



The Personality Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers as Role Models for Students at SDN 040554 Lingga Muda

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the personality competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers as role models for students at SDN 040554 Lingga Muda. Personality competence encompasses stable characteristics including religious values, ethical conduct, emotional maturity, and exemplary behavior that teachers must demonstrate. The research employed a qualitative descriptive approach with phenomenological design, involving two CRE teachers and 30 fifth and sixth-grade students. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Findings reveal that CRE teachers demonstrate strong personality competence through consistent religious practices, ethical integrity, empathetic communication, and positive behavioral modeling. Students perceive their teachers as credible role models who significantly influence their spiritual development and moral character formation. Key indicators of effective personality competence include authentic faith expression, patience in teaching, fairness in treatment, and accountability in actions. However, challenges exist in maintaining consistency between teaching and personal conduct, particularly in managing emotional responses during classroom conflicts. The study concludes that personality competence is fundamental to effective religious education, as it creates authentic learning experiences that extend beyond cognitive instruction to character transformation. Recommendations include continuous professional development programs focusing on spiritual formation, emotional intelligence training, and establishment of peer mentoring systems among religious education teachers.

Keywords: *personality competence, Christian religious education, role model, teacher*

INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia extends beyond academic achievement to encompass character development and moral formation, particularly through religious education. Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System emphasizes that education aims to develop students' potential to become faithful, noble, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and responsible citizens. Christian Religious Education (CRE) plays

a crucial role in achieving these objectives by integrating faith principles with ethical values. Teacher competence, as mandated by Law No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, comprises four dimensions: pedagogical, professional, social, and personality competence. Among these, personality competence holds particular significance in religious education contexts, as teachers serve not merely as knowledge transmitters but as living testimonies of faith principles. Personality competence encompasses stable personal characteristics reflecting noble values, including religious devotion, ethical integrity, emotional maturity, wisdom, and exemplary conduct.

At SDN 040554 Lingga Muda, a public elementary school in North Sumatra, CRE teachers face unique challenges in demonstrating personality competence. The school serves a diverse student population with varying religious backgrounds, requiring teachers to embody authentic Christian values while respecting pluralism. Students at this developmental stage (ages 10-12) are highly impressionable and actively construct their moral frameworks through observation and imitation of significant adults, particularly teachers. Despite the recognized importance of personality competence, limited empirical research examines how CRE teachers' personality characteristics influence students' perception and character development in elementary school contexts. Preliminary observations at SDN 040554 Lingga Muda indicated variations in how teachers demonstrate religious values, handle ethical dilemmas, and maintain emotional stability, raising questions about the manifestation and impact of personality competence in daily teaching practice. This research contributes to educational practice by providing empirical evidence on personality competence in religious education contexts. Findings can inform teacher training programs, professional development initiatives, and school policies aimed at strengthening the character formation dimension of religious education. Additionally, the study offers insights for educational stakeholders regarding the human dimensions of effective religious instruction.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers and students regarding personality competence. This methodology was selected to capture the complex, context-dependent nature of personality manifestation and role modeling in educational settings. The research was conducted at SDN 040554 Lingga Muda, located in Lingga Muda Village, Karo Regency, North Sumatra Province. The school serves 156 students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, with approximately 25% identifying as Christian. CRE classes are conducted twice weekly for 70 minutes per session. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, comprising: 1) Two CRE teachers (Teacher A: 15 years teaching experience, bachelor's degree in Christian Education; Teacher B: 8 years teaching experience, bachelor's degree in Theology). 2) 30 students from grades 5 and 6 (ages 10-12 years), selected based on willingness to participate and ability to articulate reflective observations

Data triangulation was achieved by comparing findings across different sources and methods. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary findings with participants for validation. The research protocol received approval from the school principal and education office. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, with

parental consent secured for student participants. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, with the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. All data were stored securely and accessible only to the research team. This study's findings are context-specific to SDN 040554 Lingga Muda and may not be generalizable to other settings. The researcher's presence during observations may have influenced participant behavior (observer effect). Additionally, student responses may reflect social desirability bias in describing their teachers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis revealed four major themes characterizing personality competence manifestation and its impact on students: (1) authentic faith expression, (2) ethical integrity and consistency, (3) emotional maturity and empathy, and (4) exemplary behavioral modeling. Each theme is presented with supporting evidence from data sources. Both CRE teachers demonstrated authentic faith expression through consistent integration of religious practices in their personal and professional lives. Teacher A regularly began lessons with spontaneous prayers addressing current student concerns, while Teacher B incorporated biblical narratives into everyday classroom management.

