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Integrity as a Pedagogical Virtue: A Case Study of Christian Teachers at SD Negeri 13 Parmonangan

Evirolin Siahaan

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: siahaanevirolin@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study investigates pedagogical integrity as a core virtue of Christian teachers within the context of public education, using a case study approach at SD Negeri 13 Parmonangan. Grounded in the theological perspective of Matthew 5:37, which emphasizes truthfulness and moral consistency, this research integrates a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with in-depth interviews involving Christian teachers. The purpose of this study is to explore how integrity is understood, practiced, and manifested in daily pedagogical activities and how it shapes educational authority, student character formation, and school culture. The findings reveal that pedagogical integrity is expressed through four interrelated dimensions: moral consistency between teaching and practice, truthfulness and transparency in instruction and assessment, responsibility in professional commitment, and spiritual authenticity rooted in personal faith. Integrity is not merely perceived as a professional ethic but as a spiritual discipline that sustains moral resilience amid institutional and cultural challenges. Teachers who consistently embody integrity develop strong relational authority, foster trust-based learning environments, and significantly influence students' moral development through lived example. The theological reflection on Matthew 5:37 affirms that integrity is fundamentally an alignment between inner conviction and outward behavior. In the pluralistic context of public schooling, the integrity of Christian teachers also functions as a form of ethical witness that promotes respect, social harmony, and interreligious understanding. This study contributes to the discourse on Christian education by highlighting the inseparable relationship between spirituality and professional conduct. Practically, the findings underscore the importance of integrating moral and spiritual formation into teacher development programs to strengthen both pedagogical effectiveness and character education in schools.

Keywords: *Competence, Christian Religious Education, Spiritual Framework*

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary educational discourse, integrity is increasingly recognized not merely as a moral attribute but as a foundational pedagogical virtue that shapes the credibility,

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authority, and transformative power of teachers. Within Christian education, integrity holds an even deeper theological dimension because it is rooted in alignment between faith, character, and professional practice. Teachers are not only transmitters of knowledge but also living texts whose lives are read daily by students. In this sense, integrity becomes the bridge between what is taught and what is embodied. The crisis of moral consistency among educators in various contexts, marked by discrepancies between speech and action, authority and example, has intensified the urgency of re-centering integrity as the heart of pedagogical vocation (Palmer, 1998; Lickona, 2013). From a biblical perspective, integrity is inseparable from truthfulness and consistency of life. The ethical demand of Christ in Gospel of Matthew 5:37, *"Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'"* establishes a moral principle of transparency and congruence between word and deed. This teaching forms a theological foundation for understanding integrity not as situational honesty but as a stable disposition of character that governs every dimension of life, including professional responsibility. In the context of Christian teachers, integrity thus becomes a lived testimony that validates their instruction, shaping students not only cognitively but also morally and spiritually (Wolterstorff, 2004). Integrity functions as an invisible curriculum that powerfully influences students' attitudes, values, and moral reasoning. Bandura's social learning theory affirms that children learn significantly through observation and imitation of role models, particularly authority figures such as teachers (Bandura, 1986). When teachers display consistency between their convictions and their conduct-discipline and compassion, fairness and accountability, truthfulness and responsibility-students internalize these virtues as normative patterns of behavior. Conversely, when contradictions occur between what teachers profess and how they act, students often experience moral confusion and distrust, which weakens the formative function of schooling (Nucci, 2001). In Christian Religious Education (PAK), the demand for integrity becomes even more critical because teachers are entrusted with guiding students toward a holistic understanding of faith that integrates doctrine, ethics, and daily living. Integrity in this context is not merely professional ethics but spiritual authenticity, faith expressed through pedagogical practice. A teacher who teaches love but practices favoritism, who teaches honesty but tolerates dishonesty, or who teaches humility but exercises authoritarianism, undermines the moral credibility of Christian education itself (Knight, 2006). Thus, integrity serves as the moral spine of Christian pedagogy. Within Indonesian public schools, Christian teachers often operate as a minority within pluralistic educational environments. Their role is not only instructional but also representational, embodying Christian values amid diverse religious and cultural settings. This study is situated at SD Negeri 13 Parmonangan, where there are 34 Christian students and 8 Christian teachers, including one Christian Religious Education (PAK) teacher. Despite being a public school, Christian teachers in this setting carry a visible ethical responsibility to model integrity both as educators and as witnesses of faith. Their daily interactions with students, colleagues, and school leadership form a living arena in which pedagogical integrity is continuously tested and manifested.

