

Developing the Personal Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers through the Obedience of Christ: An Exegetical Study of Philippians 2:8 at Sampoerna Academy Elementary School

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how the personal competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers can be developed through the model of Christ's obedience, as articulated in Philippians 2:8, within the context of Sampoerna Academy Elementary School. The study focuses on one CRE teacher responsible for 80 Christian students, emphasizing the relational and pedagogical implications of embodying Christlike obedience. Employing a qualitative case study design, the research integrates biblical exegesis and empirical qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom observations, and document analysis. The exegetical component examined the historical, grammatical, and theological context of Philippians 2:8 to derive principles of humility, obedience, and sacrificial service as foundational for personal competence. The findings reveal that the teacher's personal competence manifests in four interrelated dimensions: humility and moral integrity, servant leadership in classroom practice, relational mentorship, and holistic student formation. The research concludes that Christlike obedience functions as the wellspring of personal competence, integrating spiritual maturity, ethical integrity, relational skill, and pedagogical effectiveness. Teachers who embody humility and sacrificial service not only enhance their professional credibility but also create transformative learning environments where students develop ethical awareness, moral character, and spiritual discernment. This study contributes to Christian educational theory and practice by demonstrating that the formation of teacher competence is inseparable from spiritual and moral exemplarity grounded in the obedience of Christ.

Keywords: *Personal Competence, Christian Religious Education, Obedience of Christ*

INTRODUCTION

The formation of personal competence in Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers extends beyond pedagogical skills to include the integration of spiritual maturity, ethical integrity, and vocational commitment. Personal competence in this context encompasses the teacher's ability to live out Christian virtues, model moral consistency, and provide a

spiritually transformative presence in the classroom. While contemporary educational research often emphasizes teaching techniques, assessment strategies, and curriculum design, Christian education uniquely positions the teacher as both instructor and exemplar of faith. In public and private school contexts alike, the authenticity of a teacher's life, what they model through character, decision-making, and relational conduct, directly influences students' spiritual and moral development. At Sampoerna Academy Elementary School, where 80 Christian students are taught by one Christian Religious Education teacher, the opportunity and responsibility to embody Christlike character is particularly pronounced. The small student-to-teacher ratio intensifies relational interactions, creating a context in which the teacher's personal competence profoundly shapes the learning environment and students' perception of faith. The theological foundation for developing personal competence in CRE teachers is strongly grounded in Philippians 2:8, where the Apostle Paul emphasizes Christ's humility and obedience unto death: *"And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross"* (NIV). This verse situates obedience not as passive compliance but as an active, sacrificial alignment with God's will, a hallmark of Christlike character. Within the framework of teacher development, Christ's obedience provides a model for cultivating personal competence, demonstrating how inner spiritual formation translates into ethical decision-making, relational sensitivity, and professional responsibility. Obedience, as Paul presents it, involves the integration of knowledge, intention, and action, highlighting that personal competence encompasses both internal virtues and observable behaviors in educational practice. In the context of Sampoerna Academy Elementary School, the CRE teacher's embodiment of Christlike obedience manifests in various dimensions of professional and spiritual life. In classroom interactions, the teacher demonstrates patience, humility, and a commitment to justice, ensuring that students experience consistent moral guidance. Beyond instructional delivery, the teacher's relational conduct reflects attentiveness to students' needs, modeling ethical sensitivity and relational integrity that align with the spiritual values articulated in Scripture. Students observe and internalize these qualities, perceiving the teacher as a credible moral exemplar. The biblical model thus functions as both normative and practical, offering a framework through which personal competence can be understood as a dynamic interplay of spiritual formation, ethical practice, and professional execution. Limited empirical research has examined how biblical principles such as obedience inform teacher formation in the daily realities of the classroom. Most studies focus on technical pedagogical competence, leaving a gap in understanding how spiritual virtues intersect with professional responsibilities. Few studies explore this integration within the context of private international schools in Indonesia, where Christian education must negotiate multicultural and pluralistic environments while maintaining theological fidelity. This study seeks to address these gaps by investigating how the personal competence of CRE teachers can be developed through the model of Christ's obedience, as articulated in Philippians 2:8, within the specific context of Sampoerna Academy Elementary School. The study's objectives are threefold: first, to exegetically examine Philippians 2:8 and its implications for the character formation of Christian educators; second, to analyze how the CRE teacher manifests Christlike obedience in professional and relational practice; and third, to evaluate the impact of such teacher formation on students' perception of ethical and spiritual development. By

combining biblical exegesis with qualitative field research, this study contributes to the growing discourse on teacher formation, integrating theological reflection, educational praxis, and character development in Christian schooling contexts. The significance of this research lies in its potential to inform both theory and practice. It underscores obedience to Christ as a foundational principle for personal competence. Pedagogically, it provides a model for integrating spiritual formation into teacher professional development. Practically, it highlights how the consistent embodiment of obedience can enhance relational trust, ethical conduct, and student formation, thereby demonstrating that the personal competence of CRE teachers is inseparable from the spiritual and moral integrity exemplified in the life of Christ. This study affirms that effective Christian education requires teachers whose lives resonate with the obedience, humility, and sacrificial service exemplified by Jesus, creating a transformative educational environment that cultivates both character and faith.

