



The Pedagogical Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Instilling the Value of Faithfulness Based on Genesis 2:24

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in instilling the value of faithfulness among students, grounded in the biblical principle of Genesis 2:24. As contemporary society faces increasing challenges to commitment and fidelity in relationships, the role of religious educators becomes crucial in shaping students' moral frameworks. This research investigates how CRE teachers utilize their pedagogical competencies to effectively transmit the theological concept of faithfulness derived from the Genesis narrative. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 15 CRE teachers from various educational institutions and classroom observations. The findings reveal that teachers employ diverse pedagogical strategies, including contextual teaching methods, experiential learning activities, and value integration across curriculum content. However, significant challenges persist, including limited instructional resources, cultural tensions between traditional values and modern societal norms, and varying levels of teacher preparedness in handling sensitive relationship topics. The study concludes that enhanced pedagogical competence, characterized by biblical literacy, cultural sensitivity, and innovative teaching methodologies, significantly influences the effectiveness of value transmission. Recommendations include comprehensive professional development programs, development of contextually relevant teaching materials, and establishment of collaborative networks among CRE teachers to strengthen their capacity in character education.

Keywords: *pedagogical competence, Christian religious education, faithfulness, Genesis 2:24, value education, character formation*

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary educational landscape faces unprecedented challenges in transmitting moral and spiritual values to younger generations. In an era characterized by rapid technological advancement, shifting cultural paradigms, and evolving social structures,

the institution of marriage and the concept of faithfulness have undergone significant transformation (Anderson, 2022; Johnson & Miller, 2021). Social media, digital communication, and the normalization of individualistic lifestyles have influenced young people's understanding of relationships, commitment, and morality. Within this context, Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers occupy a critical position as moral educators tasked with instilling enduring biblical values that shape students' character and worldview. Their pedagogical competence directly determines how effectively students internalize and practice such values in their daily lives. Genesis 2:24 states, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." This foundational biblical text establishes the theological and ethical framework for understanding commitment, unity, and faithfulness in human relationships. The verse represents more than a marital directive; it serves as a theological articulation of covenantal faithfulness rooted in divine intention. The passage has served as a cornerstone for Christian teachings on marriage and relational fidelity throughout church history (Thompson, 2020). Its message underscores not only the sanctity of marriage but also the principle of steadfast devotion—a principle that extends to all human interactions and the believer's relationship with God. Thus, Genesis 2:24 conveys a universal moral imperative: faithfulness is a divine attribute that should be mirrored in human conduct (Williams, 2019). From a pedagogical standpoint, teaching the concept of faithfulness requires both theological understanding and effective instructional strategies. The role of CRE teachers extends beyond mere knowledge transmission; they function as moral exemplars and facilitators of spiritual formation (Henderson & Davis, 2023). Their teaching cannot rely solely on cognitive explanation; it must engage students emotionally and spiritually. Pedagogical competence, defined as the comprehensive ability to plan, implement, and evaluate effective learning experiences, becomes paramount when addressing value-laden content such as faithfulness (Richards & Estep, 2021). Effective pedagogy in Christian education integrates three essential dimensions: the teacher's theological literacy, pedagogical skill, and personal embodiment of the values being taught. When these components align, the learning process becomes transformative rather than informational. However, research indicates significant variability in how effectively teachers translate biblical principles into pedagogically sound and developmentally appropriate learning experiences (Brown, 2022). Many teachers struggle to connect the ancient biblical worldview with the lived realities of students growing up in pluralistic and secular societies. For instance, adolescents today often interpret faithfulness in terms of friendship loyalty or digital honesty, not necessarily marital or covenantal commitment. Therefore, teachers must contextualize Genesis 2:24 by bridging its historical and theological meanings with contemporary ethical challenges such as fidelity in communication, responsibility in relationships, and authenticity in faith practice. In teaching faithfulness, the teacher's pedagogical competence encompasses several critical domains. First, curricular competence involves selecting and structuring biblical content that appropriately reflects the message of Genesis 2:24 while aligning with students' cognitive and moral development stages. Second, instructional competence refers to the ability to design learning experiences that foster reflection, dialogue, and value internalization. Teachers may use case studies, role-play activities, or storytelling methods to illustrate biblical faithfulness in relatable scenarios. Third, evaluative competence entails assessing not only students' knowledge but also their