Empirical studies on teacher integrity have shown strong correlations between moral consistency, classroom trust, and students' character development (Carr, 2003; Sockett, 2012). However, many of these studies are conducted in secular ethical frameworks and

often neglect the theological foundations that uniquely shape Christian teachers' understanding of integrity. Moreover, research focusing specifically on integrity as a lived pedagogical virtue among Christian teachers in Indonesian public elementary schools remains limited. This gap underscores the relevance of the present study. This research seeks to explore how integrity is understood, practiced, and manifested as a pedagogical virtue among Christian teachers at SD Negeri 13 Parmonangan. The study does not merely examine integrity as a personal moral trait but as an educational force that shapes classroom climate, teacher-student relationships, and the moral formation of learners. By integrating biblical-theological reflection with qualitative educational inquiry, this research aims to contribute to the development of a contextual model of pedagogical integrity for Christian educators serving in pluralistic school environments. This study is grounded in the conviction that integrity is not an optional ethical accessory for teachers, but the very foundation of authentic education. When integrity becomes the soul of pedagogy, teaching transcends technical instruction and becomes a transformative spiritual and moral vocation.

METHODS

A qualitative research design integrating a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with an in-depth interview approach was implemented to explore pedagogical integrity as a lived virtue among Christian teachers. This combined method was chosen to strengthen both the theoretical and empirical foundations of the study. The SLR was used to construct a comprehensive conceptual framework of integrity from theological, moral, and educational perspectives, while interviews were conducted to capture the real-life expressions of integrity in pedagogical practice. The research was conducted at SD Negeri 13 Parmonangan, where there are 34 Christian students and 8 Christian teachers, including one Christian Religious Education (PAK) teacher. The SLR followed a structured and transparent procedure to ensure rigor and replicability. Academic databases were systematically searched using keywords including teacher integrity, pedagogical virtue, Christian education, moral formation, and biblical ethics in teaching. Inclusion criteria were peer-reviewed journal articles and academic books published between 2000 and 2024, written in English or Indonesian, and directly addressing integrity, teacher ethics, or character formation in educational contexts. Exclusion criteria included opinion articles, popular writings, and studies lacking methodological clarity. The selected literature was screened through titles, abstracts, and full texts, then analyzed thematically to identify dominant constructs of integrity, pedagogical implications, and biblical-ethical foundations. The results of this SLR formed the theoretical lens for interpreting the field data. The empirical component of the study utilized a qualitative case study approach through semi-structured interviews. The participants consisted of the one Christian Religious Education teacher and seven other Christian teachers actively teaching at the school. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their religious affiliation, teaching experience, and direct involvement in students' moral and character formation. Interviews were conducted individually in a quiet setting within the school environment to ensure confidentiality and participant comfort. Each interview lasted between 45 and 70 minutes and was audio-recorded with informed consent. The interview protocol focused on teachers' understanding of integrity, daily pedagogical

practices reflecting integrity, challenges in maintaining moral consistency, and the influence of integrity on student character and classroom climate. These empirical themes were then dialogued with the findings of the SLR and the biblical-theological framework of integrity drawn from Matthew 5:37. Triangulation between literature data and interview findings was applied to enhance the validity of the study. In addition, member checking was conducted by returning summarized interpretations to participants for confirmation of accuracy. All participants were informed of the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without negative consequences. This combined SLR-interview methodological design allowed the study to achieve both theoretical depth and contextual authenticity in examining pedagogical integrity as a lived Christian virtue in a public elementary school setting.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the findings derived from the integration of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and in-depth interviews with Christian teachers at SD Negeri 13 Parmonangan. The discussion is framed by the biblical perspective of integrity drawn from Matthew 5:37, *"Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'*." The results reveal that pedagogical integrity is not merely a moral concept for Christian teachers but a lived spiritual discipline that shapes instructional credibility, relational trust, and the moral ecology of the classroom. Findings from the interviews indicate that all participating teachers understand integrity primarily as consistency between words, values, and actions. Teachers repeatedly emphasized that integrity is shown when what is taught in class aligns with what is practiced in daily conduct. One teacher stated that "students quickly recognize inconsistencies; when teachers say one thing but do another, learning loses its moral authority." This experiential understanding resonates strongly with the SLR results, which consistently describe integrity as the congruence between moral conviction and behavioral manifestation in educational settings. Moral consistency is foundational for effective character education. Teachers who demonstrate integrity through punctuality, honesty in assessment, and fairness in discipline reported having stronger relational authority over students. These findings support previous studies that argue integrity functions as a form of moral capital that enhances teacher legitimacy and student receptivity to moral instruction. In Christian education, this consistency is not only ethical but also theological, since teachers are called to embody the truth they proclaim. Matthew 5:37 reinforces this dimension of consistency through its emphasis on truthful speech and moral reliability. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus rejects duplicity and manipulative oath-taking by redirecting attention to the integrity of the heart. The teachers' lived practices mirror this biblical ethic: truthfulness is not confined to verbal communication but embedded in all dimensions of pedagogical interaction. Thus, integrity becomes an internalized spiritual virtue that governs external educational behavior.

