



The Personality of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Instilling Self-Control (Genesis 4:7) among Students at SLBN Deliserdang

Rida Wati Sirait^{1*}, Pestaria Naibaho²

¹Student, Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

²Lecturer, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: ridasirait05@guru.slb.belajar.id

ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers' personality in instilling self-control among students with special needs at SLBN Deliserdang, using Genesis 4:7 as the theological foundation. Self-control is a critical character trait for students with disabilities, enabling them to manage emotions and behaviors effectively. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach with purposive sampling, involving five CRE teachers and fifteen students. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Findings reveal that teachers with exemplary personalities—characterized by patience, empathy, consistency, and spiritual maturity—significantly influence students' self-control development. The biblical principle from Genesis 4:7, which emphasizes mastering sin and controlling negative impulses, serves as an effective pedagogical framework. Teachers implement this principle through modeling behavior, storytelling, reflective discussions, and individualized approaches adapted to students' diverse needs. The study concludes that the teacher's personality is instrumental in translating biblical teachings into practical life skills for students with special needs. Recommendations include enhancing teacher training programs focused on character development and biblical pedagogy tailored for inclusive education settings.

Keywords: Teacher personality, self-control, Genesis 4:7, special needs education

INTRODUCTION

Self-control constitutes a fundamental aspect of character formation and moral development, serving as a vital foundation for students' capacity to regulate emotions, behavior, and decision-making processes. For students with special needs, this attribute becomes particularly crucial, as they often experience greater challenges in emotional regulation and behavioral adaptation within social and learning environments (Baumeister & Vohs, 2016). In the realm of Christian education, self-control transcends its psychological dimension and assumes a spiritual significance, grounded in the moral teachings of Scripture. The biblical passage in *Genesis 4:7* presents a deeply theological

reflection on human moral agency: *"If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it"* (New International Version). This verse encapsulates the principle of personal mastery over destructive impulses, emphasizing the divine expectation that individuals exercise moral responsibility and spiritual discernment. Within the educational context, this principle serves as a profound framework for nurturing students' capacity to act with discipline, integrity, and faithfulness. SLBN Deliserdang, located in North Sumatra, Indonesia, is a special needs institution dedicated to educating children with diverse disabilities, including intellectual, emotional, and physical challenges. The unique educational landscape of such a school requires teachers to adopt pedagogical strategies that integrate academic instruction, moral formation, and social skill development in ways that are responsive to students' individual needs. Within this setting, Christian Religious Education (CRE) plays a crucial role in fostering moral values, spiritual awareness, and ethical behavior through biblical learning. The CRE teacher's role extends beyond the transfer of theological knowledge; it encompasses guiding students toward holistic personal growth and nurturing virtues such as patience, humility, and self-control. This responsibility becomes especially significant in a special education environment, where emotional sensitivity, behavioral stability, and moral understanding are integral to students' success and well-being. The personality of the teacher, in this context, functions as a determining factor in achieving educational and spiritual objectives. Personality embodies a constellation of enduring traits—such as empathy, patience, integrity, and self-discipline—that shape a teacher's approach to instruction and interaction (Çelik, 2017; Stronge et al., 2011). Numerous studies in educational psychology and pedagogy have demonstrated that a teacher's personality profoundly influences classroom climate, student engagement, and moral development. In Christian Religious Education, however, this influence takes on an additional dimension: teachers become living testimonies of faith, serving as moral exemplars through whom students encounter practical expressions of Christian virtues. The teacher's character thus becomes a mirror of biblical principles, inviting students not only to learn *about* self-control but also to witness it in practice. Within the Christian worldview, the cultivation of self-control aligns with the broader theological concept of sanctification—the process of becoming more Christ-like through discipline and obedience to God's will. *Genesis 4:7* serves as an archetype for understanding moral struggle and divine expectation, illustrating humanity's ongoing tension between sin and righteousness. For students with special needs, who may struggle with impulse control or emotional volatility, the message of this verse offers both a challenge and a source of hope: though temptation and frustration are ever-present, mastery and moral growth are possible through conscious effort and divine guidance. By embedding this theological insight into classroom practice, CRE teachers at SLBN Deliserdang have the potential to nurture a spiritually informed understanding of self-control—one that integrates emotional regulation, ethical reasoning, and faith-based motivation. Research on how biblical teachings such as *Genesis 4:7* can be contextualized within special education remains limited. Even more scarce are studies exploring the role of teacher personality in mediating the development of self-control through religious instruction. Previous scholarship has largely focused on general pedagogical competencies or psychological support frameworks, with insufficient attention given to the interplay between personality, spirituality, and inclusive pedagogy.

