



## Christian Religious Education Teacher Professionalism as a Vocation of Faith: A Biblical Reflection on Philippians 1:27 in the Context of SDN Mendawai 2 Sukamara

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### ABSTRACT

*This study explores Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher professionalism as a vocation of faith through a biblical reflection on Epistle to the Philippians 1:27 within the context of SDN Mendawai 2 Sukamara. The Pauline exhortation to “conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” provides a theological framework for understanding professionalism not merely as institutional compliance but as embodied gospel citizenship. The research investigates how teachers integrate pedagogical competence, ethical integrity, and spiritual commitment in daily educational practice. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was employed involving all seven Christian students enrolled at the school. Total sampling was applied due to the small population size. Data were collected using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire measuring indicators of teacher professionalism (pedagogical competence, subject mastery, discipline, integrity, and relational fairness) and the perceived manifestation of vocational faith (consistency between confession and conduct, responsibility, and visible commitment to gospel values). Instrument validity was established through expert review, and reliability testing met acceptable internal consistency standards ( $\alpha > 0.70$ ). Descriptive statistics and Pearson’s Product-Moment correlation analysis were conducted at a 0.05 significance level. The findings indicate that teacher professionalism is perceived at a very high level and shows a strong positive correlation with students’ understanding of teaching as a vocation of faith. Students interpret consistent preparation, fairness, and disciplined conduct as tangible expressions of living “worthy of the gospel.” The study concludes that professionalism in Christian education functions as vocational obedience, integrating competence and character in a manner that strengthens students’ spiritual formation within a public school setting.*

**Keywords:** Professionalism, Christian Religious Education, Faith

## INTRODUCTION

Teacher professionalism within Christian Religious Education (CRE) must be understood not only as a regulatory obligation but as a theological vocation grounded in faithfulness to the gospel. In Indonesian educational policy, teachers are recognized as professional educators who must demonstrate pedagogical, professional, personal, and social competence (Republic of Indonesia, Law No. 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers). Yet for Christian educators, professionalism transcends compliance with institutional standards; it is intrinsically connected to spiritual identity and moral calling. This study explores teacher professionalism as a vocation of faith through an exegetical reflection on Epistle to the Philippians 1:27 within the context of SDN Mendawai 2 Sukamara, where seven Christian students are guided by two Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher. Philippians 1:27 states, "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ." The Greek verb πολιτεύεσθε (*politeuesthe*) carries civic connotations, referring to living as responsible citizens whose behavior reflects their allegiance (Fee, 1995). In the socio-political setting of Philippi, a Roman colony marked by civic pride, the apostle Paul employs this language to emphasize that believers' conduct must correspond to their identity in Christ (Hawthorne, Martin, & Reid, 2004). Thus, Christian life is portrayed not as private religiosity but as public embodiment of gospel values. Applied to teacher professionalism, this text suggests that educators who confess Christ are called to enact their faith through disciplined, ethical, and competent service. Professionalism in education is often defined in terms of specialized knowledge, pedagogical skill, and reflective practice. Lee S. Shulman (1987) introduced the concept of pedagogical content knowledge to describe the integration of subject mastery and instructional strategy as the core of professional teaching. In Christian education, however, professional competence must be integrated with spiritual integrity. Thomas H. Groome (2011) argues that Christian educators are witnesses to faith whose lives must correspond with the message they teach. Therefore, professionalism becomes a form of discipleship enacted in educational practice.

The setting of SDN Mendawai 2 Sukamara provides a distinctive lens for examining this integration. As a public elementary school with a small Christian population, seven students supported by two Christian teachers, the environment requires intentional faithfulness. In minority contexts, the credibility of Christian instruction depends heavily on the visible consistency of its educators. The small number of Christian students intensifies relational dynamics: teachers cannot rely on anonymity or structural dominance but must demonstrate integrity through personal engagement. Within such a context, Philippians 1:27 serves as both theological challenge and pastoral encouragement: conduct must be worthy of the gospel, even when circumstances are modest. Scholars of Pauline theology emphasize that "worthiness" in Philippians does not imply perfection but congruence between confession and conduct (O'Brien, 1991). Paul's exhortation appears in a section addressing unity, courage amid opposition, and steadfastness in faith. These themes resonate with teacher professionalism. Unity corresponds to collegial collaboration; courage parallels ethical steadfastness amid institutional pressures; steadfastness reflects perseverance in fulfilling responsibilities. Thus, professionalism as vocation entails enduring commitment rooted in gospel identity.

