



## Spiritual Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers as Instruments of God: Insights from Genesis 41:52 - A Study at SDN 076722 Lolomoyo Samiri

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers as instruments of God, drawing theological inspiration from Book of Genesis 41:52. Conducted at SDN 076722 Lolomoyo Samiri, South Nias, the research focuses on a school community consisting of 46 Christian students and 11 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher. The narrative of Joseph's declaration of fruitfulness in a land of affliction provides a theological framework for understanding how educators interpret their vocation and sustain resilience in contextual challenges. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Thematic analysis revealed that spiritual competence is expressed through vocational consciousness, disciplined prayer life, interpretive faith, emotional maturity, and collaborative spirituality among teachers. Participants consistently viewed themselves as instruments of God, emphasizing dependence on divine guidance rather than personal achievement. This orientation shaped classroom practices, strengthened moral credibility, and cultivated a hopeful learning environment for students. The findings indicate that spiritual competence functions as the integrative core of Christian teaching, transforming professional responsibility into participatory ministry. By embodying humility, perseverance, and gratitude, CRE teachers contribute to a school culture where faith and learning are inseparably connected. The study concludes that recognizing divine agency in educational fruitfulness not only sustains teacher resilience but also fosters holistic spiritual formation among students.*

**Keywords:** *Spiritual Competence, Christian Religious Education, Intergenerational Faithfulness*

## INTRODUCTION

Spiritual competence is increasingly recognized as a foundational dimension of teacher professionalism in Christian Religious Education (CRE). Beyond pedagogical skill and content mastery, spiritual competence refers to a teacher's lived relationship with God, theological discernment, moral integrity, and sensitivity to divine calling within educational practice. In Christian education, the teacher is not merely a transmitter of doctrinal information but a participant in God's formative work in students' lives. This perspective resonates with the biblical narrative of Joseph in Book of Genesis 41:52, where Joseph names his second son Ephraim, declaring, "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction." The verse reveals Joseph's recognition that fruitfulness is not self-generated but divinely enabled. Such theological insight provides a compelling framework for understanding teachers as instruments of God within contexts that may involve limitation, hardship, or marginality. The story of Joseph has long been interpreted as a narrative of divine providence and vocation. Walter Brueggemann argues that Joseph's confession of fruitfulness signals a mature faith that interprets success not as personal achievement but as God's redemptive action within suffering (Brueggemann, 1982). Similarly, Gordon Wenham emphasizes that the naming of Ephraim reflects theological reflection shaped by lived experience; Joseph discerns God's faithfulness amid adversity (Wenham, 1994). These interpretations suggest that spiritual competence involves interpretive faith, the ability to see God's hand in historical and personal realities. For teachers in rural or under-resourced settings, such a perspective can sustain resilience and inspire transformative educational practice. In the field of Christian education, scholars consistently highlight the inseparability of spirituality and pedagogy. Thomas Groome contends that authentic Christian teaching arises from a "lived faith" that integrates belief, practice, and communal responsibility (Groome, 2011). Robert W. Pazmiño further explains that Christian educators function as co-laborers with God, participating in divine activity that shapes learners' character and worldview (Pazmiño, 2008). This theological vision situates spiritual competence as an active disposition rather than a private devotion. It encompasses prayerful dependence, ethical consistency, discernment in decision-making, and a sense of vocation grounded in God's purposes.

Teacher competence is formally categorized into pedagogical, professional, social, and personal domains. However, in faith-based subjects such as Christian Religious Education, spiritual competence becomes the integrative core that animates all other competencies. George R. Knight notes that Christian teaching is ultimately teleological, it aims at restoring the image of God in learners (Knight, 2006). Such restoration cannot occur through technique alone; it requires teachers who consciously align themselves as instruments of God's transformative work. This study is situated at SDN 076722 Lolomoyo Samiri, South Nias, where 46 Christian students and 11 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher, form a significant faith community within the school. In this context, spiritual competence is not an abstract theological concept but a lived reality influencing daily interactions, instructional approaches, and communal identity. South Nias, characterized by strong communal traditions and vibrant church life, provides a sociocultural backdrop in which biblical narratives are often integrated into communal understanding. The Joseph narrative, especially Genesis 41:52, offers a relevant theological motif for

