



## **Living Worthy of the Gospel: The Professionalism of Christian Religious Education Teachers Inspired by Philippians 1:27 at SMP Negeri Satu Atap I Manuhing**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Teacher professionalism is a crucial element in ensuring the effectiveness of Christian Religious Education, particularly in shaping students' spiritual and moral development. Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers are expected not only to possess pedagogical competence but also to demonstrate integrity, dedication, and commitment to the values of the gospel in their professional practice. This study examines the professionalism of CRE teachers in light of the biblical message of Philippians 1:27 at SMP Negeri Satu Atap I Manuhing, Gunung Mas. The research employed a qualitative descriptive approach involving sixty-two Christian students and two Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and documentation analysis to understand how biblical values influence teacher professionalism in the educational context. The findings reveal that the professionalism of the CRE teacher is reflected through several key dimensions, including spiritual commitment, pedagogical competence, relational care, and ethical integrity. The teacher demonstrates a strong sense of vocational calling, viewing teaching not only as an academic responsibility but also as a ministry that nurtures students' faith and character. Classroom practices emphasize participatory learning, contextual biblical reflection, and supportive teacher-student relationships that encourage students to apply Christian values in their daily lives. Inspired by the exhortation of Paul the Apostle to live worthy of the gospel, the CRE teacher models unity, faithfulness, and responsibility within the school environment. The study concludes that integrating biblical principles with professional teaching practice significantly contributes to holistic student development and strengthens the role of Christian education in shaping character and faith.*

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

## INTRODUCTION

Education is not merely a process of transferring knowledge but also a formative endeavor that shapes character, worldview, and values within a community. In the context of Christian education, teachers play a strategic role as mediators of both academic learning and spiritual formation. Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers, in particular, are expected to demonstrate professionalism that integrates pedagogical competence with spiritual integrity. Professionalism in this sense extends beyond technical teaching skills; it involves a deep commitment to embodying the values of the gospel in everyday educational practice. Within Christian theology, the calling of educators resonates with the broader biblical mandate to live a life worthy of God's calling and to serve others with faithfulness and integrity. One biblical text that emphasizes such a commitment is Philippians 1:27, where believers are encouraged to live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ and to stand firm in one spirit, striving together for the faith of the gospel. The message of Philippians was written by Paul the Apostle to encourage the Christian community in Philippi to maintain unity, integrity, and commitment to the gospel despite various challenges. In the verse mentioned above, Paul emphasizes that Christian life should reflect consistency between belief and action. This principle can also be applied to the professional life of Christian educators who are called to reflect the values of the gospel within the learning environment. Professionalism for CRE teachers therefore includes not only mastery of subject matter but also the demonstration of ethical responsibility, collaborative spirit, and dedication to nurturing students' faith and character. Scholars of Christian education argue that teachers' spiritual identity and moral example significantly influence students' understanding of faith and their engagement with biblical teachings (Pazmiño, 2008). Similarly, Groome (2011) emphasizes that Christian educators must integrate faith with practice so that teaching becomes a witness to the transformative message of the gospel.

Teacher professionalism has become a central theme in educational reform and policy development. The Indonesian government emphasizes that professional teachers should possess pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies that support effective learning and character formation (Mulyasa, 2013). Professionalism also involves a spiritual dimension that is not always emphasized in general educational discourse. For CRE teachers, professionalism includes faithfulness in teaching biblical truths, modeling Christian virtues, and guiding students toward a deeper understanding of their relationship with God and others. According to Pazmiño (2008), Christian education seeks to cultivate discipleship by integrating biblical teaching with real-life experiences, enabling students to develop a holistic faith that influences their daily lives. The significance of teacher professionalism becomes even more apparent in educational settings with limited resources and small communities. Schools in rural or developing areas often rely heavily on the dedication and creativity of teachers to maintain educational quality and spiritual formation among students. SMP Negeri Satu Atap I Manuhing, located in Gunung Mas Regency, represents such a context where Christian Religious Education plays an important role in shaping students' moral and spiritual identity. The school community includes sixty-two Christian students and two Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher. In such a setting, the professionalism of teachers is