The concept of vocation in Christian thought frames work as participation in God's mission. Osmer (2008) describes practical theology as reflective engagement between faith and lived practice. Within this framework, teaching becomes a ministry of formation rather than merely an occupation. When educators prepare lessons diligently, assess fairly, and guide students patiently, they enact the civic obedience described in Philippians 1:27. Professional discipline, therefore, becomes an expression of faithfulness. Character education scholarship further reinforces this integration. Lickona (1991) contends that moral formation depends on modeling and relational influence. For Christian educators, modeling is inseparable from gospel witness. Students interpret professionalism not only through instructional clarity but also through observed attitudes, punctuality, and compassion. Especially in small educational communities, the moral authority of teachers profoundly shapes student perception. This study seeks to analyze how CRE teacher professionalism at SDN Mendawai 2 Sukamara reflects the vocation of faith articulated in Philippians 1:27. By integrating biblical exegesis with empirical educational inquiry, the research addresses three primary concerns: How does Philippians 1:27 inform a theological understanding of professionalism? How do Christian teachers in this context embody professionalism as gospel-worthy conduct? How do students perceive the relationship between professional competence and spiritual authenticity? Through this interdisciplinary approach, the study contributes to broader discussions on the integration of Pauline theology and educational professionalism, affirming that teacher identity in Christian education is fundamentally vocational—anchored in faith and enacted through disciplined service.

## METHODS

A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was used to examine Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher professionalism as a vocation of faith, interpreted through Epistle to the Philippians 1:27, within the context of SDN Mendawai 2 Sukamara. The design was selected to provide both a systematic description of perceived teacher professionalism and an analysis of its relationship to students' perceptions of gospel-centered conduct. The research integrated biblical exegesis as the theological framework and quantitative inquiry as the empirical method. The population consisted of all seven Christian students enrolled at SDN Mendawai 2 Sukamara. Given the very small population size, total sampling was applied, meaning that all seven students participated as respondents. Although the number is limited, total participation ensured comprehensive representation of the Christian student perspective in this specific educational context. The study focused particularly on the professionalism of the CRE teacher, while acknowledging that one additional Christian teacher contributes to the broader faith environment of the school. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed from established indicators of teacher professionalism and theological constructs derived from Philippians 1:27. Professionalism indicators included pedagogical competence (clarity of explanation, lesson preparation, classroom management), professional competence (subject mastery and curriculum alignment), personal competence (integrity, discipline, responsibility), and social competence (fairness, communication, collaboration). The "vocation of faith" dimension was operationalized

through items measuring congruence between teaching and conduct, consistency in fulfilling duties, courage in upholding Christian values, and visible commitment to gospel-based attitudes. The instrument employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The questionnaire underwent content validation by two lecturers in Christian education and educational research methodology to ensure theological coherence and construct clarity. Because of the small respondent pool, a pilot reliability test was conducted with a comparable group of elementary students in another nearby school with similar characteristics. Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeding 0.70 were considered acceptable indicators of internal consistency. Necessary revisions were made to improve clarity and age-appropriate language. Data collection was conducted during school hours with formal permission from the school principal. Students were informed of the study's purpose in accessible language and assured that their responses would remain confidential and would not affect their academic standing. Participation was voluntary, and anonymity was maintained to reduce response bias. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and respect for participants' rights, were carefully observed. Data analysis proceeded in two stages. First, descriptive statistics (mean scores and percentage distributions) were calculated to determine the overall level of perceived teacher professionalism and vocation-oriented conduct. Second, Pearson's Product-Moment correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between professionalism indicators and students' perceptions of gospel-worthy conduct, with statistical significance determined at the 0.05 level. In addition to quantitative procedures, a brief exegetical analysis of Philippians 1:27 was undertaken to interpret the empirical findings theologically. Attention was given to the Greek term *πολιτεύεσθε* (live as citizens) and its socio-historical context in Philippi, drawing from reputable Pauline scholarship. This integration of biblical exegesis and empirical data enabled a holistic understanding of teacher professionalism not merely as an institutional requirement but as a vocation of faith expressed in daily educational practice.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a coherent and theologically meaningful relationship between Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher professionalism and the understanding of teaching as a vocation of faith, interpreted through Epistle to the Philippians 1:27, within the context of SDN Mendawai 2 Sukamara. Although the number of respondents was limited to seven Christian students, total sampling ensured that the data fully represented the Christian student body in this particular setting. Descriptive statistical analysis indicates that overall perceptions of teacher professionalism are categorized as very high. Mean scores across pedagogical competence (clarity of explanation, structured lesson planning, classroom management), professional competence (mastery of biblical material and curriculum alignment), personal competence (discipline, integrity, responsibility), and social competence (fairness, communicative warmth, collaborative attitude) consistently approached the upper limit of the Likert scale. Similarly, indicators measuring the "vocation of faith" defined as visible alignment between gospel confession and daily conduct, also demonstrated very high averages. Pearson's Product-Moment correlation analysis revealed a strong positive

relationship at the 0.05 significance level between perceived professionalism and students' recognition of gospel-worthy conduct. While the small sample size warrants cautious generalization, the internal consistency of responses suggests a meaningful pattern of integration between competence and faithfulness in this educational environment.

