



The Professionalism of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Shaping the Character of Fifth-Grade Students at SDN 280211 Turelaoya

Erieli Harefa^{1*}, Maidiantius Tanyid²

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

²Lecturer, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: erieliharefa73@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examines the professionalism of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in shaping the character of fifth-grade students at SDN 280211 Turelaoya. The research aims to identify the professional competencies demonstrated by CRE teachers and their impact on students' character development. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers and students, and document analysis. The study involved two CRE teachers and 24 fifth-grade students. Findings reveal that teacher professionalism, encompassing pedagogical competence, personality competence, professional competence, and social competence, significantly influences character formation in students. The teachers demonstrated strong biblical knowledge integration, effective teaching methodologies, and consistent role modeling. Students exhibited improvements in moral values such as honesty, responsibility, respect, and compassion. However, challenges identified include limited instructional resources, insufficient professional development opportunities, and time constraints in curriculum delivery. This research contributes to understanding the crucial role of professional CRE teachers in elementary character education and provides recommendations for enhancing teacher professionalism through continuous training programs and institutional support.

Keywords: teacher professionalism, Christian religious education, character development

INTRODUCTION

Character education has become a fundamental concern in the Indonesian educational system, particularly following the implementation of the Strengthening Character Education (PPK) program by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The formation of moral character during elementary school years is critical, as this period represents a foundational stage in children's cognitive, emotional, and social development. Religious education plays a pivotal role in this character-building process by instilling moral values, ethical principles, and spiritual awareness in young learners.

Christian Religious Education (CRE) in Indonesian public schools serves not only as a means of religious instruction but also as a vehicle for character formation grounded in biblical principles and Christian values. The effectiveness of CRE in achieving these objectives largely depends on the professionalism of the teachers responsible for delivering the curriculum. Teacher professionalism encompasses multiple dimensions, including pedagogical competence, personality competence, professional competence, and social competence, as mandated by Indonesian Law No. 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers. SDN 280211 Turelaoya, located in a diverse community with students from various religious backgrounds, presents a unique context for examining CRE teacher professionalism. Fifth-grade students at this developmental stage are particularly receptive to moral guidance and character formation, making this an optimal period for religious and character education intervention. However, limited research has been conducted on how CRE teacher professionalism specifically contributes to character development in elementary school settings, particularly in the Indonesian context.

The problem addressed in this study centers on understanding the relationship between CRE teacher professionalism and character formation outcomes among fifth-grade students. Specifically, this research investigates: (1) What professional competencies do CRE teachers demonstrate in their instructional practices? (2) How do these professional competencies contribute to students' character development? (3) What challenges do CRE teachers face in executing their professional responsibilities? The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform educational policy and practice regarding religious education and character development in elementary schools. By examining the specific ways in which professional CRE teachers influence student character, this research can contribute to the development of more effective teacher training programs, curriculum design, and support systems for religious educators.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the professionalism of CRE teachers and its impact on fifth-grade students' character development at SDN 280211 Turelaoya. The qualitative approach was selected to enable in-depth examination of the complex relationships between teacher professionalism and character formation, capturing the nuances of classroom interactions, teaching practices, and student responses. The research participants consisted of two CRE teachers (one male, one female, both with more than five years of teaching experience) and 24 fifth-grade students (ages 10-11 years) enrolled in CRE classes at SDN 280211 Turelaoya during the 2024/2025 academic year. Purposive sampling was used to select teachers based on their teaching experience and active involvement in CRE instruction. Student participants were selected to represent diverse academic abilities and family backgrounds. Data analysis followed the thematic analysis procedure. Interview transcripts and observation notes were coded inductively to identify recurring themes and patterns. The coding process involved: (1) familiarization with data through repeated reading, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes by grouping codes, (4) reviewing and refining themes, and (5) defining and naming final themes. The NVivo 12 software was used to facilitate the coding and theme development process. Ethical approval was obtained from the school administration and local education authorities. Informed consent was secured

from teachers, parents/guardians of student participants, and student assent was obtained. Participants were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Pseudonyms are used in reporting findings to protect participant identities. To ensure research validity and trustworthiness, multiple strategies were employed: (1) triangulation through multiple data sources, (2) member checking by sharing findings with participants for verification, (3) prolonged engagement in the research setting, and (4) maintaining an audit trail of all research procedures and decisions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Both teachers exhibited strong pedagogical competence through their ability to design and implement engaging lesson plans that integrated biblical teachings with character education objectives. They employed diverse teaching methods including storytelling, role-playing, group discussions, and project-based learning activities. One teacher stated, "I always try to connect Bible stories with real-life situations that children face, so they can understand how Christian values apply to their daily lives." Observations confirmed that teachers effectively used questioning techniques to promote critical thinking and moral reasoning. They structured lessons with clear objectives, appropriate sequencing, and formative assessments to monitor student understanding. Both teachers demonstrated proficiency in adapting instruction to accommodate different learning styles and abilities within their classrooms. The teachers demonstrated exemplary personality competence through consistent role modeling of Christian values. They exhibited patience, compassion, and respect in all interactions with students. Students repeatedly described their CRE teachers as "kind," "fair," and "good examples to follow." One student commented, "Our teacher doesn't just teach us about being honest; she shows us by always being honest with us."