This research seeks to address that gap by examining how the distinctive personalities of CRE teachers at SLBN Deliserdang contribute to the process of instilling self-control in students with special needs. The investigation is guided by three interrelated research questions. First, what personality traits characterize effective CRE teachers in the special education setting of SLBN Deliserdang? Understanding these traits provides insight into the interpersonal and moral qualities that enable teachers to connect with and positively influence their students. Second, how do CRE teachers interpret and apply the principles of *Genesis 4:7* in their daily teaching practice? This question explores the integration of biblical wisdom into pedagogical methods, including how teachers model and reinforce self-control through lesson content, classroom management, and personal example. Third, what is the perceived impact of teacher personality on students' ability to develop self-control? This inquiry considers the perspectives of teachers, students, and possibly parents or administrators regarding how personality-driven teaching affects behavioral and spiritual growth among learners.

The findings from this study are expected to contribute meaningfully to both theory and practice in Christian education. Theoretically, the research extends existing discussions on teacher personality by situating it within a biblical and theological framework. It emphasizes that personality, in the context of Christian education, cannot be divorced from moral and spiritual dimensions, as the teacher's identity is inherently tied to their faith witness. Practically, the study provides pedagogical insights for educators working in inclusive environments. By understanding the role of personality in shaping self-control, schools can better design teacher training programs that emphasize emotional intelligence, spiritual maturity, and biblical integration. This research aligns with Indonesia's broader educational mission as articulated in the *National Education System Act No. 20 of 2003*, which underscores the importance of developing students' faith, piety, and noble character. Within that national vision, Christian Religious Education serves as a vital component of holistic learning that nurtures both intellect and spirit. In inclusive schools like SLBN Deliserdang, the mission of character formation must adapt to the realities of diverse learning needs without compromising the spiritual depth of biblical instruction. CRE teachers, therefore, stand at the intersection of theology, pedagogy, and compassion, tasked with transforming the principle of "*you must rule over it*" from *Genesis 4:7* into lived experience for students facing behavioral and emotional challenges.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the phenomenon in its natural context. The qualitative paradigm was chosen to capture the complexity and nuanced experiences of CRE teachers and students at SLBN Deliserdang, allowing for in-depth understanding of how personality influences pedagogical practice. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, comprising five CRE teachers (three female, two male) with teaching experience ranging from 3 to 15 years, and fifteen students aged 12-18 years with various disabilities (intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, and physical impairments). All participants were active members of the school's Christian education program. Informed consent was obtained from teachers and parents/guardians of student participants. Data were collected over a four-month period (March-June 2024) through three primary methods: 1) In-depth interviews, semi-

structured interviews with CRE teachers (45-60 minutes each) explored their understanding of self-control, teaching strategies, and personal qualities they deemed important for their role. Student interviews (20-30 minutes) assessed their perceptions of teachers and self-control development. 2) Classroom observations, twelve classroom sessions were observed, focusing on teacher-student interactions, teaching methods for self-control, and practical applications of Genesis 4:7 principles. Field notes documented teacher behaviors, communication patterns, and classroom dynamics. 3) Document analysis, lesson plans, teaching materials, student progress reports, and school policies related to character education were reviewed to contextualize observed practices. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. The process involved: (1) familiarization with data through repeated reading of transcripts; (2) generating initial codes; (3) identifying themes; (4) reviewing and refining themes; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) producing the final analysis. NVivo 12 software facilitated data organization and coding. Trustworthiness was established through triangulation of multiple data sources, member checking with participants, and peer debriefing with colleagues. Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board and school administration. Pseudonyms are used throughout this report to protect participant confidentiality. Special attention was given to ensuring students with special needs understood their voluntary participation and right to withdraw at any time.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All participating teachers demonstrated exceptional patience, essential when working with students who require extended time to process information and regulate behaviors. Teacher Maria stated: "Working with special needs children requires patience beyond measure. When a child struggles to control anger, I cannot respond with frustration. I must embody the calm I want them to learn." Observations confirmed that teachers maintained composure during challenging situations, such as student meltdowns or disruptive behaviors, modeling the self-control they sought to instill. Teachers exhibited profound empathy, recognizing each student's unique struggles and celebrating small victories. Teacher David explained: "I try to see through their eyes, to understand why controlling impulses is harder for them. This understanding shapes how I teach Genesis 4:7—not as a command but as a tool for freedom." This empathetic approach enabled teachers to tailor interventions to individual needs, creating supportive learning environments where students felt understood rather than judged. Teachers maintained consistent behavioral expectations and responses, providing students with predictable structures that facilitated self-control development. The consistency extended to modeling behavior—teachers consistently demonstrated the self-regulation they taught. Teachers' genuine faith and personal commitment to biblical principles enhanced their credibility as moral educators. Their authentic spiritual lives made their teachings more compelling and believable to students. Given the diverse learning needs, teachers demonstrated creativity in pedagogical approaches, adapting lessons to various cognitive levels and learning styles while maintaining core biblical messages.