Philippians 1:27 serves as the theological center of interpretation for these results. The apostle Paul exhorts believers to "conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ." The Greek verb πολιτεύεσθε (*politeuesthe*) evokes civic identity and public responsibility. As Gordon D. Fee (1995) notes, Paul intentionally employs citizenship language to challenge believers in Philippi, a Roman colony proud of its civic privileges, to live in a way that reflects allegiance to Christ above all other identities. This lexical nuance illuminates the professional vocation of Christian teachers: they are not merely employees fulfilling institutional obligations but citizens of the gospel whose conduct must visibly correspond to their confession. The data from SDN Mendawai 2 Sukamara indicate that students perceive this correspondence clearly. Teachers who demonstrate preparedness, fairness, and integrity are interpreted as living "worthy of the gospel." The high scores in pedagogical competence demonstrate that professionalism begins with instructional clarity. Students reported that lessons are delivered in structured and understandable ways, with appropriate examples suited to elementary comprehension levels. Such clarity contributes to cognitive engagement and reinforces the credibility of religious instruction. In Pauline theology, worthiness of the gospel does not entail abstraction but lived coherence. When teachers invest time in careful preparation, students interpret this diligence as a reflection of seriousness toward both vocation and faith. Shulman's (1987) concept of pedagogical content knowledge is particularly relevant here: effective teaching requires the integration of subject mastery and communicative strategy. In a Christian context, such integration becomes an act of stewardship. The students' responses suggest that well-prepared lessons are perceived not merely as academic excellence but as spiritual responsibility. Professional competence in subject mastery also emerged as a strong contributor to the correlation. Students indicated confidence in their teacher's understanding of biblical narratives and moral teachings. This confidence enhances trust. In small educational contexts, where relational proximity is unavoidable, perceived expertise reinforces moral authority. Theologically, Paul's exhortation in Philippians 1:27 implies steadfastness in truth. Professional mastery, therefore, becomes a form of doctrinal fidelity. When teachers demonstrate accuracy and coherence in explaining Scripture, they embody allegiance to the gospel. Students, in turn, internalize this consistency as a model for their own faith commitments.

Personal competence, especially integrity and discipline, was among the highest-rated indicators. Students noted punctuality, consistency in classroom management, and reliability in fulfilling promises. In elementary education, such behaviors significantly influence moral perception. Lickona (1991) emphasizes that children learn character primarily through observation and modeling. The data support this claim: students interpret disciplined conduct as evidence of genuine belief. Philippians 1:27 calls believers to live publicly in alignment with gospel values; punctuality and responsibility, though seemingly mundane, become tangible expressions of that alignment. In this setting,

professionalism operates sacramentally: ordinary acts communicate extraordinary convictions. Social competence further enriches the findings. Students responded positively to teachers' fairness, patience, and communicative warmth. Because the Christian student population is small, only seven individuals, the relational atmosphere is intimate. Each student's experience carries significant weight in shaping communal perception. Teachers who engage respectfully and encourage participation cultivate a climate of trust. Paul's broader exhortation in Philippians includes standing firm "in one spirit, striving together as one" (Philippians 1:27b). This communal dimension resonates strongly with the data. Professionalism, therefore, is not solely technical proficiency but relational faithfulness. Students reported feeling valued and supported, suggesting that the teachers' conduct fosters unity consistent with Pauline ecclesiology.