attitudinal and behavioral growth. Because faithfulness is a moral virtue, its assessment must consider both observable behavior and personal reflection. Despite the recognized importance of character education in religious instruction, limited empirical research has examined the specific pedagogical competencies required for teaching biblical values, particularly faithfulness as articulated in Genesis 2:24. Previous studies have predominantly focused on general religious education methodologies without addressing the unique challenges of teaching relational ethics and commitment in pluralistic educational settings (Martinez & Lee, 2020). In addition, while many teacher training programs emphasize instructional techniques, they often overlook the integration of biblical hermeneutics and moral formation theories. The intersection of biblical interpretation, developmental psychology, and pedagogy remains underexplored in CRE scholarship. Consequently, teachers often rely on personal intuition rather than evidence-based approaches in teaching moral and spiritual values.

The teaching of faithfulness based on Genesis 2:24 also presents cultural and generational challenges. Today's students are exposed to relativistic moral frameworks that question absolute truth claims. As a result, CRE teachers must balance doctrinal fidelity with pedagogical sensitivity. They must cultivate an environment that encourages open dialogue while maintaining the integrity of biblical truth. This demands high levels of interpersonal competence, emotional intelligence, and contextual awareness. Teachers must understand their students' sociocultural backgrounds, media influences, and family structures to design lessons that resonate meaningfully. For example, discussing real-life examples of loyalty in friendships or perseverance in studies can provide tangible applications of faithfulness that connect with students' experiences. Furthermore, the embodiment of faithfulness by the teacher themselves constitutes an indispensable aspect of pedagogical competence. Students learn more from the character of their teachers than from their verbal instruction. The teacher's consistency, reliability, and authenticity model the very virtue they seek to instill. This aligns with the biblical principle that faith without deeds is dead (James 2:17), underscoring that moral teaching must be lived, not merely taught. Thus, pedagogical competence in Christian education integrates ethical credibility with professional expertise. To address these concerns, this study investigates three central research questions: (1) What pedagogical competencies do CRE teachers demonstrate in teaching the value of faithfulness based on Genesis 2:24? (2) What instructional strategies do teachers employ to make this biblical principle relevant and comprehensible to contemporary students? (3) What challenges do teachers encounter in instilling the value of faithfulness, and how do they navigate these obstacles? These questions seek to uncover both the theoretical and practical dimensions of teaching faithfulness within a Christian educational framework. The significance of this research lies in its potential to inform teacher education programs, curriculum development, and professional development initiatives aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of religious education in character formation. By identifying key pedagogical competencies and strategies, this study could contribute to designing training modules that equip teachers with the skills to teach moral and spiritual values effectively. Moreover, it could offer insights into how biblical values can be contextualized without compromising theological integrity. Such findings would also benefit policymakers and educational institutions seeking to strengthen moral education in faith-based schools. The pedagogical competence of CRE teachers in instilling the value of faithfulness based on

Genesis 2:24 represents a crucial intersection of theology, pedagogy, and ethics. Teaching faithfulness is not merely about preserving doctrinal orthodoxy; it is about nurturing students who embody commitment, integrity, and love in their relationships with God and others. In a fragmented world where loyalty and covenantal relationships are increasingly rare, the faithful Christian teacher stands as both messenger and model of divine faithfulness. Their competence, therefore, extends beyond the classroom—it becomes a witness to the transforming power of biblical truth lived out through education.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in depth. The qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for understanding complex educational practices, teacher perspectives, and the nuanced process of value transmission within religious education contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure information-rich cases relevant to the research questions. The sample consisted of 15 CRE teachers (8 female, 7 male) from diverse educational settings, including public schools (n=6), private Christian schools (n=7), and seminary preparatory institutions (n=2) across three geographic regions. Inclusion criteria required participants to have at least three years of teaching experience in Christian Religious Education, formal theological or religious education training, demonstrated experience teaching content related to marriage, relationships, or biblical ethics, and a willingness to participate in interviews and allow classroom observations. Participant demographics varied in age (ranging from 28 to 58 years), educational background (from bachelor's to doctoral degrees in theology, education, or related fields), and denominational affiliation (Protestant, Catholic, and independent Christian traditions). This diversity ensured multiple perspectives and enhanced the transferability of the findings across different educational contexts.

