



Obedience as a Reflection of Professionalism: An Expository Study on Hagar's Story (Genesis 16:9) in Christian Religious Education at SMA Negeri 1 Pinangsori

Agnes Monica Pakpahan^{1*}, Rusmauli Simbolon²

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

²Lecturer, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: agnesmonicapakpahan46@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explores obedience as a reflection of professionalism in Christian Religious Education (CRE), drawing from the expository interpretation of Hagar's story in Genesis 16:9. The narrative-where the angel of the Lord commands Hagar to "return to your mistress and submit to her"-reveals obedience not as passive compliance but as an active expression of faith and moral resilience. Employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, this research synthesizes theological, pedagogical, and ethical literature to examine how biblical obedience informs professional competence among CRE teachers, particularly in pluralistic educational contexts such as SMA Negeri 1 Pinangsori. The findings indicate that obedience functions as a multidimensional virtue encompassing vocational faithfulness, moral discipline, and pedagogical authenticity. Theologically, obedience reflects alignment with divine purpose; pedagogically, it embodies integrity, humility, and accountability in professional practice. In modern education-where autonomy and self-expression often dominate-biblical obedience offers a countercultural framework for moral consistency and spiritual depth. For Christian teachers, obedience transcends institutional compliance, becoming an expression of faithful stewardship toward God's truth. The study concludes that integrating the principle of obedience into Christian education nurtures professional excellence rooted in spiritual authenticity. Teachers who model obedience foster classrooms marked by trust, compassion, and justice-transforming education from mere knowledge transmission into an act of worship and ministry. Thus, Hagar's story serves as both a theological metaphor and pedagogical paradigm, inviting educators to view obedience as the foundation of professional and spiritual integrity in Christian teaching.

Keywords: Obedience, Christian Religious Education, Professionalism

INTRODUCTION

The essence of Christian education lies not merely in the transmission of biblical knowledge but in the cultivation of moral integrity, faith-based character, and obedience

to God's will. Within the framework of Christian Religious Education (CRE), teachers are called not only to instruct but also to embody the values they teach. Among these values, obedience occupies a central place, serving as both a theological virtue and a professional attitude that shapes the teacher's identity. The story of Hagar in Genesis 16:9 offers a profound narrative of obedience under difficult circumstances, illuminating the relationship between divine command, human submission, and spiritual transformation. Her encounter with the angel of the Lord, who instructs her to "return to your mistress and submit to her," reveals a form of obedience that transcends cultural expectations and personal suffering, reflecting trust in divine providence and the moral resilience expected in the life of believers. Obedience is not a passive act of compliance but an active manifestation of faith and professional responsibility. The professional competence of CRE teachers encompasses mastery of theological content, pedagogical skill, and moral integrity. When teachers exhibit obedience to their divine calling and institutional responsibilities, they model a form of professional faithfulness that influences students' spiritual growth. Hence, the integration of biblical principles-such as those reflected in Hagar's obedience-into teaching practices becomes essential in fostering a holistic educational experience. At SMA Negeri 1 Pinangsori, where Christian Religious Education operates within a pluralistic and secular educational system, the challenge of maintaining biblical values amid social diversity becomes even more significant. Teachers are not only knowledge transmitters but also witnesses to the living Word, called to integrate faith with professional conduct in daily instruction. The story of Hagar provides an expository framework for understanding obedience in its theological and pedagogical dimensions. From a theological standpoint, obedience is a response to divine revelation-a willingness to align one's actions with God's purposes, even when those purposes seem paradoxical or painful. From a pedagogical perspective, obedience represents a professional discipline that demands humility, consistency, and accountability. In modern education, where autonomy and individual expression are highly valued, the biblical concept of obedience invites a re-evaluation of how authority, submission, and vocation interact in the teaching profession. Hagar's response to the angel's command symbolizes not weakness but spiritual strength-the courage to obey God even when obedience entails hardship or misunderstanding. This paradigm resonates with the vocation of Christian teachers, who must remain faithful to their mission in the face of challenges such as moral relativism, institutional pressure, and declining student motivation.