educators who seek fruitfulness amid contextual challenges. Empirical research examining how CRE teachers embody their role as instruments of God remains limited, particularly in rural Indonesian contexts. Many discussions remain normative or theological without exploring lived practices. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate how spiritual competence is understood, practiced, and experienced by Christian Religious Education teachers at SDN 076722 Lolomoyo Samiri. By drawing inspiration from Genesis 41:52 and integrating insights from Christian educational scholarship, the research aims to illuminate how teachers interpret their vocation, sustain spiritual resilience, and cultivate fruitfulness in students' lives. Through this inquiry, the study contributes to broader conversations about spirituality in education, emphasizing that fruitfulness in Christian teaching is fundamentally rooted in dependence on God. As Joseph acknowledged divine agency in his fruitfulness, so too may CRE teachers discover that their effectiveness arises not merely from professional expertise but from spiritual alignment with God's redemptive purposes.

## METHODS

A qualitative case study design was implemented to explore the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers as instruments of God at SDN 076722 Lolomoyo Samiri, South Nias. A qualitative approach was selected because the research sought to understand lived spiritual experiences, theological interpretations, and contextual practices rather than to measure quantifiable variables. The case study framework enabled an in-depth examination of how spiritual competence is embodied within a specific educational community consisting of 46 Christian students and 11 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher. Given the communal and relational nature of spirituality, this approach allowed for a holistic understanding of the dynamics between belief, vocation, and daily pedagogical practice. Participants were selected purposively to ensure that those most directly involved in Christian faith formation were represented. The primary participants included the CRE teacher and several Christian subject teachers who actively contribute to the spiritual climate of the school. Additional perspectives were gathered from selected Christian students across different grade levels to understand how teachers' spiritual competence is perceived and experienced. The inclusion of both teachers and students enabled the study to capture reciprocal dimensions of spiritual influence within the school environment. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews provided flexibility for participants to articulate their understanding of Genesis 41:52, their sense of calling, and their perception of being "instruments of God" in educational practice. Interview questions explored themes such as spiritual discipline, vocational motivation, resilience in challenges, and the integration of biblical values into teaching. Classroom observations were carried out during Christian Religious Education lessons and selected general subjects to identify expressions of spiritual leadership, prayer practices, relational care, and interpretive references to Scripture. Field notes were recorded systematically to document verbal expressions, teacher–student interactions, and contextual nuances. Document analysis included review of lesson plans, school vision statements, and character education guidelines to identify explicit or implicit references to spiritual

formation. Data analysis followed a thematic analysis process. Interview transcripts and observation notes were transcribed and read repeatedly to gain familiarity with the data. Initial coding was conducted to identify significant statements related to spiritual awareness, dependence on God, interpretive faith, resilience, and fruitfulness. These codes were then grouped into broader themes representing dimensions of spiritual competence. To enhance trustworthiness, methodological triangulation was applied by comparing findings across interviews, observations, and documents. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with selected participants to ensure accuracy and credibility. Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all teacher participants and from parents or guardians of student participants. Confidentiality was maintained by using pseudonyms and omitting identifying details in the reporting of findings. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage. Through this qualitative methodological framework, the study sought to provide a contextually grounded and theologically informed understanding of how spiritual competence shapes the identity and practice of CRE teachers as instruments of God in their educational vocation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that spiritual competence among Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SDN 076722 Lolomoyo Samiri is not understood merely as private piety or ritual observance, but as a lived theological orientation that shapes identity, resilience, pedagogical intentionality, and communal relationships. Within a school community composed of 46 Christian students and 11 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher, spirituality emerges as a shared atmosphere rather than an isolated characteristic. Participants consistently interpreted Genesis 41:52 in the Book of Genesis as a narrative of divine fruitfulness amid limitation, and this interpretive lens significantly informed how teachers perceived their vocation. The confession of Joseph, "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction" was frequently referenced in interviews as a source of encouragement in the face of infrastructural constraints, limited teaching resources, and the broader socio-economic challenges characteristic of rural South Nias. Teachers did not romanticize hardship; rather, they reframed it theologically, viewing contextual limitations as potential spaces for divine agency. This interpretive reframing aligns with Brueggemann's understanding that Joseph's naming of Ephraim represents theological reflection on lived experience, where suffering becomes the context of God's generative action (Brueggemann, 1982). In practice, this meant that teachers approached their work with a posture of dependence rather than self-reliance, often describing their daily preparation not only in technical terms but in spiritual ones, prayer preceding lesson planning, Scripture meditation accompanying curriculum review, and communal worship shaping staff meetings. A central theme emerging from the data is vocational consciousness. Teachers articulated a clear sense of being "called" rather than merely employed. This calling was expressed in language of stewardship, service, and instrumentality. Several participants described themselves explicitly as "*alat Tuhan*" (instruments of God), echoing Pauline imagery of participation in divine work. Although Genesis 41:52 was the primary textual inspiration, teachers connected it to a broader