Teachers maintained professional boundaries while creating warm, supportive classroom environments. They demonstrated emotional stability and responded to challenging behaviors with constructive discipline approaches rooted in Christian principles of forgiveness and restoration rather than punitive measures. Both teachers possessed solid theological knowledge and understanding of biblical content appropriate for elementary-level instruction. They participated in regional CRE teacher networks and attended periodic training sessions, though they expressed desire for more frequent professional development opportunities. One teacher noted, "I continuously study the Bible and read Christian education materials to deepen my understanding so I can teach more effectively." Teachers demonstrated competence in curriculum implementation, aligning their instruction with national CRE standards while contextualizing content to local community needs. They maintained organized records of student progress and used assessment data to inform instructional adjustments. The teachers showed strong social competence through effective communication with students, parents, and colleagues. They maintained positive relationships with school administration and collaborated with classroom teachers to reinforce character education across subjects. Both teachers actively engaged with parents regarding students' spiritual and character development, conducting periodic meetings and providing guidance for home-based religious education.

Impact on Character Development

Students demonstrated increased understanding and internalization of core Christian values including honesty, responsibility, respect, love, and forgiveness. Classroom observations revealed students applying these values in peer interactions, conflict resolution, and academic integrity. Teachers reported observable behavioral improvements, with students showing greater consideration for others and more ethical decision-making in classroom situations. Students exhibited growing spiritual awareness and connection with Christian faith practices. Many students reported engaging in personal prayer and reading Bible stories at home, indicating transfer of learning beyond the classroom. Students articulated understanding of God's love and their identity as created beings with inherent worth and dignity. The CRE classes fostered social-emotional competencies including empathy, self-control, and cooperation. Students demonstrated increased ability to recognize and manage emotions, show compassion toward peers facing difficulties, and work collaboratively in group activities. One student shared, "I learned that when I'm angry, I should pray and think before I act, just like Jesus taught us." Teachers and parents reported improvements in specific behaviors including increased honesty in academic work, greater responsibility in completing assignments, more respectful communication with adults and peers, and enhanced willingness to help others. Students showed reduced incidents of bullying behaviors and improved conflict resolution skills. The findings of this study illuminate the critical role that professional CRE teachers play in shaping elementary students' character development. The demonstrated competencies across pedagogical, personality, professional, and social domains align with Indonesia's teacher professionalism standards and confirm that effective character education requires multifaceted teacher expertise beyond mere content knowledge delivery.

The pedagogical competence exhibited by the teachers, particularly their integration of biblical narratives with real-life applications, reflects effective character education practice. This approach resonates with cognitive-developmental theories of moral education which emphasize the importance of connecting abstract moral principles to concrete situations relevant to learners' experiences. The teachers' use of diverse instructional strategies accommodated different learning styles and maintained student engagement, which is essential for meaningful character formation rather than superficial moral instruction.

The personality competence dimension emerged as particularly influential in character development outcomes. Students' frequent references to their teachers as role models underscores the power of observational learning in moral development. This finding supports social learning theory, which posits that children acquire values and behaviors through observing and imitating significant adults in their lives. The consistency between the teachers' professed values and demonstrated behaviors created authentic learning environments where character education was lived rather than merely taught. The positive character development outcomes observed in this study—including moral values integration, spiritual development, social-emotional growth, and behavioral improvements—suggest that when CRE is delivered by professional, competent teachers, it can effectively contribute to holistic student development. These findings challenge perspectives that view religious education as peripheral to academic achievement and position it as central to developing well-rounded individuals capable of ethical reasoning

and moral action. The challenges identified in this study reveal systemic issues that can undermine even highly professional teachers' effectiveness. The resource limitations and time constraints faced by CRE teachers reflect broader patterns in how religious education is prioritized (or deprioritized) in educational systems. These constraints can lead to teacher burnout and reduced instructional quality over time if not addressed through institutional support and adequate resource allocation. The professional development gaps identified are particularly concerning given the specialized knowledge and skills required for effective character education. While general pedagogical training is valuable, CRE teachers need specific preparation in developmental psychology, moral education theories, theology, and culturally responsive pedagogy. The limited availability of such specialized training suggests a need for educational institutions, religious organizations, and government agencies to collaborate in developing comprehensive professional development programs for religious educators.