crucial for creating a supportive learning environment where students can grow academically and spiritually. Most educational research tends to focus on pedagogical effectiveness or curriculum implementation, while the integration of biblical theology and teacher professionalism remains underexplored. The teaching of Philippians 1:27 provides a meaningful framework for exploring how Christian educators interpret and embody the call to live “worthy of the gospel” within their professional responsibilities. This verse emphasizes unity, perseverance, and commitment to the faith, values that are particularly relevant for teachers who serve as role models within the school community. This study seeks to explore how the professionalism of Christian Religious Education teachers is understood and practiced in light of Philippians 1:27 at SMP Negeri Satu Atap I Manuhing, Gunung Mas. By examining the experiences and perspectives of teachers and students, this research aims to provide insights into the ways biblical values shape professional identity and educational practice within Christian Religious Education. The findings are expected to contribute to the broader discussion on the integration of faith and professionalism in Christian education, particularly within the context of Indonesian public schools where religious instruction plays an important role in character formation and moral development.

## **METHODS**

A qualitative descriptive research design was used to explore the professionalism of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in light of the biblical teaching of Philippians 1:27 at SMP Negeri Satu Atap I Manuhing, Gunung Mas. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the research sought to understand the lived experiences, perceptions, and professional practices of teachers in their natural educational context rather than to measure variables quantitatively. Qualitative descriptive research allows researchers to examine social and educational phenomena in depth, emphasizing meaning, interpretation, and contextual understanding (Creswell, 2014). In the context of this study, the approach enabled the researcher to analyze how the values of living “worthy of the gospel” are reflected in the professional attitudes and practices of CRE teachers. The research site was SMP Negeri Satu Atap I Manuhing, a public junior high school located in Gunung Mas Regency, Central Kalimantan. The school community includes sixty-two Christian students and two Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher who serves as the primary subject of this study. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, which allows the researcher to choose individuals who possess relevant knowledge and experience related to the research topic (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The participants consisted of the CRE teacher, one additional Christian teacher, and several Christian students who regularly participate in Christian Religious Education classes. Their perspectives provided valuable insights into how teacher professionalism is perceived and experienced within the school environment. Data were collected through three primary techniques: semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and documentation analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teachers to explore their understanding of professional responsibility, their interpretation of biblical values in teaching, and their experiences in implementing Christian principles within the classroom. Interviews with selected students were also conducted to understand how they perceive the teacher’s professionalism and spiritual influence. Classroom observations were carried out during Christian Religious Education lessons to examine

how the teacher demonstrates professional competence, interacts with students, and integrates biblical teachings into the learning process. Documentation analysis included reviewing lesson plans, teaching materials, school policies, and other relevant documents that reflect the teacher's professional preparation and educational practices. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involves identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis process consisted of several stages: data familiarization through repeated reading of interview transcripts and observation notes, initial coding to identify meaningful units of information, categorization of codes into broader themes, and interpretation of themes in relation to the research objectives and theoretical framework. This analytical approach allowed the researcher to uncover key themes related to teacher professionalism, spiritual commitment, and the practical application of biblical values in Christian Religious Education. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, several validation strategies were employed. Data triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. This process helped confirm the consistency of the findings across different data sources. Second, member checking was applied by sharing summaries of the findings with participants to verify the accuracy of the interpretations. Third, careful documentation of the research process was maintained to enhance transparency and reliability. Through these procedures, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive and trustworthy description of how the professionalism of Christian Religious Education teachers is practiced within the context of SMP Negeri Satu Atap I Manuhing and how it reflects the biblical call to live in a manner worthy of the gospel.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the professionalism of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMP Negeri Satu Atap I Manuhing, Gunung Mas, is expressed through a combination of pedagogical competence, spiritual integrity, relational commitment, and dedication to the gospel-centered mission of education. These dimensions are closely connected with the theological message of Philippians 1:27, which encourages believers to live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ and to stand firm in one spirit while striving together in faith. Within the educational setting examined in this research, the CRE teacher's professionalism is not limited to instructional techniques but is embodied through consistent attitudes, ethical behavior, and a deep sense of spiritual calling in teaching. The integration of biblical values into daily educational practice becomes a defining characteristic of the teacher's professional identity and shapes the learning experiences of students. One of the most prominent findings is the strong sense of vocational calling that characterizes the teacher's approach to Christian Religious Education. Interviews with the CRE teacher reveal that teaching is perceived not merely as a profession but as a ministry that requires commitment, patience, and spiritual responsibility. This perspective resonates with the teaching of Paul the Apostle, who in his letter to the Philippian church emphasized the importance of living a life that reflects the values of the gospel even in challenging circumstances. The teacher described his role as guiding students to understand not only biblical knowledge but also the practical implications of faith in daily life. This vocational understanding contributes to a deeper