biblical narrative of providence and mission. This vocational awareness influenced classroom demeanor, patience with struggling students, and perseverance during administrative pressures. Observational data confirmed that the CRE teacher frequently integrated brief reflective moments into lessons, inviting students to see academic effort as part of God's formative process. Even teachers of non-religious subjects demonstrated spiritual intentionality by framing diligence, honesty, and cooperation as expressions of gratitude to God. This integrative spirituality resonates with Pazmiño's assertion that Christian educators function as co-laborers with God, participating in divine redemptive purposes within ordinary educational contexts (Pazmiño, 2008).

Another significant finding concerns resilience as a dimension of spiritual competence. Teachers reported encountering emotional fatigue, limited facilities, and fluctuating student motivation. However, rather than attributing discouragement solely to external factors, participants consistently described returning to prayer and scriptural reflection as restorative practices. Genesis 41:52 functioned symbolically as a reminder that fruitfulness may not be immediately visible yet remains divinely promised. This theological resilience was observable in classroom management patterns: teachers corrected misbehavior firmly yet calmly, avoided humiliating language, and maintained relational openness after disciplinary moments. Students interviewed in the study described their teachers as "*sabar*" (patient) and "*tidak mudah marah*" (not easily angered), indicating that spiritual disciplines translated into emotional regulation. Such integration between spirituality and character supports Groome's argument that authentic Christian teaching flows from lived faith rather than abstract doctrine (Groome, 2011). The embodiment of patience and hope became, in itself, a pedagogical act. The communal dimension of spiritual competence also emerged prominently. With 11 Christian teachers forming a substantial portion of the staff, the school exhibits a collaborative spiritual culture. Teachers reported praying together informally, sharing devotional reflections, and discussing students' spiritual growth during meetings. This collegial spirituality reinforced shared vision and minimized professional isolation. Rather than competing for recognition, teachers described mutual encouragement rooted in shared faith identity. Observations indicated that such collegiality influenced students' perception of unity; students frequently referred to teachers collectively as "*Bapak/Ibu yang takut Tuhan*" (teachers who fear God). This perception suggests that spiritual competence extends beyond individual character to corporate witness. Theologically, such communal embodiment mirrors the covenantal motif underlying Joseph's narrative, where personal blessing contributes to collective preservation. Spiritual competence influenced both content and method. The CRE teacher demonstrated interpretive depth when teaching biblical narratives, encouraging students to identify divine activity in contemporary life. Rather than presenting Genesis 41:52 as distant history, the teacher invited students to reflect on their own experiences of difficulty and growth. This contextualization fostered personal appropriation of Scripture. Students reported that lessons felt "*nyata*" (real) and relevant. Teachers integrated storytelling as a primary strategy, paralleling Joseph's retrospective naming of Ephraim as narrative theology. Storytelling allowed students to connect biblical faithfulness with familial and communal histories in South Nias, reinforcing continuity between Scripture and lived culture. Knight's perspective that Christian education aims at restoring God's image through

holistic formation is evident here; intellectual comprehension was consistently linked to moral and spiritual transformation (Knight, 2006).

