



Christian Religious Education Teachers' Competence in Cultivating the Value of Holiness: A Reflective Study of Exodus 30:20 at SMP Negeri 6 Satu Atap Bahorok

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers' competence in cultivating the value of holiness through an exegetical reflection on Exodus 30:20 within the educational context of SMP Negeri 6 Satu Atap Bahorok. The biblical text emphasizes ritual washing before entering the Tent of Meeting, symbolizing reverence and preparedness before a holy God. The research seeks to determine how the pedagogical competence of the CRE teacher influences students' theological understanding and ethical internalization of holiness in contemporary school life. Using a quantitative descriptive method with a correlational approach, the study involved all 15 Christian students enrolled at the school as research participants. Data were collected through a validated Likert-scale questionnaire measuring two principal variables: teacher competence (including exegetical mastery, instructional clarity, contextualization, classroom management, and assessment alignment) and students' understanding of holiness (including theological interpretation, conceptual comprehension, and practical application). Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, and data were analyzed through descriptive statistics and Pearson's Product-Moment correlation at a 0.05 significance level. The findings reveal a positive and statistically significant relationship between perceived teacher competence and students' understanding of holiness. Students demonstrated stronger cognitive and applicative comprehension when instruction integrated theological depth with dialogical engagement and ethical modeling. The study concludes that pedagogical competence functions as a hermeneutical bridge between biblical ritual symbolism and adolescent character formation, affirming the importance of professional excellence in CRE instruction for fostering disciplined and reverent Christian living.

Keywords: Teachers' Competence, Christian Religious Education, Holiness

INTRODUCTION

Holiness occupies a central position in biblical theology, functioning not merely as a ritual category but as a defining attribute of God and a normative calling for God's people. In educational contexts shaped by Christian faith, the transmission of holiness as a lived value demands more than doctrinal explanation; it requires pedagogical intentionality and professional competence. Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers, therefore, carry a dual mandate: to interpret Scripture responsibly and to cultivate moral and spiritual formation among students. This study explores Christian Religious Education teachers' competence in cultivating the value of holiness through a reflective engagement with Exodus 30:20 within the learning environment of SMP Negeri 6 Satu Atap Bahorok, where 15 Christian students are guided within a faculty that includes six Christian teachers, one of whom serves as the CRE teacher. Exodus 30:20 forms part of the priestly legislation concerning ritual purification before entering the Tent of Meeting: "When they go into the tent of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, they shall wash with water, so that they may not die" (NRSV). This verse underscores the gravity of approaching God and the necessity of ritual cleansing as an expression of reverence and obedience. Scholars note that holiness in Exodus is intrinsically linked to divine presence; Israel's vocation is shaped by proximity to a holy God whose dwelling among them requires consecration and order (Fretheim, 1991). The washing prescribed in Exodus 30 is not merely hygienic but symbolic, embodying the theological principle that access to the sacred demands preparation and transformation.

Holiness in the Pentateuch conveys separation for divine purpose rather than mere moral isolation. Christopher J. H. Wright argues that Israel's holiness derives from covenantal election, meaning that ethical distinctiveness flows from relational belonging to God (Wright, 2004). Thus, the ritual washing of Exodus 30:20 signals both reverence and responsibility. In contemporary Christian education, this concept must be translated into categories intelligible to adolescents who navigate pluralistic social environments. Holiness cannot be reduced to ritual compliance; it must be framed as integrity, self-discipline, and moral clarity in daily life. The competence of the CRE teacher becomes decisive in mediating this theological depth into pedagogically meaningful instruction. Educational theory further supports the significance of teacher competence in shaping value formation. Lee S. Shulman's framework of pedagogical content knowledge emphasizes that effective teaching integrates mastery of subject matter with strategies for making that content comprehensible and transformative (Shulman, 1987). In the case of Exodus 30:20, CRE teachers must interpret ancient priestly legislation with exegetical precision while simultaneously contextualizing its symbolism for students. Without this integrative competence, holiness risks being misunderstood as archaic ritualism or moralistic restriction. Holistic education models highlight the role of teachers as moral exemplars. Paulo Freire emphasizes that authentic education involves the congruence between word and action, suggesting that credibility enhances transformative impact (Freire, 2000). In a junior high school setting such as SMP Negeri 6 Satu Atap Bahorok, where students are in formative stages of identity development, the lived example of teachers significantly influences ethical internalization. The presence of six Christian teachers within the faculty provides a broader communal context for reinforcing the value

of holiness, yet the CRE teacher bears primary responsibility for articulating its biblical foundation. Within this institutional setting, the relatively small number of 15 Christian students presents both opportunity and challenge. The intimate scale allows for dialogical instruction and personalized mentoring, yet it also requires deliberate pedagogical structure to ensure systematic theological understanding. The integration of ritual symbolism, covenant theology, and practical application must therefore be handled with methodological clarity. This research seeks to examine how the competence of the CRE teacher shapes students' understanding of holiness as reflected in Exodus 30:20 and how pedagogical strategies influence their ability to translate biblical consecration into contemporary moral practice. By situating exegetical reflection within an empirical educational framework, the study contributes to ongoing discourse at the intersection of biblical theology and professional Christian pedagogy.