Data collection took place over a four-month period and utilized multiple methods to ensure triangulation and strengthen trustworthiness. Semi-structured interviews served as the primary data source, with each participant taking part in a 60–90-minute recorded interview. The interview protocol covered key areas including teachers' understanding of Genesis 2:24 and its contemporary relevance, pedagogical approaches used in teaching faithfulness, perceived challenges and successes, professional preparation and ongoing development, and strategies for contextualizing biblical values for diverse student populations. Classroom observations complemented interview data, with each participating teacher observed in at least two instructional sessions addressing topics related to faithfulness, commitment, or biblical teachings on relationships. Observation protocols focused on instructional methods, student engagement strategies, use of resources, classroom discourse, and integration of biblical texts, while field notes captured both descriptive and reflective details. Documentary analysis included the examination of lesson plans, curriculum materials, student assignments, and assessment tools used by the teachers, offering additional insights into planning processes, pedagogical intentions, and evaluation practices related to moral and value education.

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework, progressing through six phases: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the scholarly report. All interviews were transcribed verbatim, and multiple readings of transcripts, observation notes, and documents facilitated deep immersion in the data. Initial coding combined deductive codes drawn from pedagogical competence frameworks with inductive codes emerging from the data. NVivo 12 software was used to organize and manage the extensive qualitative dataset. The coding process was iterative, employing constant comparison methods to identify patterns, variations, and relationships among codes. These codes were subsequently grouped into categories and refined into overarching themes that addressed the research questions.

Trustworthiness of the findings was enhanced through multiple strategies. Triangulation across data sources (interviews, observations, and documents) and participant perspectives strengthened credibility. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary findings with five participants, who confirmed the accuracy of the interpretations. A detailed audit trail documented all analytical decisions, while peer debriefing with two experienced qualitative researchers provided external perspectives on emerging themes and interpretations. Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board prior to data collection. All participants provided informed consent, were assured of confidentiality through pseudonymization, and were informed of their right to withdraw without consequence. Particular care was taken to protect student privacy during classroom observations, including obtaining parental consent where required by institutional policies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The first theme emerging from the data highlights the centrality of biblical-theological foundational knowledge in shaping the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers. All participating teachers exhibited a strong commitment to biblical authority, acknowledging Scripture as the ultimate source of moral and theological truth. Genesis 2:24 was universally recognized as a foundational text for Christian teachings on human relationships and faithfulness, reflecting its enduring significance within Christian moral and doctrinal frameworks. However, despite this shared acknowledgment, the depth and sophistication of teachers' exegetical understanding of the passage varied considerably among participants. Nine teachers demonstrated a nuanced and comprehensive approach to biblical interpretation. Their engagement with Genesis 2:24 extended beyond surface-level comprehension and revealed an awareness of its linguistic, historical, and theological dimensions. These teachers considered the Hebrew text's nuances—particularly the terms denoting unity and covenantal faithfulness—and contextualized the passage within the broader biblical narrative of divine-human relationships. Teacher Sarah, for example, explained, "Genesis 2:24 isn't just about marriage ceremonies. It's about covenant—about two becoming one through God's design. This principle of unity and faithfulness extends to our relationship with God and how we approach all commitments." Her interpretation illustrates a hermeneutical awareness that perceives marriage as a symbol of divine faithfulness and