Truthfulness and Transparency in Instruction and Assessment

A dominant theme emerging from the data is truthfulness and transparency, particularly in instructional delivery and student assessment. Teachers emphasized that integrity requires honesty in presenting learning materials, admitting personal limitations, and

avoiding academic manipulation. Several teachers reported that they openly acknowledge when they do not know an answer and commit to finding accurate information. Such transparency, according to participants, fosters student respect and a learning climate grounded in trust. In assessment practices, integrity is expressed through objective grading, resistance to favoritism, and the rejection of academic dishonesty. One teacher highlighted the temptation to "help" certain students with inflated scores due to emotional closeness or parental pressure but affirmed that integrity demands fairness regardless of personal ties. This finding aligns with the SLR literature that identifies fairness and impartiality as core indicators of pedagogical integrity. Within the framework of Matthew 5:37, truthfulness reflects a deeper spiritual authenticity. Jesus' call for "Yes" to mean "Yes" confronts every form of distortion, exaggeration, and hidden agenda. In the educational context, this translates into pedagogical transparency that protects students from moral confusion. When teachers practice truthfulness consistently, students internalize honesty as a normative value rather than merely an abstract moral rule. The findings also suggest that in a minority-Christian context, truthfulness becomes even more significant. Christian teachers perceive that their integrity is constantly observed not only by students but also by colleagues of different faith backgrounds. This situational awareness encourages heightened moral vigilance and reinforces the missional dimension of pedagogical integrity. Another significant theme is responsibility as an expression of integrity. Teachers consistently associated integrity with faithfulness in fulfilling professional duties, including lesson preparation, classroom management, and administrative responsibilities. Integrity was not understood as sporadic moral heroism but as sustained faithfulness in routine tasks. Teachers noted that coming prepared to class, completing evaluations on time, and providing constructive feedback to students are forms of moral obedience. This understanding is strongly supported by the SLR findings, which describe integrity as a long-term commitment to ethical consistency rather than isolated moral acts. Scholarly studies emphasize that integrity is demonstrated through perseverance in ethical practice under both supervision and solitude. In the biblical tradition, faithfulness in small things is a key marker of spiritual maturity. Matthew 5:37 implies that integrity operates beyond performative morality. The teachers' testimonies reveal that responsibility is not driven by institutional surveillance but by an internalized conscience shaped by faith. Several teachers explicitly stated that their accountability is ultimately "before God," not merely before school authorities. This vertical dimension of accountability transforms ordinary professional duties into acts of spiritual obedience. Responsibility as integrity influences institutional culture. Teachers who consistently model responsibility contribute to a collective climate of discipline, reliability, and mutual trust within the school. Students learn that faith is not separate from daily obligations but is embedded within academic and social routines.

Spiritual Authenticity as the Core of Pedagogical Integrity

One of the most profound findings of this study is the recognition of spiritual authenticity as the inner core of pedagogical integrity. All Christian teachers emphasized that integrity is sustained by personal spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Scripture reading, and moral self-examination. Without these inner practices, they acknowledged that maintaining integrity in external behavior would be difficult, especially amid professional pressures.