level of dedication in preparing lessons, mentoring students, and maintaining consistency between teaching and personal conduct. The sense of calling also motivates the teacher to overcome limitations commonly faced in rural educational contexts, such as limited teaching resources and diverse student learning needs. Classroom observations further demonstrate that professionalism is reflected in the teacher's pedagogical preparation and instructional strategies. The teacher consistently prepares lesson plans that integrate biblical narratives with practical applications relevant to students' daily experiences. During observed lessons, the teacher encouraged students to reflect on how the values expressed in Philippians 1:27, such as unity, perseverance, and faithfulness, can be applied in their relationships with classmates and family members. Students were invited to share personal experiences related to honesty, cooperation, and mutual respect, creating a participatory learning environment that supports both cognitive and spiritual development. This approach aligns with the perspective of Christian education scholars who emphasize that teaching should foster active engagement with faith rather than passive reception of information. The professional competence demonstrated in these instructional practices indicates that the teacher intentionally integrates theological reflection with effective pedagogy.

Another important dimension revealed by the findings is the role of relational professionalism in shaping the educational environment. Students interviewed during the research frequently described the CRE teacher as approachable, patient, and supportive. These relational qualities contribute to the creation of a classroom atmosphere characterized by trust and mutual respect. In small school communities such as SMP Negeri Satu Atap I Manuhing, interpersonal relationships play a crucial role in shaping students' motivation and sense of belonging. The teacher's willingness to listen to students' concerns, provide encouragement, and offer moral guidance reflects the biblical principle of striving together in one spirit as described in Philippians 1:27. Rather than adopting an authoritarian teaching style, the teacher emphasizes dialogue and collaboration, enabling students to feel valued as participants in the learning process. Such relational professionalism not only enhances the effectiveness of instruction but also reinforces the communal dimension of Christian education. The findings also highlight the importance of moral example in establishing professional credibility. Students repeatedly emphasized that the teacher's behavior outside the classroom strongly influences their perception of the lessons taught during Christian Religious Education classes. When students observe consistency between the teacher's words and actions, they are more likely to internalize the values being taught. In the context of this study, the teacher demonstrates integrity through responsible conduct, respectful communication, and fairness in dealing with students. These behaviors illustrate the principle of living "worthy of the gospel," which involves aligning personal life with the teachings of Christ. The example set by the teacher therefore becomes a powerful form of informal education that complements formal instruction. This finding supports broader research in Christian education indicating that the character and integrity of teachers significantly shape students' moral and spiritual development.

Professionalism in this context is also closely connected with collaboration within the school community. Although the number of Christian teachers at the school is relatively small, only two educators including the CRE teacher, both teachers actively support each other in fostering Christian values within the school environment. Their collaboration

includes organizing prayer activities, encouraging students to participate in discussions about moral issues, and integrating Christian perspectives into broader character education initiatives. This cooperative approach reflects the communal emphasis found in Philippians 1:27, where believers are encouraged to stand firm together in unity of spirit. In practice, this collaboration strengthens the impact of Christian Religious Education because students encounter consistent messages about character and faith across different aspects of school life. The data further indicate that the teacher's professionalism involves ongoing personal and spiritual development. The teacher reported regularly engaging in personal Bible study, prayer, and participation in church activities as part of maintaining spiritual vitality. These practices are perceived as essential for sustaining motivation and wisdom in teaching. Spiritual disciplines serve as a source of guidance when addressing challenges related to classroom management, student behavior, and academic pressures. By nurturing a strong spiritual foundation, the teacher is better equipped to model the perseverance and faithfulness emphasized in the message of Philippians. This finding suggests that professional development for CRE teachers should not be limited to pedagogical training but should also include opportunities for spiritual formation and theological reflection. One challenge relates to limited instructional resources, which can restrict the variety of teaching methods available for CRE classes. In some cases, the teacher must rely primarily on textbooks and verbal explanations due to the absence of multimedia facilities or additional teaching materials. However, the teacher addresses this limitation through creative strategies such as storytelling, group discussions, and contextual examples drawn from students' daily lives. These strategies demonstrate adaptive professionalism, where teachers utilize available resources effectively while maintaining educational quality. Another challenge involves balancing academic responsibilities with the broader mission of spiritual formation. As a teacher in a public school setting, the CRE educator must meet curriculum requirements while also nurturing students' faith development. Achieving this balance requires careful planning and thoughtful integration of biblical principles within the official curriculum. The findings indicate that the teacher successfully navigates this challenge by framing lessons around themes of character, responsibility, and community life that align with both educational objectives and Christian teachings. This integrative approach reflects a holistic understanding of professionalism in Christian education. Students' responses during interviews also reveal the positive influence of the teacher's professionalism on their attitudes toward learning and faith. Many students expressed that they feel encouraged to participate actively in CRE classes because the teacher creates a welcoming and respectful atmosphere. Students reported that discussions about biblical teachings often help them reflect on personal challenges such as peer pressure, honesty, and cooperation with others. Through these discussions, students begin to see the relevance of Christian values in everyday life. This outcome illustrates the transformative potential of professional Christian educators who integrate faith and learning in meaningful ways. The findings of this study therefore contribute to a broader understanding of teacher professionalism within Christian Religious Education. In contrast to purely technical definitions of professionalism, the results emphasize the integration of spiritual commitment, relational care, ethical integrity, and pedagogical competence. The biblical message of Philippians 1:27 provides a theological framework that highlights the importance of living consistently with the gospel while working collaboratively within