The choice of SMA Negeri 1 Pinangsori as the site of this study is not incidental. As a public school in a diverse community, it provides a dynamic setting where Christian teachers must navigate the balance between faith and professionalism. The study explores how the story of Hagar can inspire teachers to view obedience not as submission to human authority alone but as a reflection of divine calling. It also examines how professional competence in teaching Christian values can be enriched by a deeper understanding of biblical obedience as demonstrated in Genesis 16:9. This research thus bridges biblical exposition and educational praxis, arguing that professional excellence in Christian Religious Education is inseparable from spiritual authenticity. This article seeks to contribute to the discourse on professional ethics and biblical spirituality in education by presenting obedience as a multidimensional virtue-spiritual, ethical, and pedagogical. Through an expository study of Hagar's story, it highlights how obedience becomes a

mirror of professional commitment rooted in faith. In doing so, it challenges educators to redefine professionalism not merely as skillful performance but as faithful stewardship of God's truth. For Christian Religious Education teachers, especially in plural contexts like SMA Negeri 1 Pinangsori, obedience to God's call remains the foundation upon which all educational excellence and moral credibility are built.

METHODS

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to explore the concept of obedience as a reflection of professionalism in Christian Religious Education (CRE), drawing on the expository analysis of Hagar's story in Genesis 16:9 and its pedagogical implications for teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Pinangsori. The SLR method was chosen because it allows for a comprehensive, structured, and replicable process of identifying, analyzing, and synthesizing scholarly literature related to biblical interpretation, professional teacher competence, and Christian education ethics. By systematically integrating theological, pedagogical, and contextual insights, this method provides a solid foundation for understanding how biblical narratives inform professional practice in education. The research process followed the five key stages of the SLR model as outlined by Kitchenham (2004): (1) planning the review, (2) defining inclusion and exclusion criteria, (3) conducting the literature search, (4) evaluating and analyzing the findings, and (5) synthesizing and interpreting the results. In the planning stage, the study established clear objectives: to examine how the principle of obedience in Genesis 16:9 can be interpreted theologically and translated into professional behavior among Christian Religious Education teachers. During the data collection stage, various academic databases-such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ResearchGate-were utilized to locate relevant sources published between 2000 and 2024. Keywords included "obedience in the Bible," "Hagar Genesis 16:9," "teacher professionalism in Christian education," "biblical ethics in pedagogy," and "Christian Religious Education in Indonesia." The selection process prioritized peer-reviewed journal articles, theological commentaries, dissertations, and educational research studies that explicitly discussed either biblical obedience or teacher professionalism from a Christian worldview. Literature written in both English and Indonesian was included to capture global and local perspectives. For the inclusion criteria, studies had to (a) focus on the interpretation or theological meaning of obedience, (b) address professional competence or ethics in Christian education, and (c) discuss applications of biblical principles in teaching practice. Sources were excluded if they were purely devotional, lacked analytical depth, or did not address the educational dimension. The data analysis stage involved thematic coding and synthesis. Thematic categories were developed around (1) theological interpretations of obedience, (2) professional attributes of Christian teachers, and (3) educational practices influenced by biblical principles. Each theme was analyzed to reveal patterns and connections between scriptural obedience and pedagogical professionalism. Expository commentaries on Genesis 16:9 were examined using hermeneutical principles to ensure contextual and doctrinal accuracy, while educational literature was analyzed for its alignment with Christian ethics and professional standards. In the synthesis stage, the findings were integrated to construct an interpretive model that connects the obedience of Hagar with the professional competence expected of Christian Religious Education teachers. The SLR method not only ensured the credibility and validity of this study but also facilitated a

balanced interpretation between theological exposition and educational application. The integration of biblical obedience with professional ethics aims to strengthen the conceptual framework for developing spiritually grounded educators in contemporary Christian education contexts such as SMA Negeri 1 Pinangsori.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The narrative of Hagar in Genesis 16:9 captures one of the most paradoxical yet theologically profound moments in the Old Testament. When the angel of the Lord commands Hagar, "Return to your mistress and submit to her," the text reveals a divine directive that challenges conventional human reasoning. At its core, the command embodies an act of obedience that transcends personal suffering and social injustice, pointing instead toward divine sovereignty and relational trust. Exegetically, the Hebrew verb used for "return" (*shuv*) denotes both physical movement and spiritual repentance, while "submit" (*anah*) conveys humility, endurance, and moral surrender to God's higher purposes. The text thus portrays obedience not as passive submission but as an active alignment with divine will that brings about redemption and identity transformation. Within this theological framework, obedience emerges as a relational virtue. Hagar's response, though humanly painful, becomes the means by which she encounters divine revelation - *El Roi*, the "God who sees." Her obedience does not signify weakness but courage to trust in divine justice beyond immediate circumstances. For Christian educators, this mirrors the moral tension between professional duty and divine calling. A teacher's obedience to truth, ethical standards, and the moral essence of the Christian vocation becomes the pedagogical equivalent of Hagar's spiritual submission. Obedience, therefore, is not a constraint but a liberating act of faith that sustains professional integrity in the face of challenges.