This insight is strongly affirmed by the SLR literature, which links moral integrity with spiritual formation in Christian pedagogy. Integrity is not merely a behavioral code but a fruit of inner transformation. Educational ethics grounded in Christian theology assert that moral actions flow from a renewed heart rather than from mere compliance with external regulations. Matthew 5:37 reinforces this inner-outer integration by shifting the locus of moral authority from formal oaths to the integrity of personal character. Jesus implies that the reliability of one's words depends on the truthfulness of one's inner life. The teachers' lived experiences confirm this theological principle: when spiritual authenticity weakens, moral consistency becomes fragile. In the context of a public school where Christian teachers are a minority, spiritual authenticity also functions as a source of resilience. Teachers shared that pressures to conform to pragmatic compromises, such as tolerating minor dishonesty or neglecting professional duties, are real. However, their personal relationship with God provides moral clarity and inner strength to resist such pressures. An important relational implication of integrity is its impact on pedagogical authority. Teachers reported that authority derived from integrity is fundamentally different from authority imposed through institutional power. Students are more likely to respect and follow teachers whose lives reflect consistency, honesty, and fairness. Conversely, teachers who lack integrity may hold formal positions of authority but struggle to gain moral influence. This finding corresponds with educational leadership studies in the SLR, which argue that moral authority is more sustainable and transformative than positional authority. Integrity generates trust, and trust becomes the relational currency of effective education. In the absence of trust, instructional influence weakens, and discipline becomes increasingly coercive.

Matthew 5:37 situates authority within the realm of truthful character rather than legalistic formalism. Jesus critiques a culture that relies on external guarantees of truth while neglecting the moral credibility of the speaker. In the classroom, this principle manifests when students respond not merely to a teacher's role but to the authenticity of the teacher's life. The case study at SD Negeri 13 Parmonangan demonstrates that teachers who consistently practice integrity experience fewer disciplinary conflicts, greater student openness, and deeper relational engagement. Authority rooted in integrity fosters a learning environment characterized by mutual respect rather than fear-based compliance. The study also reveals that maintaining integrity is not without challenges. Teachers identified several institutional and cultural pressures that test their moral consistency, including administrative workload, limited resources, student behavioral problems, and socio-economic disparities. In some cases, teachers are required to navigate ambiguous ethical situations where institutional expectations and moral convictions appear to conflict. The SLR findings highlight that teachers in developing educational contexts often encounter structural challenges that complicate ethical decision-making. Integrity, therefore, is not merely a personal virtue but also a contextual struggle. Teachers must continuously negotiate between ideal moral principles and practical constraints. In the interviews, teachers described moments of moral tension, such as whether to adjust academic standards for struggling students, how to respond to parental complaints, and how to balance compassion with fairness. Integrity, in these situations, is expressed through reflective discernment rather than rigid moral absolutism. Teachers emphasized the importance of prayerful consideration and collegial

consultation in resolving ethical dilemmas. Matthew 5:37 provides a moral compass in such ambiguous contexts by anchoring ethical decisions in truthfulness and moral clarity. Rather than manipulating circumstances for pragmatic convenience, teachers seek to align their responses with the integrity of their yes and no before God.

One of the most significant outcomes of pedagogical integrity identified in this study is its influence on student character formation. Teachers observed that students gradually internalize the values they witness consistently embodied by their teachers. Honesty, responsibility, fairness, and humility are more effectively learned through observation than through verbal instruction alone. This finding is strongly corroborated by the SLR literature, which emphasizes that moral modeling is the most powerful mechanism of character education. Students interpret teacher behavior as a living curriculum that shapes their moral imagination. When integrity is visible and consistent, it becomes normative for student behavior. Teachers shared specific examples of students who began to demonstrate greater honesty in completing assignments, increased responsibility in classroom duties, and improved relational attitudes after prolonged exposure to integrity-centered teaching. These behavioral changes were not produced through punitive measures but through quiet moral influence sustained over time. From a theological perspective, this process reflects the incarnational nature of Christian education. Just as Christ embodied divine truth, teachers are called to embody moral truth in tangible ways. Matthew 5:37, therefore, is not merely an ethical injunction for individual behavior but a pedagogical mandate for moral formation through lived example. The contextual dimension of this case study reveals that pedagogical integrity also functions as a form of silent witness in a pluralistic educational environment. As a minority group, Christian teachers are acutely aware that their moral conduct is often perceived as a reflection of their faith community. Integrity thus carries missional significance. Teachers expressed that their commitment to integrity is partly motivated by the desire to honor Christ through their professional lives. Their ethical consistency becomes a non-verbal testimony that transcends doctrinal instruction. This aligns with the SLR literature on faith-based education in plural contexts, which emphasizes lifestyle witness as a primary mode of religious presence in public institutions. Matthew 5:37 supports this missional dimension by grounding witness in truthful living rather than rhetorical assertion. A consistent yes and no communicates moral reliability that invites trust across religious boundaries. In this way, integrity facilitates interfaith respect and social harmony. Integrity helps Christian teachers navigate identity tensions without resorting to defensive or confrontational postures. Their moral credibility becomes a bridge for relational dialogue and collaborative engagement with colleagues and students of different backgrounds. The SLR supplies the conceptual scaffolding, while the field data demonstrate how these dimensions are lived out in daily educational practice. Theologically, Matthew 5:37 serves as a unifying interpretive key that connects inner character with outward behavior. Integrity is not simply behavioral conformity to ethical codes but an existential alignment of heart, word, and action before God and others. Educationally, the findings affirm that integrity is foundational rather than supplementary to effective teaching. It shapes authority, learning climate, student character, institutional trust, and the public witness of Christian educators. Integrity thus emerges as a central pedagogical virtue that integrates professional competence with spiritual maturity. The