"Teacher [A] doesn't just tell us to pray, she really prays with her whole heart. When my friend was sick, she stopped teaching and we prayed together. I felt God was really listening because teacher believed it." (Student F5-03)

Observations confirmed that teachers' faith expressions appeared genuine rather than performative. During a classroom conflict between two students, Teacher B responded by modeling forgiveness, explicitly connecting the situation to Christian principles: *"Remember how Jesus taught us to forgive seventy times seven? This is our chance to practice that teaching together."*

Teachers articulated their understanding of faith integration in teaching: *"My faith is not separate from my teaching. When I enter the classroom, I don't 'put on' Christianity like a costume. It's who I am. Students can sense authenticity. They know when you're just performing religion versus living it."* (Teacher A)

Ethical Integrity and Consistency

A prominent finding was the importance students placed on consistency between teachers' stated values and actual behaviors. Students demonstrated acute awareness of ethical integrity, frequently citing specific examples of fairness, honesty, and accountability. *"Teacher [B] always admits when he makes mistakes. Once he gave wrong information about a Bible story, and next week he apologized and corrected it. That taught me it's okay to admit mistakes."* (Student F6-05)

Observations revealed teachers maintained ethical standards even in challenging situations. When a student was caught cheating, Teacher A addressed the situation privately with compassion while maintaining clear boundaries about academic honesty. The teacher later reflected: *"I had to balance firmness about wrong behavior with grace and restoration, just as God does with us. I couldn't be harsh or condemning, but I also couldn't ignore it. Students watch how I handle these moments."* (Teacher A). However, both teachers acknowledged occasional struggles with consistency: *"Sometimes when I'm tired or stressed, my patience wears thin. I might respond more sharply than I should."*

Those moments remind me I'm still growing too, but they also concern me because students are always watching." (Teacher B)

Emotional Maturity and Empathy

Teachers' emotional regulation and empathetic responses significantly influenced students' perceptions of them as role models. Students frequently mentioned teachers' calmness, patience, and ability to understand their perspectives. *"When I'm sad or upset, Teacher [A] notices even if I don't say anything. She asks me what's wrong in a kind way, not like she's punishing me. She really tries to understand."* (Student F5-08)

Observations documented multiple instances of empathetic communication. When a student struggled to answer a question, Teacher B responded with encouraging words and adjusted the question complexity rather than expressing frustration. Field notes recorded: *"Teacher B noticed student's anxiety, lowered his voice, smiled reassuringly, and said, 'Take your time. There's no rush. We're learning together.' Student visibly relaxed and attempted the answer."* (Observation note, March 15, 2025)

Teachers identified emotional intelligence as learned competence requiring continuous development: *"Early in my career, I took student misbehavior personally and reacted emotionally. Now I understand that emotional maturity means pausing, considering the student's context, and responding rather than reacting. But it's still challenging, especially with repetitive behavior issues."* (Teacher B)

Exemplary Behavioral Modeling

Students identified specific behaviors they learned through observation rather than explicit instruction, including respectful communication, conflict resolution, and inclusive attitudes. *"I learned how to disagree with someone without being mean by watching Teacher [B]. When students argue, he listens to both sides and helps them understand each other. He doesn't take sides."* (Student F6-02)

Observations confirmed that teachers modeled inclusive behavior by ensuring all students participated, regardless of academic ability or social status. Teacher A intentionally paired academically stronger students with struggling peers, modeling collaborative rather than competitive learning: *"Christianity teaches us that we're all valuable members of God's family. I try to create a classroom community that reflects this, where students help each other rather than compete. My role is to model this inclusive love first."* (Teacher A)

Students also noted teachers' humility and willingness to learn: *"Teacher [A] sometimes asks us questions about our experiences and really listens. She told us that teachers can learn from students too. That made me feel respected."* (Student F5-06)

Both teachers acknowledged gaps between their ideals and actual practice, particularly during stressful periods or when facing persistent behavioral issues. Teachers felt pressure to cover curriculum content, sometimes at the expense of addressing character formation opportunities that arise spontaneously. Teachers expressed desire for peer mentoring and professional development specifically addressing spiritual formation and emotional intelligence, which were rarely available. Managing personality competence demonstration while addressing varied student backgrounds, learning styles, and emotional needs presented ongoing challenges. *"Sometimes I feel stretched between being authentic, meeting curriculum requirements, managing classroom behavior, and*

responding to individual student needs. It's difficult to maintain consistent personality competence across all these demands." (Teacher B)

Personality Competence as Foundation for Role Modeling

This study confirms that personality competence serves as the foundation for effective role modeling in religious education. Consistent with social learning theory, students acquire values and behaviors primarily through observation and imitation of credible models rather than through abstract instruction alone. The findings demonstrate that CRE teachers' personality characteristics directly influence students' spiritual development and moral character formation. The authenticity of faith expression emerged as particularly significant. Students demonstrated sophisticated ability to distinguish between genuine faith integration and performative religiosity, validating previous research indicating that children possess acute sensitivity to adult authenticity. This finding challenges transmission-based models of religious education that prioritize knowledge transfer over embodied witness.