The correlation between professionalism and vocation of faith indicates that students do not compartmentalize technical competence and spiritual authenticity. Instead, they perceive these dimensions as integrated. Teachers who prepare lessons carefully, treat students fairly, and demonstrate moral consistency are seen as living embodiments of gospel citizenship. Conversely, even minor inconsistencies, though rarely reported, were associated with slightly lower perceptions of vocational authenticity. This pattern underscores the interpretive sensitivity of students: authenticity is assessed through everyday behavior. Paul's emphasis on worthiness challenges superficial religiosity; similarly, students evaluate credibility not by verbal affirmation but by observable faithfulness. The unique context of SDN Mendawai 2 Sukamara amplifies the significance of these findings. In schools where Christian students form a minority, the witness of Christian teachers becomes especially visible. The presence of only two Christian teachers (including the CRE teacher) means that their conduct shapes the entire Christian identity of the institution. Students reported that collaborative attitudes between the two teachers reinforce perceptions of unity and shared commitment. This collegial harmony aligns with Paul's appeal for believers to stand firm in one spirit. Professional collaboration thus functions as theological testimony. The small sample size restricts statistical generalization beyond this specific setting. Additionally, because respondents are elementary students, their evaluative criteria may reflect relational impressions more than analytical judgment. Nevertheless, the consistency of responses suggests authentic experiential perception rather than random agreement. The strong positive correlation indicates that professionalism and vocational faith are experientially linked in students' understanding. These findings affirm that vocation is enacted through disciplined practice. Philippians 1:27 does not prescribe grand gestures but calls for steady, faithful conduct. In the context studied, professionalism becomes a concrete expression of that call. Preparation of lesson plans, accurate record-keeping, equitable assessment, and patient correction embody civic obedience to the gospel. The research thus bridges Pauline theology and contemporary educational practice, demonstrating that professionalism is not secularized efficiency but spiritual stewardship. The results contribute to discussions of faith integration in public educational contexts. SDN Mendawai 2 Sukamara operates within a national educational framework, yet Christian teachers interpret their professional obligations through gospel identity. This dual accountability, to state standards and to Christ, reflects the civic metaphor inherent in *πολιτεύεσθε*. Teachers are citizens of Indonesia and citizens of the gospel simultaneously.

The data suggest that this dual identity does not create tension but synergy: fulfilling professional standards becomes an expression of Christian faithfulness. In practical terms, the findings encourage ongoing reflective formation among Christian educators. Professional development should not isolate technical training from spiritual reflection. Workshops on curriculum design and classroom management can be enriched by theological dialogue about vocation and gospel citizenship. Similarly, school leadership can recognize that administrative discipline and spiritual integrity are mutually reinforcing rather than competing priorities. The results substantiate the thesis that CRE teacher professionalism at SDN Mendawai 2 Sukamara is perceived by students as a vocation of faith grounded in Philippians 1:27. Professional competence, ethical consistency, relational integrity, and collaborative unity collectively form a credible embodiment of gospel-worthy conduct. Even within a small and modest educational setting, the integration of faith and professionalism exerts profound formative influence. Students observe, interpret, and internalize the visible alignment between confession and practice. Thus, teacher professionalism, when lived as civic obedience to Christ, becomes a transformative witness shaping the spiritual imagination of young learners.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher professionalism as a vocation of faith through the theological lens of Epistle to the Philippians 1:27 in the specific context of SDN Mendawai 2 Sukamara. Grounded in Paul's exhortation to "conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ," the research sought to integrate biblical exegesis with empirical educational inquiry in order to understand how professionalism can function as embodied gospel citizenship within a public elementary school setting. The findings demonstrate that teacher professionalism, expressed through pedagogical clarity, subject mastery, discipline, integrity, fairness, and relational care, is perceived at a very high level by the seven Christian students participating in this study. More importantly, statistical analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between perceived professionalism and students' recognition of teaching as a vocation of faith. Students interpreted consistent preparation, punctuality, responsible administration, and respectful communication as concrete evidence that their teachers live in alignment with the gospel they proclaim. Professional competence, therefore, was not perceived as merely technical expertise but as visible faithfulness. Philippians 1:27 emphasizes congruence between identity and conduct. The civic metaphor embedded in *πολιτεύεσθε* frames Christian life as public allegiance to Christ expressed through disciplined behavior. In the educational context examined, this allegiance becomes tangible in everyday professional routines. Lesson planning, equitable evaluation, collaborative harmony between Christian teachers, and patient guidance of students collectively embody "gospel-worthy" conduct. Thus, professionalism is reframed not as secular efficiency but as vocational obedience. The small scale of SDN Mendawai 2 Sukamara, with only seven Christian students and two Christian teachers, intensifies the relational and symbolic impact of teacher behavior. In such an intimate environment, authenticity is immediately observable. Students' perceptions confirm that alignment between confession and practice strengthens spiritual credibility. The study therefore underscores that vocational

faith is most persuasive when enacted consistently in ordinary responsibilities. Although limited by its small sample size and correlational design, this research affirms that professionalism in Christian education is inseparable from spiritual identity. When teachers integrate competence with integrity, they cultivate an environment where faith is not merely taught but demonstrated. In conclusion, CRE teacher professionalism at SDN Mendawai 2 Sukamara exemplifies vocation as lived obedience, an ongoing commitment to conduct worthy of the gospel within the structures of formal education.

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