results of this study demonstrate that pedagogical integrity, when understood through the lens of Matthew 5:37, is a lived spiritual discipline that permeates every dimension of educational practice. Integrity manifests in moral consistency, truthfulness, responsibility, spiritual authenticity, and relational authority. It enables Christian teachers to exercise pedagogical influence not through coercion but through credible moral example. In a minority-Christian public school context, integrity also functions as a powerful form of ethical witness that contributes to student character formation and social harmony. The integration of SLR and field findings affirms that integrity is not merely an abstract ideal but a concrete virtue that sustains both educational excellence and Christian discipleship in everyday teaching.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined pedagogical integrity as a core virtue of Christian teachers through the integrated lens of Systematic Literature Review, empirical interviews, and theological reflection on Matthew 5:37. The findings affirm that integrity is not merely an ethical attribute attached to professionalism but a spiritually grounded disposition that shapes the entire educational vocation of Christian teachers. Integrity emerges as the congruence between inner conviction and outward practice, where words, decisions, and actions are consistently aligned in truthfulness before God and the school community. The empirical data reveal that integrity is concretely expressed through moral consistency in teaching, honesty and transparency in instructional and assessment practices, responsibility in professional commitments, and spiritual authenticity sustained through personal faith disciplines. These dimensions demonstrate that integrity operates not as a momentary moral stance but as a continuous spiritual discipline that is cultivated through obedience, reflection, and accountability. The teachers' testimonies confirm that integrity strengthens pedagogical authority, fosters trust-based relationships with students, and creates a positive moral climate that supports effective learning and character formation. Matthew 5:37 provides a strong ethical foundation for understanding integrity as the embodiment of truthful living without duplicity. Jesus' call for simplicity of speech reflects the demand for simplicity of character. This study shows that Christian teachers who internalize this principle are better equipped to navigate moral tensions, resist pragmatic compromises, and remain faithful to their vocational calling even amid institutional and cultural pressures. Integrity, therefore, is not only a personal moral achievement but a form of spiritual obedience that reflects devotion to Christ in the context of education. The study confirms that integrity functions as the foundation of moral authority and ethical influence. Teachers who consistently model integrity do not rely primarily on positional power or disciplinary force to establish authority. Rather, their credibility is built through trust, fairness, and reliability, which in turn enhances students' moral receptivity and character development. Students learn integrity not only as a moral concept but as a lived reality embodied in their teachers' daily conduct. In the context of a public school with religious plurality, pedagogical integrity also plays a missional and social role. The consistent ethical witness of Christian teachers contributes to mutual respect, social harmony, and positive interreligious relations. Integrity becomes a silent testimony that transcends doctrinal boundaries and demonstrates the transformative power of faith through concrete professional practice. This study contributes theoretically by reinforcing the integration of educational ethics and Christian spirituality in the

discourse on teacher competence. Practically, it offers important implications for teacher formation, emphasizing that professional development should not only target technical pedagogical skills but also nurture moral and spiritual maturity. For policymakers and school leaders, the findings highlight the importance of creating institutional environments that support ethical consistency, transparency, and spiritual well-being among teachers. This study acknowledges its limitations as a single-case qualitative investigation. Future research is recommended to explore pedagogical integrity across broader contexts, comparative interfaith settings, and different educational levels. Nevertheless, this case study affirms that integrity, grounded in biblical truth and lived in faithful practice, remains a vital pedagogical virtue for sustaining both educational excellence and Christian witness in contemporary schools.

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