Implementation of Genesis 4:7 Principles

Teachers narrated the Cain and Abel story using simplified language, visual aids, and role-playing activities. Teacher Ruth described her approach: "I help students see that 'sin

crouching at the door' is like the angry feelings they experience. Just as God told Cain to master it, they can master their emotions with God's help." Teachers connected the biblical principle to students' daily experiences-managing frustration during difficult tasks, controlling impulses to hit others when angry, or resisting the urge to quit. Practical exercises included:

- a. "Pause and Pray" moments when students felt overwhelmed
- b. "Master It" charts tracking instances of successful self-control
- c. Role-play scenarios practicing impulse control in various situations

Teachers facilitated age-appropriate discussions about the consequences of uncontrolled behavior and the empowerment that comes from self-mastery. Student Joshua (pseudonym), a 15-year-old with mild intellectual disability, shared: "Teacher Sarah helps me remember that angry feelings are like that lion at the door. I can tell it 'no' when I want to throw things."

Positive Reinforcement with Biblical Affirmation

Teachers combined behavioral reinforcement with spiritual encouragement, affirming students' God-given capacity to exercise self-control as made in God's image. Student progress reports showed measurable improvements in self-regulation behaviors over the academic year. Teachers reported decreased incidents of aggressive outbursts and increased ability to use calming strategies independently. Students demonstrated growing understanding of self-control concepts, connecting biblical teachings to personal experiences. During interviews, twelve of fifteen students could articulate basic self-control strategies and reference Genesis 4:7 principles in their own words. Students showed improved emotional awareness and vocabulary to express feelings rather than acting out behaviorally. Parent reports (gathered through school documentation) corroborated improvements in home settings. Several students expressed viewing self-control as both a personal skill and spiritual practice, indicating successful integration of religious and practical dimensions.

The Mediating Role of Teacher Personality

The data revealed that teacher personality mediated the effectiveness of self-control instruction. Students responded more positively to teachers who embodied the qualities they taught. As Teacher John observed: "They watch everything I do. If I lose my patience, my lessons about Genesis 4:7 ring hollow. My personality-how I handle frustration, show kindness, remain steady-teaches more powerfully than my words." Observations confirmed that classrooms led by teachers with stronger personality alignment to biblical virtues demonstrated more engaged students and greater behavioral improvements. The teachers' authentic embodiment of self-control principles created a "living curriculum" that transcended formal instruction.

Teacher Personality as Pedagogical Foundation

The identified personality traits-patience, empathy, consistency, spiritual authenticity, and adaptability-correspond to qualities emphasized in both educational literature and biblical teachings about Christian educators. These traits enable teachers to create safe, supportive environments where students with special needs can practice self-control without fear of harsh judgment. The alignment between teacher personality and

pedagogical content enhances message credibility, a principle supported by communication research on source credibility effects. For students with disabilities, who often experience heightened sensitivity to social cues and environmental consistency, the teacher's stable and compassionate personality provides an essential foundation for learning emotional regulation. This finding resonates with attachment theory principles, suggesting that secure teacher-student relationships facilitate risk-taking and skill development in vulnerable populations.