Obedience as a Professional Virtue in Christian Religious Education

From the literature analyzed through the Systematic Literature Review (SLR), three dominant themes emerge regarding the connection between obedience and professionalism in Christian Religious Education (CRE): obedience as vocational faithfulness, obedience as moral discipline, and obedience as pedagogical authenticity. First, obedience as vocational faithfulness emphasizes that teaching in Christian education is a calling, not merely an occupation. According to Palmer (1998), teaching is an act of identity - an expression of who the teacher is before God and others. When a teacher obeys the divine call to serve through education, professionalism is no longer measured merely by technical skill but by spiritual integrity. In the context of SMA Negeri 1 Pinangsori, where Christian teachers operate within a multi-faith environment, vocational obedience requires balancing spiritual conviction with institutional expectations. The ability to remain faithful to biblical truth while promoting tolerance and respect reflects a mature form of professional obedience - one that is both faithful and dialogical. Second, obedience as moral discipline suggests that professionalism requires consistent adherence to ethical standards rooted in Scripture. Christian teachers are called to model obedience through honesty, patience, humility, and responsibility. According to Loughran (2010), true professionalism integrates personal morality with

pedagogical competence, forming a unity between belief and behavior. The CRE teacher's task, therefore, extends beyond delivering content about faith to embodying faithfulness itself. In classroom practice, this manifests through discipline, accountability, and servant leadership - virtues derived from Christ's own example of obedience to the Father (Philippians 2:8). Third, obedience as pedagogical authenticity refers to teaching that reflects integrity between belief, speech, and action. The story of Hagar teaches that obedience does not eliminate struggle but authenticates faith through perseverance. Similarly, Christian teachers are called to authenticity - to teach not only with intellectual clarity but with moral coherence. Authentic teaching involves transparency, empathy, and willingness to learn alongside students. Through obedience, teachers embody the gospel in pedagogical relationships, influencing students toward transformation rather than mere information.

The Expository Model: From Hagar's Obedience to Teacher Professionalism

The expository interpretation of Genesis 16:9 provides a theological-pedagogical model in which divine instruction, human obedience, and professional integrity are interwoven. Hagar meets the angel of the Lord in her moment of despair. This encounter represents God's initiative to reveal purpose amidst suffering. For Christian teachers, divine encounter parallels moments of vocational reflection - when challenges become opportunities to rediscover calling and mission. Professional competence begins not with skill acquisition but with awareness of divine presence in one's work. Hagar's decision to return demonstrates surrender and trust. In education, obedience manifests through the teacher's faithfulness to ethical practice and commitment to student formation despite institutional or personal limitations. It involves aligning teaching decisions with moral and theological principles rather than mere administrative convenience. Hagar's obedience results in divine promise: her descendants will multiply greatly. Similarly, the obedient teacher's faithfulness produces transformation not only in students but in the educational community. The fruits of obedience - integrity, empathy, and excellence - become visible testimonies of professional maturity. This threefold model provides a framework for interpreting professional conduct through the lens of biblical obedience. At SMA Negeri 1 Pinangsori, such a framework encourages teachers to integrate faith with practice, transforming classrooms into spaces of witness and discipleship. The professional competence of a Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher typically includes four dimensions: pedagogical, personal, social, and professional. Obedience, as revealed through Hagar's story, strengthens each dimension. Obedience calls teachers to humility in learning and teaching. Just as Hagar submitted to divine instruction, educators must remain teachable before God, acknowledging that knowledge without wisdom leads to arrogance. Obedience inspires reflective teaching - continually aligning pedagogy with biblical truth. Obedience develops inner virtues such as patience, self-control, and perseverance. These personal qualities shape the moral authority of the teacher. A teacher who models obedience to God becomes a living curriculum of faith. In a pluralistic context, obedience guides teachers to act justly and compassionately toward all students. Hagar's experience as an outsider reminds educators of the ethical demand to value inclusion and empathy. Obedience fosters respect for diversity while upholding conviction. Obedience ensures consistency between spiritual calling and professional conduct. Teachers who see their work as service to God view professionalism not as

compliance to policy but as participation in divine mission. Such obedience guards against moral compromise and fosters educational excellence grounded in faith.