METHODS

The quantitative paradigm was selected to enable systematic measurement of instructional variables and statistical analysis of the association between pedagogical competence and student learning outcomes (Creswell, 2014). The correlational model was deemed appropriate because the study sought to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between teacher competence and students' comprehension of biblical holiness rather than to establish causal inference. The population of the study consisted of all 15 Christian students enrolled at the school during the academic year in which the research was conducted. Given the relatively small population size, total sampling was applied, meaning that all 15 students participated as respondents. Although the school includes six Christian teachers (including the CRE teacher), the primary data source was the student body, since the research objective was to measure students' perceptions of the CRE teacher's competence and their own understanding of holiness in Exodus 30:20. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The instrument comprised two principal variables. The first variable measured the competence of the CRE teacher, including indicators such as mastery of biblical exegesis, clarity in explaining the theological meaning of ritual washing, ability to contextualize holiness within adolescent life, use of interactive and reflective learning strategies, classroom management effectiveness, and alignment between learning objectives and assessment. These indicators were adapted from established teacher competence frameworks and pedagogical theory (Shulman, 1987; Mulyasa, 2013). The second variable assessed students' understanding of holiness in Exodus 30:20. Indicators included their ability to explain the ritual and theological context of priestly washing, articulate the concept of holiness as consecration rather than mere ritual purity, identify contemporary expressions of moral and spiritual discipline, and demonstrate reflective commitment to personal integrity. The questionnaire items were formulated to capture both cognitive comprehension and affective internalization. To ensure content validity, the instrument was reviewed by two experts in biblical studies and educational methodology. Construct validity was evaluated through item analysis, and reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, with a minimum threshold of 0.70 considered acceptable for internal consistency (Creswell, 2014). Prior to data collection, formal permission was

obtained from the school administration, and informed consent was secured from student participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained to minimize social desirability bias. Data analysis was conducted in two stages. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviations, were calculated to determine the overall level of teacher competence and students' understanding of holiness. Subsequently, Pearson's Product-Moment correlation was employed to test the relationship between the two variables. Statistical significance was evaluated at the 0.05 level. Through this methodological framework, the study aimed to provide empirical evidence regarding the extent to which CRE teachers' professional competence contributes to students' theological literacy and moral formation concerning the biblical value of holiness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate a strong and positive relationship between Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers' competence and students' understanding of the value of holiness as reflected in Exodus 30:20 within the instructional context of SMP Negeri 6 Satu Atap Bahorok. Descriptive statistical analysis revealed that students generally perceived the CRE teacher's competence at a high level across the principal dimensions measured: mastery of biblical content, clarity of theological explanation, contextualization of ritual symbolism, classroom management, instructional strategy, and evaluative alignment. The mean score for teacher competence was situated within the upper interpretive range of the Likert scale, indicating consistent student agreement that the teacher demonstrated professional capability in delivering instruction on holiness. Similarly, students' understanding of holiness, assessed through their ability to interpret the priestly washing command, articulate its theological meaning, and apply its ethical implications, also yielded high average scores. Pearson's Product-Moment correlation analysis demonstrated a statistically significant positive correlation between the two variables at the 0.05 level, suggesting that higher perceived teacher competence corresponded with stronger student comprehension and internalization of holiness as a biblical value.

Exodus 30:20 forms part of the priestly instructions concerning ritual purification prior to entering the Tent of Meeting or approaching the altar. The text states that priests must wash with water "so that they may not die," underscoring the gravity of approaching divine presence without proper consecration. Within the larger priestly theology of Exodus 25-31 and 35-40, holiness functions as a structural principle governing Israel's liturgical life. The ritual washing symbolizes preparation, reverence, and alignment with God's sacred order. In the classroom setting, the CRE teacher's competence in explicating this context proved decisive. Students reported clearer understanding when the teacher explained that ritual washing in the ancient Israelite system was not primarily about physical cleanliness but about covenantal obedience and symbolic readiness before a holy God. This aligns with Terence E. Fretheim's interpretation that holiness in Exodus reflects relational proximity to God rather than abstract ritualism (Fretheim, 1991). The data show that when the teacher articulated the covenantal framework behind the priestly legislation, students were able to move beyond literalistic interpretation toward theological comprehension. The transformation of ancient priestly ritual into

contemporary moral formation required deliberate contextualization. Students indicated that the teacher connected the symbolic act of washing with modern concepts such as self-discipline, ethical integrity, mental preparation, and spiritual accountability. For example, the act of washing before entering sacred space was paralleled with the need for personal reflection before making moral decisions, preparing one's heart before worship, and maintaining integrity in social interactions. Such contextual bridges demonstrate effective pedagogical content knowledge in the sense articulated by Lee S. Shulman, wherein teachers translate disciplinary knowledge into forms accessible to learners (Shulman, 1987). Students who perceived stronger clarity and coherence in these explanations exhibited higher levels of agreement in survey items measuring conceptual and applicative understanding. This suggests that competence in hermeneutical translation directly enhances theological literacy.