Ethical integrity, particularly consistency between stated values and behaviors, proved central to establishing teacher credibility. Students' emphasis on teachers' willingness to admit mistakes and maintain fairness reflects developmental psychology insights that early adolescents actively construct moral frameworks through critical observation of authority figures. Teachers who demonstrate fallibility while maintaining ethical standards model healthy spiritual development as ongoing process rather than achieved perfection. This finding has implications for teacher education programs, suggesting that preparation for religious education should address ethical decision-making, self-awareness, and reflective practice alongside content knowledge. The vulnerability required for authentic teaching demands support systems that many teachers in this study reported lacking.

Emotional Intelligence in Religious Education

The prominence of emotional maturity and empathy in students' descriptions of effective role models aligns with contemporary educational research emphasizing socioemotional dimensions of learning. Students' positive responses to teachers' empathetic communication suggest that religious education effectiveness depends significantly on relational quality. Teachers who demonstrate emotional intelligence create psychologically safe learning environments where students feel valued and understood, facilitating deeper engagement with spiritual content. However, the emotional labor required for consistent empathetic engagement presents sustainability concerns. Both teachers acknowledged difficulty maintaining emotional regulation during stressful periods, highlighting the need for institutional supports including manageable workloads, mental health resources, and professional development addressing self-care and emotional intelligence.

Behavioral Modeling Beyond Explicit Instruction

The finding that students learned significant lessons through observing teachers' unplanned behaviors reinforces the "hidden curriculum" concept—implicit messages conveyed through everyday interactions often prove more influential than formal

instruction. Teachers' modeling of inclusive attitudes, conflict resolution strategies, and humble learning dispositions provided powerful character formation experiences.

This underscores the comprehensive nature of personality competence; it encompasses not only planned demonstrations of values but also spontaneous responses to unexpected situations. Religious educators must recognize that their entire presence constitutes curriculum, necessitating continuous self-reflection and growth. Teachers' identification of challenges in maintaining personality competence consistency reveals the demanding nature of religious education. The tension between curricular coverage and responsive character formation reflects broader educational pressures that may undermine holistic learning goals. Additionally, limited access to specialized professional development and peer support systems leaves teachers navigating complex personality competence demands largely alone.

These findings suggest that educational institutions must prioritize teacher wellbeing and development. Effective religious education requires not only competent teachers but supported teachers who have opportunities for spiritual formation, emotional processing, and professional learning communities. Theoretically, this study contributes to understanding personality competence as dynamic, contextual, and relational rather than static trait possession. Personality competence manifests through ongoing interactions where teachers continuously negotiate authenticity, ethical consistency, emotional regulation, and behavioral modeling within specific situations. Practically, findings indicate several actionable directions: 1) Teacher preparation programs should emphasize formation alongside information, cultivating spiritual depth and emotional intelligence. 2) Schools should establish peer mentoring systems enabling religious educators to support each other's growth. 3) Professional development should address practical strategies for maintaining personality competence consistency. 4) Institutional policies should recognize teacher wellbeing as prerequisite for effective character education. 5) Assessment of religious education should include personality competence dimensions alongside content knowledge evaluation

CONCLUSION

This study examined personality competence manifestation among Christian Religious Education teachers at SDN 040554 Lingga Muda and its influence on students' perception and character development. Findings reveal that personality competence, encompassing authentic faith expression, ethical integrity, emotional maturity, and exemplary behavioral modeling, fundamentally shapes religious education effectiveness. Students demonstrate sophisticated capacity to evaluate teacher authenticity and consistency, learning significant spiritual and moral lessons through observation of teachers' lived faith rather than solely through explicit instruction. CRE teachers serve as powerful role models whose entire presence constitutes curriculum. Students learn forgiveness by witnessing teachers forgive, develop empathy through experiencing empathetic treatment, and construct ethical frameworks through observing consistent value alignment. However, maintaining personality competence consistency presents ongoing challenges, particularly given emotional labor demands, contextual pressures, and limited support systems.

The study concludes that effective religious education transcends content mastery to require comprehensive personal formation of educators. Personality competence cannot be reduced to skill acquisition but involves continuous spiritual growth, ethical development, emotional intelligence cultivation, and reflective practice. Educational institutions must recognize this complexity by providing robust support systems enabling teachers to sustain the demanding work of serving as living testimonies of faith. This research illuminates the profound responsibility and opportunity inherent in religious education. As living epistles read by students daily, CRE teachers' personality competence shapes not only what students know but who students become. Investing in teachers' comprehensive formation therefore represents investment in students' character transformation and, ultimately, in society's moral fabric.

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