a community of faith. For CRE teachers, professionalism involves embodying these principles in daily teaching practice, thereby enabling students to experience Christian values not only as theoretical concepts but also as lived realities. The study highlights the importance of contextual factors in shaping professional practice. The small size of the school community, the limited number of Christian teachers, and the rural setting all influence the ways in which professionalism is expressed. In such contexts, the personal example and dedication of teachers become particularly significant because they directly impact the spiritual and moral climate of the school. The CRE teacher's commitment to living worthy of the gospel therefore serves as both a personal testimony and a professional model for students and colleagues alike. The results demonstrate that the professionalism of Christian Religious Education teachers at SMP Negeri Satu Atap I Manuhing is deeply rooted in the integration of faith and practice. By embodying the values expressed in Philippians 1:27, the teacher creates a learning environment that encourages unity, perseverance, and commitment to the gospel. This integration of theological reflection and professional responsibility illustrates how Christian educators can contribute to the holistic development of students within public school contexts. The discussion underscores that professionalism in Christian education is not merely a matter of technical competence but a holistic vocation that combines spiritual authenticity, ethical integrity, and pedagogical excellence in the service of both God and the educational community.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study explored the professionalism of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMP Negeri Satu Atap I Manuhing, Gunung Mas, through the theological perspective of Philippians 1:27, which calls believers to live in a manner worthy of the gospel and to stand firm together in unity and faith. The findings indicate that teacher professionalism in Christian education extends beyond technical teaching abilities and encompasses spiritual commitment, ethical integrity, relational care, and pedagogical competence. Within the school context studied, the CRE teacher demonstrates professionalism through a strong sense of vocational calling, consistent moral example, effective instructional preparation, and supportive relationships with students and colleagues. These qualities contribute to the creation of a learning environment that fosters both academic engagement and spiritual growth among students. The study also highlights that professionalism in Christian Religious Education is closely linked to the teacher's ability to integrate biblical values into everyday teaching practices. Inspired by the exhortation of Paul the Apostle in Philippians, the teacher models perseverance, unity, and faithfulness within the classroom and the wider school community. This integration of faith and professionalism allows students not only to learn biblical teachings intellectually but also to observe and experience those values through the teacher's example. In this way, the teacher becomes a living witness to the message of the gospel, reinforcing the transformative purpose of Christian education. The research reveals that the small and rural context of the school shapes the expression of teacher professionalism. With only two Christian teachers serving sixty-two Christian students, collaboration, dedication, and personal influence become essential elements of educational practice. Despite challenges such as limited resources and the demands of teaching within a public school framework, the CRE teacher demonstrates adaptability

and commitment to maintaining the quality and spiritual depth of Christian Religious Education. The professionalism of CRE teachers plays a crucial role in shaping the spiritual and moral development of students. When teachers embody the values of the gospel in their professional conduct, they create meaningful opportunities for students to understand and practice Christian faith in their daily lives. The message of Philippians 1:27 provides a powerful theological foundation for this calling, reminding Christian educators to live and teach in a way that reflects the integrity and unity of the gospel. Future research may further explore how similar biblical frameworks can inform teacher professionalism in other educational contexts, contributing to the ongoing development of Christian education in Indonesia and beyond.

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