covenantal relationship, offering a multidimensional understanding that transcends literal marital instruction. Teachers with such strong theological grounding tended to approach classroom teaching from a transformative rather than prescriptive perspective. Their lessons invited students to reflect critically on the spiritual and moral essence of faithfulness rather than merely adhering to behavioral rules. By situating Genesis 2:24 within the larger scriptural narrative—linking it to God’s faithfulness to Israel in the Old Testament, Christ’s unwavering fidelity to the Church in the New Testament, and the believer’s call to faithful discipleship—they provided a coherent theological framework. This approach not only deepened students’ scriptural literacy but also helped them internalize faithfulness as a divine attribute to be emulated in daily life. In contrast, six teachers, though equally committed to upholding biblical truth, exhibited a more limited exegetical understanding of Genesis 2:24. Their interpretations were predominantly pragmatic and tended to focus on moral exhortation and prescriptive applications. For these teachers, Genesis 2:24 primarily served as a moral directive concerning marital fidelity, emphasizing obedience to biblical commandments without substantial engagement with theological depth or biblical intertextuality. Lessons delivered by this group often centered on moral warnings against unfaithfulness or the importance of loyalty within human relationships. While such teachings reinforced behavioral expectations, they risked reducing faithfulness to mere compliance with rules rather than nurturing internalized moral conviction grounded in divine example. The divergence in theological depth among teachers was reflected in their pedagogical practices. Teachers with stronger biblical-theological foundations demonstrated greater flexibility and creativity in their instructional strategies. They employed storytelling, biblical case studies, and dialogical reflection to help students relate faithfulness to various life contexts—family, friendship, community, and one’s relationship with God. These educators encouraged students to explore faithfulness as both a relational and spiritual commitment, fostering critical thinking and moral discernment. Conversely, teachers with less developed theological perspectives tended to rely on lecture-based instruction and moral prescription, offering fewer opportunities for reflective engagement or contextual application. This theme underscores that biblical-theological competence is not merely an academic requirement but a crucial pedagogical asset in religious education. A teacher’s ability to interpret Scripture with theological depth directly influences how effectively they can translate biblical truths into meaningful and transformative learning experiences. The data suggest that students are more likely to internalize moral values such as faithfulness when they are taught as part of a coherent theological narrative rather than isolated moral commands. When teachers link biblical instruction to the broader story of God’s covenantal faithfulness, students can see faithfulness not simply as human duty but as participation in God’s redemptive purpose. The findings highlight the importance of ongoing theological formation for CRE teachers. Professional development programs should emphasize exegetical skills, biblical theology, and hermeneutics to help teachers move beyond literal and moralistic interpretations. Deepening teachers’ understanding of Scripture enables them to integrate theology with pedagogy—an integration essential for character formation in Christian education. By cultivating such depth, CRE teachers can more effectively nurture faithfulness as a multidimensional virtue encompassing spiritual devotion, moral consistency, and relational integrity.

Contextual Pedagogical Strategies

The second major theme identified in this study centers on the contextual pedagogical strategies employed by Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers to teach the value of faithfulness grounded in Genesis 2:24. Participants demonstrated a clear awareness that teaching biblical values effectively requires pedagogical adaptability—recognizing students’ developmental stages, cultural backgrounds, and the broader educational environment in which learning occurs. Rather than relying solely on traditional didactic methods, teachers employed diverse and contextually responsive strategies to facilitate meaningful engagement with biblical principles. Four predominant instructional approaches emerged from the data: narrative-based teaching, dialogical interaction, creative expression, and service-oriented application. Narrative and Story-Based Teaching was the most widely used strategy, applied by thirteen of the fifteen participants. Teachers reported that biblical narratives, contemporary stories, and real-life case studies served as powerful tools for translating the abstract notion of faithfulness into concrete and emotionally resonant experiences. By using characters such as Ruth, Joseph, and Daniel, teachers highlighted enduring examples of loyalty and covenantal integrity, linking them to modern situations that students could identify with. Teacher Michael explained, “I use stories of biblical figures who demonstrated faithfulness—Ruth, Joseph, Daniel—but also contemporary examples students can relate to. Stories create emotional connection that pure lecture cannot achieve.” This narrative method aligned with constructivist pedagogy, which emphasizes that learners build understanding through meaningful contexts and personal relevance. Observations confirmed that story-based teaching often evoked deep emotional responses and reflective discussions, reinforcing moral and spiritual lessons through imaginative engagement. Interactive Discussion and Dialogue represented another key pedagogical approach, adopted by eleven teachers. These educators favored dialogical classrooms in which students were encouraged to explore and question rather than passively receive information. Strategies included Socratic questioning, peer group discussions, and structured debates addressing the challenges of living faithfully in contemporary society. This approach positioned students as active participants in the learning process, fostering both critical thinking and moral reasoning. During observations, dialogical lessons were marked by high levels of student engagement and thoughtful exchanges that bridged biblical ideals with real-world dilemmas, such as loyalty in friendships or integrity in academic life. Teachers observed that open dialogue helped students internalize values by examining their relevance and implications in everyday contexts. Creative and Arts-Based Approaches were employed by eight teachers who recognized the importance of aesthetic and experiential dimensions in moral learning. Methods included drama, visual art projects, music composition, and the use of digital media to explore faithfulness thematically. These approaches were particularly effective among younger students and those with diverse learning preferences. In one observed classroom, students designed visual representations of “covenant relationships,” producing artwork symbolizing unity, trust, and commitment. Such activities allowed students to embody faithfulness imaginatively, transforming abstract theological ideas into personal and tangible expressions of belief. The arts also facilitated affective learning by engaging emotion, creativity, and reflection, thereby deepening the moral significance of biblical teachings.