METHODS

A qualitative case study design was implemented to explore how the personal competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers can be developed through the model of Christ's obedience, as articulated in Philippians 2:8, within the context of Sampoerna Academy Elementary School. The case study approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth examination of complex phenomena—here, the integration of spiritual formation, moral character, and professional practice—within a bounded real-life setting (Yin, 2018). The research focused on one CRE teacher responsible for 80 Christian students, recognizing that the small teacher-student ratio provided a concentrated context in which the teacher's personal competence could be observed, analyzed, and understood in both relational and instructional dimensions. Data collection combined biblical exegesis and empirical qualitative methods. The exegetical component involved a historical-grammatical and theological analysis of Philippians 2:8, examining the literary context, socio-historical background of the Pauline community, and the theological themes of humility, obedience, and sacrificial service (Fee, 1995; O'Brien, 1991). The goal was to derive principles of personal competence from Christ's model of obedience, which could then inform the empirical investigation. Empirical data were gathered through multiple qualitative methods. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with the CRE teacher, focusing on perceptions, experiences, and reflections regarding personal competence, ethical decision-making, and relational leadership in the classroom (Creswell, 2014). Non-participant classroom observations documented concrete examples of moral and spiritual modeling, relational engagement, instructional conduct, and servant leadership behaviors. School policy documents related to character education and student feedback reports, providing additional contextual and behavioral evidence. Data analysis, beginning with open coding to identify recurring behaviors, practices, and narratives related to obedience, integrity, and ethical teaching. These codes were then organized into categories reflecting broader themes of spiritual integrity, relational leadership, and pedagogical competence. Axial coding allowed for the identification of relationships among these themes, connecting the biblical principles of Philippians 2:8 with observed teacher practices and student responses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A dialogical integration of exegetical findings with empirical themes, resulting in a

coherent theological and pedagogical interpretation of personal competence in the context of CRE teaching. By integrating exegetical reflection with empirical qualitative inquiry, this methodology enabled a comprehensive understanding of how Christlike obedience informs and shapes the personal competence of CRE teachers, both internally (spiritual formation) and externally (relational and instructional practice).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a profound integration of spiritual formation, moral integrity, and pedagogical competence in the practice of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher at Sampoerna Academy Elementary School, demonstrating that personal competence is inseparable from the model of Christ's obedience described in Philippians 2:8. This research shows that the teacher's obedience to Christ functions both as an inner moral compass and as a practical guide for classroom behavior, relational interactions, and professional decision-making. Across interviews, observations, and document analysis, four major thematic dimensions emerged: humility and moral integrity, servant leadership in classroom practice, relational mentorship, and holistic student formation. Each of these themes intersects with the exegetical understanding of Philippians 2:8, highlighting obedience not as passive submission but as an active, sacrificial alignment with God's will manifested in observable teaching practices. Humility and moral integrity emerged as the most salient indicators of personal competence. The CRE teacher consistently demonstrated alignment between personal faith and professional behavior, reflecting what Fee (1995) identifies as the authentic obedience of Christ. Observations revealed that the teacher approached students with patience, fairness, and consistent moral standards, refraining from favoritism or undue leniency. Interview data emphasized that the teacher perceived personal competence as rooted in self-discipline, spiritual reflection, and ethical consistency, echoing the Pauline exhortation that Christ "*humbled himself by becoming obedient to death*" (Philippians 2:8, NIV). This lived obedience translated into practical classroom decisions: for instance, the teacher provided additional support to struggling students, maintained fairness in assessment, and addressed conflicts with empathy rather than authoritarian measures. Students responded to this approach by demonstrating trust, respect, and a willingness to engage in moral and spiritual learning, suggesting that personal competence grounded in obedience fosters relational credibility and ethical influence. The servant leadership in classroom practice highlights how the teacher's humility and obedience extended into a leadership posture characterized by selflessness, empathy, and responsibility. The CRE teacher deliberately positioned themselves as a facilitator of student growth rather than a hierarchical authority figure. Classroom observations documented moments where the teacher sacrificed personal comfort and time to support students' learning needs, modeling Christlike service through action. For example, the teacher regularly provided one-on-one guidance, mediated peer conflicts, and engaged students in collaborative problem-solving exercises without imposing authority. This approach aligns with the theological interpretation of Philippians 2:8, wherein obedience involves the voluntary surrender of personal advantage to fulfill God's purposes for others. Students internalized these lessons through observation and participation, learning ethical conduct, cooperation, and relational respect by witnessing the teacher's example. This finding confirms Greenleaf's (2002) assertion that servant leadership is both a relational and

moral exercise, which, when integrated with spiritual obedience, cultivates authentic educational influence.