The challenge of addressing diverse student backgrounds highlights the complexity of religious education in pluralistic school settings. Professional CRE teachers must balance fidelity to their religious tradition with respect for students' diverse experiences and family contexts. This requires sophisticated intercultural competence and sensitivity that should be explicitly cultivated through teacher education and ongoing professional development. This study has several limitations that should be noted. First, the research was conducted in a single school with a small sample size, limiting the generalizability of findings to other contexts. Second, the three-month observation period, while providing valuable insights, represents a relatively short timeframe for observing character development outcomes. Third, the study relied heavily on self-reported data from teachers and students, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Future research could employ longitudinal designs, larger samples across multiple schools, and more objective behavioral measures to further validate these findings. Despite these limitations, this study contributes to the growing body of research on religious education and character development by providing detailed insights into the mechanisms through which professional CRE teachers influence student character. The findings have practical implications for teacher education programs, school administrators, and policymakers concerned with enhancing character education effectiveness in elementary schools.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the professionalism of CRE teachers significantly influences the character development of fifth-grade students at SDN 280211 Turelaoya. Teachers who exhibit strong pedagogical, personality, professional, and social competencies create learning environments conducive to moral values integration, spiritual development, social-emotional growth, and positive behavioral changes. The teachers' ability to integrate biblical teachings with relevant life applications, coupled with their authentic role modeling of Christian values, emerged as particularly powerful factors in character formation. However, the effectiveness of professional CRE teachers is constrained by systemic challenges including limited resources, time constraints, insufficient professional development opportunities, and sometimes inadequate institutional recognition. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from multiple stakeholders. In conclusion, this study affirms that professional CRE teachers are essential agents in shaping elementary students' character. Investing in teacher professionalism through

adequate resources, ongoing professional development, and institutional support is critical for maximizing the character education potential of religious education in Indonesian schools. As educational systems worldwide grapple with preparing students not only for academic success but also for ethical citizenship, the insights from this study contribute to understanding how professional religious educators can fulfill this vital mission.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Berkowitz, M. W., & Bier, M. C. (2005). What works in character education: A research-driven guide for educators. Character Education Partnership.
- Chandra, R. (2021). Kompetensi profesional guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen dalam membentuk karakter siswa sekolah dasar. *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Kristen*, 12(2), 145-162.
- Darmawan, I. P. A. (2019). *Pembelajaran yang mentransformasi: Teori dan praktik*. Yayasan Bilangan Research Center.
- Huber, S., & Huber, O. W. (2012). The centrality of religiosity scale (CRS). *Religions*, 3(3), 710-724. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel3030710>
- Koesoema, D. (2015). *Pendidikan karakter utuh dan menyeluruh*. Kanisius.
- Lickona, T. (2004). *Character matters: How to help our children develop good judgment, integrity, and other essential virtues*. Simon and Schuster.
- Mariani, A., & Setiawan, B. (2020). Peran guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen dalam pembentukan karakter siswa di era digital. *Fidei: Jurnal Teologi Sistematis dan Praktika*, 3(1), 82-99.
- Ministry of Education and Culture. (2017). *Konsep dan pedoman penguatan pendidikan karakter*. Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia.
- Nainggolan, J. M. (2022). Profesionalisme guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen dalam pembelajaran berbasis karakter. *Jurnal Shanana*, 6(1), 75-92.
- Nucci, L. P., & Narvaez, D. (Eds.). (2008). *Handbook of moral and character education*. Routledge.
- Republik Indonesia. (2005). *Undang-Undang Nomor 14 Tahun 2005 tentang Guru dan Dosen*. Sekretariat Negara.
- Samani, M., & Hariyanto. (2017). *Pendidikan karakter: Konsep dan model*. Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Sidjabat, B. S. (2019). *Mengajar secara profesional: Mewujudkan visi guru profesional*. Yayasan Kalam Hidup.

- Supratiknya, A. (2016). *Merancang program dan modul psikoedukasi: Edisi revisi*. Universitas Sanata Dharma.
- Tanner, M. N., & Steimer, S. (2019). Character education in U.S. schools: An analysis of the instructional strategies used to cultivate character. *Journal of Character Education*, 15(2), 1-18.
- Waddington, D. I. (2010). A field guide to whole-school character education. *Journal of Campus Activities Practice and Scholarship*, 2(2), 18-30.
- Zuchdi, D., Prasetya, Z. K., & Masruri, M. S. (2010). *Pengembangan model pendidikan karakter terintegrasi dalam pembelajaran bidang studi di sekolah dasar*. Jurnal Cakrawala Pendidikan, 3(3), 1-12.