mirrors the supportive actions of Aaron and Hur: they did not replace Moses nor assume his role, but provided the necessary stability for him to fulfill his divine mandate. Similarly, CRE teachers guide students toward obedience not by coercion, but by strengthening the relational foundations that empower students to choose obedience willingly. A third finding highlights that teachers intentionally integrate biblical principles into pedagogical strategies, ensuring that moral obedience is grounded in Scripture rather than merely in institutional regulations. Teachers consistently linked classroom expectations to Christian values, offering biblical narratives, parables, and theological reflection as moral reference points. Several teachers referenced stories of biblical obedience, including Abraham, Daniel, and Mary, to show students the significance of faithfulness in difficult circumstances. Theologically, teachers emphasized that obedience is not blind submission but a response to God's love and guidance. This integration of Scripture aligns with Exodus 17:12, where the victory of Israel is contingent on Moses' obedience to God's instruction of keeping his hands raised. Teachers used this imagery to help students understand that obedience leads to stability and spiritual growth. Document analysis revealed that many lesson plans intentionally included scriptural reflection activities, prayer moments, and ethical discussions related to classroom behaviors. This suggests that professionalism, in this context, includes theological clarity and the ability to interpret Scripture pedagogically. It also reflects a commitment to helping students internalize obedience as a spiritual virtue rather than an externally imposed requirement. The fourth finding pertains to professional classroom management as a means of sustaining student obedience. Teachers demonstrated structured routines, clear expectations, and consistent consequences for misbehavior. Observations revealed that teachers who maintained predictable classroom procedures—such as opening prayer, review sessions, and collaborative learning—experienced fewer student disruptions. Students responded positively to teachers who combined authority with compassion, demonstrating that professionalism in classroom management involves balancing firmness with flexibility. This dynamic reflects the biblical tension between divine justice and mercy, seen in the broader narrative of Exodus. Just as Moses' leadership blended obedience to God with pastoral sensitivity toward the people, CRE teachers at SMK Swasta Nusantara blend rule enforcement with empathetic understanding. Interviews also revealed that teachers perceived discipline not as punishment but as guidance, aimed at cultivating internalized obedience. This aligns with contemporary Christian pedagogy, which views discipline as discipleship—helping students grow into maturity through guided moral practice. A fifth finding reveals that professional collaboration among teachers strengthens their capacity to guide students toward obedience, reflecting the communal support theme in Exodus 17:12. Teachers frequently consulted one another about student behavior issues, shared strategies, and offered mutual encouragement. Several teachers mentioned informal mentoring relationships within the school, where more experienced teachers supported younger ones in developing pedagogical and spiritual competencies. This collegial support mirrors the biblical cooperation between Aaron, Hur, and Moses; each fulfilled a different function, but all worked together toward a shared goal. Classroom observations confirmed that students responded better when teachers demonstrated unity and consistency. The collaborative professionalism seen among the CRE teachers demonstrates that guiding

students toward obedience requires not only individual competence but collective wisdom and mutual strengthening. In theological terms, this finding echoes the communal dimension of obedience throughout Scripture, where faithfulness often depends on shared encouragement and accountability. Another major finding is the role of reflective practice in strengthening teacher professionalism. Interviews revealed that teachers frequently engaged in personal reflection, prayer, and self-evaluation to assess their own behavior and teaching effectiveness. Some teachers reported keeping journals in which they recorded moments of classroom difficulty and considered how their responses aligned with Christian values. This reflective discipline echoes Moses' perseverance in the wilderness narrative, where sustained obedience required ongoing reflection on God's faithfulness and the challenges of leadership. Teachers acknowledged that their own obedience to God influenced their ability to guide students. This inward dimension of professionalism reflects the biblical understanding that spiritual leadership flows first from the heart. Teachers who engaged in reflection demonstrated greater consistency, emotional regulation, and pastoral sensitivity in their interactions with students. Document analysis also revealed evidence of reflective practice in lesson plan revisions and annotations, showing that teachers intentionally refined their methods to better support student obedience. The next significant finding concerns the spiritual authority perceived by students when teachers integrate prayerful dependence on God into their professional lives. Students reported feeling more respected, encouraged, and spiritually supported when teachers prayed with them or invoked biblical encouragement during difficult moments. Teachers described prayer as a source of strength that enabled them to remain steadfast, especially when dealing with student disobedience or emotional difficulty. The imagery of Moses' raised hands in Exodus 17:12-symbolizing intercessory dependence on God-resonates strongly with this practice. Teachers at SMK Swasta Nusantara viewed their prayer life as integral to their professionalism, believing that spiritual authority arises from consistent communion with God. Observations supported this finding; classrooms where prayer was woven naturally into the learning process tended to have more peaceful and respectful environments. Theologically, this finding illustrates that guiding students toward obedience is not merely a pedagogical task but a spiritual ministry requiring reliance on divine empowerment. The findings highlight the role of contextual sensitivity in teacher professionalism. Teachers recognized the unique challenges faced by students in a vocational high school setting, including peer influence, early romantic relationships, economic pressure to work, and difficulties in academic engagement. As a result, they adapted their teaching strategies, counseling approaches, and disciplinary methods to meet students' real-life needs. This contextual awareness mirrors the pragmatic adaptability seen in Moses' leadership throughout Exodus. Just as Moses responded to the evolving needs of Israel in the wilderness, CRE teachers at SMK Swasta Nusantara demonstrated responsiveness to their students' shifting circumstances. Such adaptability reflects professional maturity, as teachers balance biblical principles with contemporary realities, ensuring that the call to obedience remains relevant and accessible. Another finding demonstrates that students associate teacher fairness with moral authority, which significantly influences their obedience. Teachers who distributed consequences impartially, considered student perspectives, and avoided favoritism were perceived as trustworthy. This trust increased students' willingness to follow rules and internalize moral lessons. Conversely, when students