Service-Learning and Practical Application constituted the fourth pedagogical strategy, implemented by six teachers. These educators sought to bridge classroom learning with real-world practice, translating the principle of faithfulness into acts of service and social responsibility. Projects included mentoring younger students, visiting nursing homes, and participating in community outreach initiatives. Through such experiential learning, students were encouraged to view faithfulness not merely as a private moral virtue but as active commitment to others. This approach aligned with the Christian educational emphasis on lived faith—embodying biblical values through concrete action and community engagement. Teachers reported that these experiences fostered empathy, perseverance, and a sense of covenantal responsibility consistent with the message of Genesis 2:24.

Relational and Experiential Learning Approaches

A significant finding of the study was the strong emphasis participants placed on relational pedagogy and experiential forms of learning. Fourteen teachers explicitly identified authentic teacher–student relationships as the cornerstone of effective moral and spiritual education. They viewed faithfulness not merely as a concept to be taught but as a relational virtue to be modeled and experienced. Teacher Rebecca captured this sentiment aptly: *“Students won’t embrace faithfulness as a value if they don’t see it embodied. I must demonstrate faithful commitment to them, to my own relationships, to truth. They watch how I live, not just what I teach.”* This statement highlights the essential role of the teacher’s personal integrity and example in nurturing students’ moral formation. This relational orientation manifested through several consistent practices. Teachers emphasized the importance of being present and available to students, offering emotional support, and demonstrating reliability in their interactions. Many cultivated relationships characterized by empathy, mutual respect, and psychological safety—conditions that encourage students to internalize values through trust and imitation. Teachers who shared appropriate personal stories of struggle, perseverance, or loyalty allowed students to see faithfulness embodied in real-life contexts, thereby transforming moral instruction into lived witness. Experiential learning was also a defining component of participants’ pedagogical practice. Rather than confining faithfulness instruction to abstract discussions or doctrinal explanations, teachers designed opportunities for students to practice faithfulness in tangible and developmentally appropriate ways. These experiences included maintaining commitment to group projects, supporting peers through challenges, fulfilling assigned responsibilities, and showing perseverance during difficult learning tasks. Each of these situations served as a microcosm for understanding and embodying faithfulness as an active and relational virtue. Moreover, several teachers deliberately framed classroom activities and community engagements as “practice grounds” for covenantal living. Through guided reflection and discussion, students were encouraged to connect their daily acts of responsibility, loyalty, and perseverance with biblical principles drawn from Genesis 2:24 and related texts. This integration of reflection and practice allowed students to perceive faithfulness as more than compliance or obedience—it became a way of life grounded in trust, relationship, and consistency. Ultimately, the findings reveal that relational and experiential approaches not only deepen moral understanding but also cultivate character transformation. When teachers model faithfulness authentically and provide opportunities for students to live it out in

meaningful contexts, learning transcends cognition. It becomes a holistic process of becoming—where faithfulness is learned through relationship, practiced through experience, and sustained through spiritual reflection.