Genesis 4:7 as a Developmentally Appropriate Framework

The study demonstrates that Genesis 4:7's metaphor of "mastering" crouching sin can be effectively translated into concrete self-control strategies for students with special needs. The visual and action-oriented nature of the biblical metaphor-sin as a crouching beast that must be ruled-provides a memorable and empowering framework that transcends cognitive limitations. This finding contributes to religious education scholarship by demonstrating how ancient texts can be contextually adapted for contemporary educational challenges. The teachers' ability to bridge theological content and practical application reflects what Yount (2008) describes as "transformative teaching" in Christian contexts-instruction that moves beyond information transfer to life transformation.

Inclusive Pedagogy in Christian Education

The teachers' adaptive approaches highlight important principles for inclusive Christian education. Rather than lowering expectations, teachers maintained core biblical principles while modifying delivery methods to accommodate diverse learning needs. This practice reflects universal design for learning (UDL) principles (Rose & Meyer, 2002) applied within religious education contexts. The success of individualized approaches challenges deficit-based perspectives of disability, instead affirming students' capacity for spiritual growth and moral development. This strengths-based orientation aligns with theological affirmations of human dignity and the *imago Dei*-all persons created in God's image with inherent worth and potential (Yong, 2007). Several limitations should be noted. First, the study's small sample size and single-site focus limit generalizability. Future research should include multiple schools across diverse contexts to identify patterns and variations. Second, the four-month timeframe provides limited longitudinal perspective on sustained behavior change. Long-term studies tracking students' self-control development over years would strengthen understanding of lasting impacts. Third, this study relied primarily on self-reported data and researcher observations, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Future research could incorporate additional measures such as standardized behavioral assessments, physiological stress indicators, or video analysis of classroom interactions. Fourth, the study did not include a comparison group of secular education approaches, limiting conclusions about the unique contributions of Christian frameworks versus general character education methods.

Future research should also explore: (1) the differential effectiveness of various personality traits in different disability contexts; (2) mechanisms through which teacher personality influences student outcomes; (3) training programs that effectively develop these personality qualities in pre-service and in-service teachers; and (4) students' long-term retention and application of self-control skills in post-school life.

CONCLUSION

This study illuminates the vital connection between Christian Religious Education teachers' personalities and their effectiveness in instilling self-control among students with special needs. The findings demonstrate that teachers who embody patience, empathy, consistency, spiritual authenticity, and adaptability create powerful learning environments where biblical principles become lived realities. Genesis 4:7's teaching about mastering sin provides a robust theological framework for self-control education, particularly when teachers skillfully adapt this ancient wisdom to students' contemporary challenges and cognitive capacities. The teachers at SLBN Deliserdang exemplify how personality and pedagogy intertwine-their character strengths enable them to translate scriptural principles into accessible, meaningful, and transformative lessons for students who face unique developmental challenges. For inclusive Christian education practice, these findings underscore the importance of selecting and developing teachers who possess not only subject matter expertise but also the personal qualities that make them effective moral educators and spiritual mentors. Teacher education programs should prioritize character formation alongside pedagogical training, recognizing that in religious education contexts, the teacher's person is inseparable from their professional practice. Ultimately, this research affirms that students with special needs, when supported by teachers of exemplary character, can develop essential self-control skills grounded in biblical truth. This development enhances not only their behavioral functioning but also their spiritual formation and sense of dignity as persons created in God's image with the capacity for moral agency and self-governance.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baumeister, R. F., & Vohs, K. D. (2016). Strength model of self-regulation as limited resource: Assessment, controversies, update. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 54, 67-127. <https://doi.org/10.1016/bs.aesp.2016.04.001>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Çelik, S. (2017). The effect of personality on students' achievement. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 5(8), 110-119. <https://doi.org/10.11114/jets.v5i8.2509>
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge.
- Kunter, M., Klusmann, U., Baumert, J., Richter, D., Voss, T., & Hachfeld, A. (2013). Professional competence of teachers: Effects on instructional quality and student development. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105(3), 805-820. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0032583>
- Rose, D. H., & Meyer, A. (2002). *Teaching every student in the digital age: Universal design for learning*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

- Stronge, J. H., Ward, T. J., & Grant, L. W. (2011). What makes good teachers good? A cross-case analysis of the connection between teacher effectiveness and student achievement. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 62(4), 339-355. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487111404241>
- Yong, A. (2007). *Theology and Down syndrome: Reimagining disability in late modernity*. Baylor University Press.
- Yount, W. R. (2008). *Created to learn: A Christian teacher's introduction to educational psychology* (2nd ed.). B&H Publishing Group.