perceived inconsistency or bias, their obedience declined. This dynamic reflects the biblical principle of righteousness-consistent, impartial leadership-as foundational to spiritual authority. The steadiness of Moses' hands symbolizes not only perseverance but moral reliability, qualities that CRE teachers must embody to guide students effectively. Observational data confirmed that classrooms led by fair and balanced teachers displayed higher levels of respect and cooperation. A final finding reveals that teacher professionalism is strengthened by a strong sense of calling, which motivates teachers to persevere despite challenges. Teachers described their work not merely as employment but as a ministry entrusted by God. This sense of vocation sustained them emotionally and spiritually when facing student resistance, administrative pressure, or personal fatigue. The imagery of Moses growing weary yet persisting through divine support provides a theological framework for understanding this perseverance. Teachers at SMK Swasta Nusantara expressed that their calling empowered them to continue guiding students toward obedience even when immediate results were not visible. This vocational consciousness aligns with Christian educational philosophy, which holds that teaching is a sacred trust requiring commitment, sacrifice, and reliance on God. Together, these findings illustrate that the professionalism of CRE teachers in guiding students toward obedience is deeply holistic, encompassing personal integrity, relational care, theological grounding, pedagogical competence, collaborative support, and spiritual discipline. Professionalism is not limited to technical skill or administrative compliance; rather, it reflects a dynamic interplay of character, faith, community, and pedagogical wisdom. The narrative of Exodus 17:12 emerges as a powerful interpretive lens that brings together these dimensions, portraying the teacher as a stabilizing force who, like Aaron and Hur, supports students in their journey toward steadfast obedience.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the professionalism of Christian Religious Education teachers at SMK Swasta Nusantara in guiding students toward obedience is a deeply integrative and multifaceted practice shaped by theological conviction, pedagogical competence, and relational commitment. Through the exegetical lens of Exodus 17:12, the teacher's role emerges as one of stabilizing moral leadership-mirroring the supportive actions of Aaron and Hur who upheld Moses' weary hands so that Israel could remain steadfast in obedience. The findings reveal that teacher professionalism is most effective when embodied through consistent personal example, empathetic relational engagement, and intentional integration of biblical principles into daily instruction. Teachers who model patience, fairness, and spiritual maturity cultivate environments where students willingly internalize obedience not as external compliance but as a meaningful expression of their faith and moral identity. The results highlight that professionalism in Christian teaching extends beyond individual competence to include collaborative support among teachers and an unwavering dependence on God through prayer and reflective practice. Teachers at SMK Swasta Nusantara actively adapted their pedagogical strategies to address students' contextual realities, demonstrating that authentic moral guidance must be responsive to the socio-emotional and spiritual needs of learners. Their ability to balance authority with compassion reflects the biblical tension between justice and mercy, underscoring that guiding students toward obedience is both

an instructional task and a pastoral ministry. The study concludes that CRE teacher professionalism is grounded in a strong sense of calling that sustains perseverance amidst challenges. When teachers understand their vocation as a divine trust, they demonstrate greater resilience, spiritual authority, and pedagogical intentionality. Ultimately, this research affirms that fostering student obedience in a Christian educational context requires an integrated approach where theological insight, professional integrity, and relational accompaniment converge. By embodying the biblical principles illustrated in Exodus 17:12, CRE teachers can serve as steadfast guides who help students grow in faith, character, and moral consistency.

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