Integration of Contemporary Challenges

All participating teachers consistently recognized the growing tension between biblical teachings on faithfulness and the shifting moral landscape of contemporary society. They identified several pressing cultural challenges that require both theological sensitivity and pedagogical adaptability. Among these, the most prominent were the increasing rates of divorce and family instability within students' personal contexts, the normalization of casual or non-committal relationships among adolescents, the pervasive influence of social media on attention span and relational depth, and the pluralistic environment of modern education that exposes students to a wide spectrum of worldviews. These realities collectively create an environment in which the biblical concept of covenantal faithfulness often appears countercultural or even irrelevant to young people's lived experiences. Teachers exhibited varying degrees of competence in addressing these tensions within their classrooms. Those who demonstrated higher pedagogical and theological maturity practiced what can be described as bridge-building pedagogy—an approach that seeks to connect biblical ideals with students' contemporary realities without compromising scriptural integrity. This method involves presenting biblical truth with both conviction and compassion, ensuring that students feel seen and understood in their complex circumstances. As Teacher Daniel explained, *"Many students come from divorced families. I can't teach faithfulness in a way that condemns their parents or adds to their pain. I focus on God's ideal while acknowledging brokenness and emphasizing grace and restoration."* His approach reflects a theologically balanced pedagogy that integrates the redemptive dimensions of Christian teaching with pastoral care for students navigating fragmented family backgrounds. Nine teachers integrated media literacy into their lessons, guiding students to critically evaluate cultural messages surrounding relationships, commitment, and sexuality. By analyzing films, advertisements, and social media content, students learned to discern the underlying values being communicated and to compare them with biblical principles. This approach empowered students to engage the modern world thoughtfully rather than reactively, fostering discernment rather than rejection of culture. It also cultivated critical thinking skills essential for moral and spiritual maturity. Conversely, less effective pedagogical responses tended to fall into one of two extremes. Some teachers avoided controversial or emotionally charged topics altogether, creating a form of silence that left students without guidance in navigating real-world ethical dilemmas. Others adopted overly moralistic or judgmental tones, presenting faithfulness as a rigid rule rather than a transformative relationship grounded in grace. In three documented cases, teachers struggled significantly with this integration, oscillating between cultural accommodation that diluted biblical distinctiveness and dogmatism that alienated students. These patterns suggest that theological depth and emotional intelligence are essential competencies for effectively teaching faithfulness in modern contexts.

Professional Challenges and Adaptive Practices

Participants also identified a number of professional and institutional challenges that shaped their pedagogical effectiveness. One major concern was the lack of appropriate instructional resources. Eleven teachers reported difficulty finding curriculum materials that were simultaneously theologically robust, developmentally suitable, and culturally relevant to their students. As Teacher Jennifer expressed, *"Most resources are either too simplistic, treating students like children, or too heavy-handed, moralizing without engaging real questions and struggles."* This shortage often forced teachers to design their own lesson materials or adapt existing ones creatively to fit their classroom realities. Another recurring theme was insufficient professional preparation. Eight teachers noted that their theological or educational training programs provided limited guidance on addressing sensitive topics such as sexuality, relationships, and marriage in classroom settings. Many educators therefore developed expertise through informal means—trial and error, mentorship from colleagues, and self-directed study. This experiential learning process, while demanding, also fostered resilience and adaptability in their teaching practice. Teachers faced additional complexities stemming from the diversity of student backgrounds. Classrooms typically included students from a range of family structures (two-parent households, divorced parents, single-parent families, or same-sex parents), religious commitments (devout Christians, nominal believers, or secular students), and cultural orientations (conservative, progressive, or mixed heritage). Teaching the value of faithfulness in such pluralistic settings required sophisticated discernment to affirm biblical principles without alienating students whose life experiences diverged from those ideals. Teachers needed to cultivate empathetic communication, cultural sensitivity, and the capacity to navigate theological and ethical gray areas with humility and care. Time constraints also hindered deep exploration of complex moral and relational issues. Six teachers in public school contexts highlighted additional legal limitations on explicitly religious instruction, compelling them to approach discussions of faithfulness through universal moral frameworks such as integrity, trustworthiness, and commitment. Despite these restrictions, they maintained that subtle integration of Christian perspectives remained possible through modeling character, facilitating ethical reflection, and promoting community service projects aligned with biblical values. Remarkably, despite these structural and professional obstacles, most teachers displayed a strong capacity for adaptive professional growth. Twelve participants actively sought further development through workshops, conferences, online courses, and informal peer learning groups. Many participated in collaborative networks—both in person and virtual—where they shared resources, exchanged experiences, and supported one another in refining pedagogical approaches. These collegial spaces emerged as vital to sustaining motivation and innovation in teaching moral and spiritual formation. These findings underscore that teaching faithfulness in today's complex world demands not only theological competence but also emotional intelligence, adaptability, and collaborative learning. By engaging contemporary challenges thoughtfully and pursuing continual professional growth, teachers of Christian Religious Education can embody and transmit faithfulness in ways that remain biblically grounded, culturally relevant, and pedagogically effective.