The data reveal that dialogical and participatory instructional strategies contributed significantly to student engagement. The CRE teacher reportedly employed small-group discussions, reflective journaling, and scenario-based analysis to explore the practical implications of holiness. For instance, students were invited to consider situations involving peer pressure, academic dishonesty, online behavior, and relational conflict, and to evaluate how the principle of consecration might inform their responses. These pedagogical approaches fostered reflective learning rather than passive memorization. The correlation between interactive methodology and ethical articulation supports Paulo Freire's emphasis on active participation in value formation, wherein learners internalize concepts through dialogue and critical engagement (Freire, 2000). Although Freire's framework originates in critical pedagogy, its emphasis on dialogical education resonates with the CRE teacher's strategy of inviting students into interpretive participation. An additional dimension of the findings concerns the role of ethical modeling within a small institutional context. With only 15 Christian students and six Christian teachers (including the CRE teacher), the school environment allows for close relational interaction. Students' responses suggest that perceptions of teacher integrity reinforced the credibility of the message of holiness. When the teacher consistently demonstrated fairness, discipline, punctuality, and respectful communication, students were more inclined to perceive holiness as attainable and relevant rather than abstract or unattainable. This relational consistency illustrates the integration of professional competence and moral example. Holiness, as interpreted from Exodus 30:20, involves alignment between external action and internal disposition; thus, teacher authenticity becomes an embodied extension of the biblical principle. The discussion also highlights the formative impact of structured assessment. Students reported that reflective essays and oral presentations helped consolidate their understanding of the theological meaning of washing and its ethical implications. The teacher's competence in aligning assessment with learning objectives ensured that evaluation measured not only cognitive recall but also moral reasoning. For example, scenario-based questions required students to analyze hypothetical ethical dilemmas in light of the holiness principle, thereby integrating scriptural knowledge with practical discernment. The positive correlation between teacher competence and student understanding suggests that systematic assessment strengthens value internalization.

A small subset of students expressed moderate uncertainty in articulating the broader canonical theology of holiness beyond Exodus 30:20, indicating that while contextual application was strong, deeper intertextual connections, such as links to Levitical holiness codes or New Testament reinterpretations, were less developed. This observation suggests opportunities for curricular expansion. Integrating cross-textual study could deepen theological coherence and reinforce continuity between ritual symbolism and ethical transformation. The small sample size limits generalizability; however, the total sampling approach ensures representational accuracy within this specific locus. The statistically significant correlation, despite limited numerical scope, underscores the strength of the association between pedagogical competence and theological comprehension in intimate educational environments. The results affirm that Christian Religious Education teachers' competence significantly shapes students' understanding of holiness as reflected in Exodus 30:20. Effective exegesis, contextual translation, dialogical pedagogy, consistent ethical modeling, and aligned assessment collectively contribute to the transformation of ancient priestly instruction into contemporary moral formation. Within the educational setting of SMP Negeri 6 Satu Atap Bahorok, the integration of theological depth and pedagogical professionalism enabled students to reinterpret ritual washing as a metaphor for disciplined and reverent living. The study thus reinforces the principle that pedagogical competence functions as a hermeneutical bridge, connecting scriptural holiness with adolescent character development in pluralistic school contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study examined Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers' competence in cultivating the value of holiness through a reflective engagement with Exodus 30:20 within the instructional context of SMP Negeri 6 Satu Atap Bahorok. The findings demonstrate a positive and statistically significant relationship between perceived teacher competence and students' understanding of holiness. Higher levels of pedagogical competence, manifested in exegetical mastery, contextual explanation, dialogical methodology, structured classroom management, and aligned assessment, corresponded with stronger student comprehension and ethical internalization of the biblical concept of consecration. Exodus 30:20 emphasizes the seriousness of approaching God without preparation, symbolized through ritual washing. Within its priestly framework, holiness is not merely ritual purity but covenantal alignment with the presence of a holy God. The study shows that when the CRE teacher effectively communicated this theological depth and translated ritual symbolism into contemporary categories such as integrity, self-discipline, and moral readiness, students were able to reinterpret holiness as a lived ethical commitment rather than an archaic ceremonial requirement. In the specific context of 15 Christian students supported by six Christian teachers, the small educational environment provided opportunity for relational mentorship and dialogical engagement. The results suggest that teacher credibility and ethical modeling reinforced the persuasive force of biblical instruction. Holiness was perceived not only as doctrinal content but also as observable practice embodied within the school community. The research affirms that pedagogical competence plays a decisive role in theological literacy and character formation. Future studies may incorporate

qualitative approaches, such as classroom observation or in-depth interviews, to enrich interpretive depth and explore long-term behavioral outcomes. Expanding the research across multiple institutions would also enhance generalizability. Strengthening the professional competence of CRE teachers is both an educational necessity and a theological vocation. When exegetical rigor is integrated with pedagogical skill and ethical authenticity, Scripture becomes a transformative instrument for cultivating holiness in contemporary adolescent life.

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