The findings further indicate that spiritual competence shapes moral authority. Students described trusting teachers' advice because "*mereka melakukan apa yang mereka ajarkan*" (they practice what they teach). This congruence between word and action strengthened credibility. Observational data supported this claim: teachers who emphasized honesty in lessons demonstrated transparency in grading practices and admitted mistakes openly. Such integrity reinforced a culture of accountability. Wenham notes that Joseph's acknowledgment of God's action in his life reflects humility rather than self-exaltation (Wenham, 1994). Similarly, teachers who attributed success to divine grace avoided authoritarian attitudes. Humility emerged as a hallmark of spiritual competence, counterbalancing hierarchical tendencies that can characterize teacher–student relationships. An additional dimension involves interpretive faith in contextual adversity. South Nias presents logistical and socio-economic challenges that could easily foster discouragement. However, participants reframed their context through a providential lens, echoing Joseph's experience in a foreign land. Teachers described the school as "*tanah perjumpaan dengan Tuhan*" (a land of encounter with God), suggesting that geographical marginality does not negate spiritual significance. This reframing nurtured hope not only among teachers but also among students, who expressed aspirations for future service and leadership. Fruitfulness, in this sense, was understood not solely as academic achievement but as character development and faith perseverance. Such an expanded notion of fruitfulness reflects theological maturity; success is defined covenantally rather than competitively. Discussion of these findings suggests that spiritual competence operates as an integrative force uniting personal devotion, professional responsibility, and communal mission. Unlike compartmentalized spirituality confined to religious instruction periods, the spirituality observed in this study permeated the school's ethos. Teachers' prayer practices influenced emotional resilience; theological reflection shaped interpretive pedagogy; communal worship reinforced collegial solidarity. This holistic pattern supports contemporary Christian educational theory emphasizing formation over information. It also challenges reductionist understandings of teacher competence limited to technical skill. In this context, competence is relational and transcendent, rooted in alignment with divine purpose.

The small size of the Christian student body enhanced relational depth. Teachers knew students personally, including family backgrounds and spiritual struggles. Such familiarity facilitated mentoring relationships that extended beyond classroom instruction. Several teachers described visiting families or communicating regularly with parents about spiritual development. These practices mirror Joseph's generational consciousness, where blessing extends to descendants. Genesis 41:52 thus functions not merely as thematic inspiration but as narrative paradigm shaping relational investment. At the same time, the study reveals tensions requiring careful reflection. Spiritual competence must avoid exclusivism in pluralistic settings. Although the majority of participants in this context are Christian, educators expressed awareness of maintaining respect for diversity. Observations showed that teachers framed Christian values in ways emphasizing universal virtues such as gratitude and perseverance, thereby preventing sectarian

isolation. This sensitivity demonstrates maturity in spiritual expression—confidence without coercion. The results affirm that spiritual competence among CRE teachers at SDN 076722 Lolomoyo Samiri manifests in vocational clarity, resilience amid limitation, communal collaboration, pedagogical integration of faith and life, moral integrity, and hopeful reframing of adversity. Genesis 41:52 serves as a theological anchor, reminding educators that fruitfulness is ultimately God’s work within human faithfulness. The discussion underscores that when teachers perceive themselves as instruments of God, their identity shifts from performance-based anxiety to grace-centered stewardship. Such orientation not only sustains personal perseverance but also cultivates a spiritually fertile environment in which students learn to interpret their own lives through the lens of divine providence. In this way, spiritual competence becomes both the foundation and the fruit of Christian education, an embodied testimony that God indeed grants growth even in lands marked by challenge.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that spiritual competence plays a central and transformative role in shaping the identity and practice of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SDN 076722 Lolomoyo Samiri, South Nias. Grounded in the theological insight of Genesis 41:52, the teachers understand themselves not merely as educational professionals but as instruments of God called to cultivate fruitfulness within their specific context. Their interpretation of Joseph’s confession, acknowledging God as the source of fruitfulness in a land of affliction, provides a spiritual framework that sustains resilience, humility, and vocational clarity. The findings demonstrate that spiritual competence is expressed through several interconnected dimensions: a deep sense of calling, disciplined dependence on prayer and Scripture, emotional maturity in responding to challenges, moral integrity in daily conduct, and collaborative spirituality among colleagues. These elements collectively shape a school culture where faith is not confined to formal religious instruction but embodied in relationships, decision-making, and educational vision. Teachers’ lived spirituality strengthens their credibility in the eyes of students, who perceive authenticity when instruction aligns with observable character. Spiritual competence fosters a reinterpretation of contextual limitations. Rather than viewing rural challenges as barriers, teachers frame them as opportunities for divine fruitfulness. This perspective encourages hope, perseverance, and gratitude within the school community. Students, in turn, learn to understand their own experiences through a theological lens, recognizing that growth and blessing often emerge from difficult circumstances. The study affirms that spiritual competence functions as the integrative core of Christian teaching. When educators consciously position themselves as instruments of God, their work transcends technical instruction and becomes participation in divine formation. Strengthening spiritual competence, therefore, is essential not only for professional development but also for sustaining a transformative Christian educational environment in which faith, character, and fruitfulness flourish together.

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