Pedagogical Competence as Multidimensional Construct

This study confirms that pedagogical competence in value education constitutes a multidimensional construct rather than a singular skill set. Shulman's (1987) pedagogical content knowledge framework, while developed for secular education, proves relevant here with important adaptations. Effective CRE teachers demonstrate: Content Knowledge encompassing biblical, theological, and ethical dimensions of faithfulness; Pedagogical Knowledge of developmentally appropriate, engaging instructional strategies; Pedagogical Content Knowledge understanding how to make faithfulness comprehensible and meaningful across developmental stages; Curricular Knowledge of resources and scope-and-sequence considerations; Knowledge of Learners including developmental, cultural, and individual characteristics; Contextual Knowledge of broader educational, cultural, and ecclesiastical environments; and Spiritual-Moral Knowledge including personal embodiment of values taught. This expanded framework suggests that teacher education programs must address multiple domains simultaneously. Current preparation often emphasizes theological content or pedagogical method but rarely integrates these dimensions with attention to the unique demands of value education.

The Centrality of Relational Pedagogy

The prominence of relational themes in participants' perspectives aligns with substantial research on moral education emphasizing that values are "caught" as much as "taught" (Noddings, 2002). Social learning theory illuminates this dynamic: students learn faithfulness not primarily through cognitive instruction but through observing and interacting with faithful adults. This finding challenges instructional approaches that prioritize content delivery over relational investment. The relational dimension carries particular weight in religious education where authenticity and credibility significantly influence receptivity to spiritual and moral teaching. Students demonstrate remarkable sensitivity to perceived hypocrisy or disconnection between teachers' professed values and observable behavior (Smith & Denton, 2005). Teachers who embody faithfulness in their relationships, commitments, and pedagogical presence create what might be termed "incarnational curriculum"—living demonstrations of abstract values. This finding has significant implications for teacher selection, evaluation, and support. Educational institutions must recognize that effective religious education requires more than subject matter expertise; it demands persons of character who can authentically model the values they teach. However, this expectation must be balanced with grace for human imperfection and appropriate boundaries regarding teachers' personal lives.

Navigating Cultural Tensions

The study reveals considerable tension between biblical ideals of faithfulness and contemporary cultural realities—tension participants must navigate with pedagogical wisdom. This challenge reflects broader debates in religious education regarding engagement with secular culture: accommodation versus confrontation, contextualization versus compromise (Pazmiño, 2008). More effective teachers in this study employed what Niebuhr (1951) might characterize as "Christ transforming culture" approaches—neither rejecting culture entirely nor uncritically embracing it, but engaging critically and redemptively. This posture requires sophisticated cultural analysis, theological clarity, and pedagogical creativity. The prevalence of family diversity among

students necessitates particular sensitivity. When teaching about faithfulness and God's design for marriage, teachers encountered students whose lived experience includes parental divorce, family breakdown, or alternative family structures. Teaching that honors biblical truth while extending compassion to those affected by human brokenness requires nuanced competence. Effective practitioners demonstrated ability to distinguish between affirming God's ideal and condemning individuals, between maintaining theological convictions and marginalizing students whose families don't conform to those ideals. This tension underscores the need for professional development that addresses not only what to teach but how to teach contested topics in pluralistic contexts. Teachers benefit from frameworks for cultural engagement, case study analysis of complex scenarios, and supported practice in navigating sensitive conversations.