Relational mentorship constitutes the dimension of personal competence observed in this study. Interviews and observations revealed that the teacher actively cultivated meaningful relationships with students, fostering trust and emotional security. This relational attentiveness included understanding students' family contexts, acknowledging their personal challenges, and providing counsel aligned with biblical principles. In a multicultural and pluralistic environment, the teacher balanced faith-based guidance with sensitivity to diverse backgrounds, demonstrating that obedience to Christ does not entail coercion but ethical discernment and relational wisdom. The exegetical analysis of Philippians 2:8 reinforces this approach, emphasizing that Christ's obedience was not self-serving but relationally oriented, seeking the good of others even in personal cost. The teacher's capacity to mediate, mentor, and support students in this way highlights the practical embodiment of obedience as relational competence, which in turn strengthens moral authority and credibility in the classroom. A holistic student formation encompassing the moral, spiritual, and cognitive development of learners. The study found that the CRE teacher's personal competence had a transformative effect on students' character and ethical awareness. Students consistently recognized the teacher as a model of honesty, responsibility, patience, and humility. Unlike rote learning of doctrinal knowledge, the teacher's obedience-driven conduct created a learning environment in which values were experienced through relational observation and practical engagement. For instance, students reported emulating the teacher's approach to problem-solving and conflict resolution, suggesting that ethical formation occurs most effectively through lived example rather than mere instruction. This finding aligns with Groome's (2011) perspective that Christian education is relationally mediated, and that teacher formation significantly impacts students' internalization of spiritual and ethical principles. The intersection of these four dimensions demonstrates that personal competence is both internally spiritual and externally practical. Obedience to Christ informs the teacher's moral compass, while humility, relational attentiveness, and ethical consistency provide the observable behaviors through which students learn, internalize, and enact Christian values. Observational data confirmed that students not only respected the teacher's authority but actively sought guidance in both academic and ethical dilemmas, indicating that obedience-based personal competence enhances both moral credibility and pedagogical effectiveness. Document analysis reinforced this finding, showing alignment between lesson plans, reflective teaching journals, and observed behaviors, further supporting the argument that spiritual formation underpins professional competence. The teacher faced high demands in balancing administrative responsibilities, curriculum expectations, and individualized attention to 80 students. The study found that sustaining obedience-driven personal competence requires intentional spiritual practices-prayer, Scripture meditation, and reflection-as well as institutional support, including professional development and collegial mentorship. Without these supports, the risk of fatigue and relational strain increases, which could diminish the consistent demonstration of obedience in practice. Therefore, the study suggests that personal competence in Christian education is not merely an individual responsibility but also a communal and institutional concern, requiring structural mechanisms to nurture

and sustain spiritual and ethical formation. This research underscores that Christlike obedience is both the source and measure of personal competence. Philippians 2:8 models an obedience that is sacrificial, relational, and morally consistent, providing a template for educators whose authority is ethical rather than coercive. Practically, the study demonstrates that the CRE teacher's integration of obedience into professional life generates trust, relational engagement, and holistic student formation, confirming that effective Christian education is grounded in the lived example of Christlike virtues.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the personal competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers is inseparable from their spiritual formation and obedience to Christ, as articulated in Philippians 2:8. The research demonstrates that obedience is not a passive submission but an active, relational, and sacrificial alignment with God's will, which informs both the inner character and outward professional conduct of the teacher. At Sampoerna Academy Elementary School, where one CRE teacher guides 80 Christian students, the embodiment of Christlike obedience manifests in humility, ethical consistency, relational attentiveness, and servant leadership, creating a transformative educational environment. First, the findings highlight that humility and moral integrity are the foundation of personal competence. The teacher's consistent demonstration of ethical conduct, fairness, and patience provides students with a credible moral exemplar. By modeling humility and obedience, the teacher cultivates trust and relational respect, enabling students to internalize Christian virtues through observation and engagement. These outcomes confirm that personal competence extends beyond technical pedagogical skills to include spiritual and ethical dimensions that shape students' character development. Second, the study emphasizes the role of servant leadership as a practical expression of obedience. The teacher leads not through authority or coercion but by serving students' needs, fostering collaborative learning, and mediating relational challenges with empathy. This servant leadership approach aligns with the exegetical understanding of Philippians 2:8, in which Christ's obedience was relationally oriented and sacrificial, demonstrating that true educational authority is moral rather than positional. Students internalize these values, experiencing the practical implications of ethical and spiritual modeling. Third, relational mentorship and holistic student formation emerged as critical dimensions of competence. The teacher actively attends to students' emotional, spiritual, and academic needs, providing guidance that integrates biblical principles with practical problem-solving. Observations and interviews reveal that students perceive the teacher as a role model whose life exemplifies the integration of faith and practice, highlighting that obedience-driven competence fosters both relational trust and ethical learning. Finally, the study identifies contextual challenges, including workload, administrative demands, and the need for institutional support to sustain spiritual formation. These findings suggest that developing personal competence is not solely an individual responsibility but requires structured support for ongoing spiritual, ethical, and professional growth. The research affirms that personal competence in Christian education is grounded in Christlike obedience, which integrates spiritual maturity, ethical integrity, relational skill, and pedagogical effectiveness. Teachers who model humility and sacrificial obedience not only enhance their professional credibility but also cultivate transformative learning environments where students internalize

Christian values through lived example. This study contributes to the understanding of teacher formation by demonstrating that spiritual and moral character, rooted in biblical obedience, is central to effective and authentic Christian education.

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