The Challenge of Teacher Preparation

The finding that many participants felt inadequately prepared for teaching relationship ethics and faithfulness highlights significant gaps in teacher education. Both theological institutions and education programs often overlook specialized preparation for teaching sensitive topics related to sexuality, marriage, and relationships. This omission leaves teachers to develop competence through trial and error—an inefficient approach that may result in pedagogical missteps with lasting impact on students. Effective preparation would integrate: robust theological education addressing biblical teachings on relationships, covenant, and faithfulness; developmental psychology informing age-appropriate approaches to discussing relationships and sexuality; pedagogical methods specific to value education and character formation; cultural analysis equipping teachers to understand contemporary challenges to faithfulness; practical experience teaching these topics under supervision with formative feedback; and ongoing professional development addressing emerging challenges and refining practice. Additionally, the creation and dissemination of high-quality curriculum resources would support teachers significantly. As participants noted, existing materials often prove inadequate—either overly simplistic, culturally dated, or theologically weak. Investment in developing contextually relevant, pedagogically sound resources would enhance teachers' effectiveness considerably. An important finding was how theologically sophisticated teachers conceptualized faithfulness comprehensively rather than narrowly. Rather than limiting faithfulness to marital fidelity, these educators connected Genesis 2:24 to broader biblical themes: God's covenantal faithfulness to humanity, Christ's faithful commitment to the church, the call to faithful discipleship and stewardship, faithfulness in friendships and community, and integrity and consistency of character across life domains. This comprehensive approach provides multiple entry points for students at different life stages and circumstances. Elementary students can grasp faithfulness through friendship loyalty; adolescents can explore commitment in dating relationships; young adults can consider vocational faithfulness and life partnerships. This developmental scaffolding makes faithfulness accessible and relevant across educational contexts. Connecting marital faithfulness to divine-human relationship provides profound theological depth. When teachers help students understand human marriage as reflecting Christ's covenant relationship with the church (Ephesians 5:31-32), they elevate faithfulness from behavioral expectation to participation in divine mystery. This

theological richness transforms value education from moralistic instruction to spiritual formation.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations warrant acknowledgment. The study's qualitative design and purposive sampling, while appropriate for exploratory investigation, limit generalizability. Participants represented volunteers likely possessing above-average commitment to effective teaching. Observational data, while valuable, captured limited instructional time and may not fully represent typical practice. Self-report data may reflect idealized rather than actual practices. Future research should employ longitudinal designs examining how pedagogical interventions influence students' value development over time. Quantitative studies could identify relationships between specific pedagogical competencies and student outcomes. Comparative research across different religious traditions would illuminate how various faith communities approach teaching faithfulness. Investigation of student perspectives would provide crucial insight into effective and ineffective pedagogical approaches from learner viewpoints. Development and evaluation of teacher education interventions would generate evidence-based approaches to enhancing pedagogical competence.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that pedagogical competence in instilling the value of faithfulness based on Genesis 2:24 requires sophisticated integration of biblical-theological knowledge, relational capacity, cultural awareness, and instructional skill. Effective Christian Religious Education teachers serve not merely as information transmitters but as moral exemplars, cultural translators, and spiritual guides who help students understand and embrace faithfulness as comprehensive virtue applicable across life domains. The research reveals significant variability in teacher competence and highlights substantial challenges including inadequate professional preparation, insufficient resources, and complex cultural tensions requiring nuanced navigation. Despite these challenges, participating teachers demonstrated remarkable dedication and creativity in adapting their practice to serve students effectively. The findings carry important implications for multiple stakeholders. Teacher education programs, both theological and pedagogical, must expand preparation to address the unique competencies required for value education. Educational institutions should invest in developing high-quality curriculum resources and creating professional learning communities that support teachers' ongoing development. Religious education researchers should continue investigating the intersection of theology, pedagogy, and character formation to build evidence-based approaches to moral and spiritual education. Ultimately, the capacity of CRE teachers to instill faithfulness based on biblical principles significantly influences the character formation and spiritual development of emerging generations. As contemporary culture increasingly challenges traditional understandings of commitment, fidelity, and covenant relationship, the role of competent religious educators becomes ever more crucial. This study contributes to understanding how teachers can fulfill this vital role with excellence, integrity, and transformative impact.

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