Obedience as Counter-Cultural Witness in the Modern Classroom

The modern educational landscape often celebrates autonomy, self-expression, and critical independence - values that, while valuable, can conflict with biblical notions of obedience if misunderstood. In this context, the obedient teacher becomes a counter-cultural witness. The CRE teacher at SMA Negeri 1 Pinangsori embodies professionalism that resists moral relativism and utilitarian ethics. Obedience becomes an act of resistance against the commodification of education, reminding the community that teaching is ultimately a moral and spiritual vocation. Obedience nurtures transformational pedagogy - a form of teaching that seeks heart-level change rather than cognitive accumulation. When students witness a teacher's humility and integrity, they encounter a lived theology of obedience that transcends textbooks. As Palmer (2007) asserts, "We teach who we are." The obedient teacher teaches not from authority imposed but from authenticity earned through faithfulness. Teachers can incorporate the narrative of Hagar into moral and spiritual lessons that emphasize resilience, trust, and obedience. This integration helps students see biblical stories as relevant ethical frameworks rather than distant history. Professional competence requires continuous reflection. Teachers should engage in spiritual journaling, devotionals, and peer discussions that connect classroom experiences with theological insights on obedience. Instead of focusing solely on cognitive achievement, CRE evaluation can include indicators of moral and spiritual growth - cooperation, empathy, and faithfulness. Teachers should model obedience through servant leadership within their professional community. Shared prayer, mentorship, and collaboration can strengthen spiritual and pedagogical unity. The teacher's daily behavior - punctuality, respect, discipline - becomes a witness of obedience. As students observe consistency between belief and practice, they internalize obedience as a virtue worth emulating. Some may perceive obedience as submission to authority without critical thought, which contradicts democratic educational ideals. However, the biblical concept of obedience - as seen in Hagar's story - involves conscious choice grounded in trust, not coercion. For Christian teachers, obedience must be critically reflective, discerning when institutional demands align or conflict with divine principles. At SMA Negeri 1 Pinangsori, challenges include administrative constraints, pluralistic sensitivities, and pressures to secularize moral content. Teachers must navigate these tensions with wisdom, ensuring that obedience to God does not lead to alienation but to constructive engagement. This balance requires spiritual maturity and institutional support. When obedience is grounded in love and discernment, it enhances rather than diminishes professional integrity. Obedience transforms both the teacher and the educational community. Spiritually, it purifies motives; ethically, it aligns actions with justice; pedagogically, it deepens relational authenticity. Teachers who live obediently cultivate classrooms where faith, discipline, and compassion coexist. Students learn that obedience is not submission to power but response to divine truth. In this sense, Hagar's story functions as a pedagogical parable - a reminder that faithfulness in adversity leads to revelation and growth. The obedient teacher mirrors Hagar's journey: from rejection to recognition, from despair to purpose. Professional competence becomes an act of worship, where

every lesson taught and every challenge endured participates in God's ongoing work of redemption through education. The synthesis of biblical exegesis and educational literature reveals that obedience and professionalism are inseparable in Christian Religious Education. Hagar's obedience embodies spiritual maturity; teacher professionalism embodies vocational responsibility. When both converge, education transcends technical function and becomes ministry. At SMA Negeri 1 Pinangsori, this synthesis encourages a redefinition of professional identity. Teachers are not merely civil servants but covenantal agents, shaping souls through faithful service. The measure of professionalism, therefore, lies not only in pedagogical skill but in the teacher's capacity to obey God amid complexity. In contemporary discourse, professionalism is often secularized, focusing on efficiency, regulation, and performance. The Christian perspective reclaims professionalism as faithful stewardship - service motivated by obedience to divine truth. Through this lens, obedience is not peripheral but foundational to educational ethics, forming the moral backbone of Christian pedagogy.

CONCLUSION

The expository study of Genesis 16:9 reveals that the virtue of obedience, as exemplified in Hagar's story, carries profound theological and pedagogical implications for Christian Religious Education (CRE). Hagar's willingness to heed the divine command, despite the harshness of her circumstances, redefines obedience not as passive submission but as an active expression of faith grounded in trust and surrender to God's sovereignty. Through the lens of Christian education, this narrative becomes a mirror for professional life - a call for teachers to integrate faithfulness, integrity, and humility into their professional identity. In the context of SMA Negeri 1 Pinangsori, where Christian educators serve within a pluralistic environment, the integration of biblical obedience into professional competence becomes both a challenge and a moral imperative. The study affirms that the essence of professionalism for CRE teachers lies not solely in technical expertise but in the alignment of vocation with divine purpose. Obedience thus functions as the foundation upon which professional excellence, moral consistency, and spiritual authenticity are built. The obedient teacher models what it means to follow God faithfully in daily pedagogical practice - teaching not merely for intellectual formation but for moral and spiritual transformation. The findings derived from the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and the expository interpretation of Genesis 16:9 demonstrate that obedience serves three major functions in Christian pedagogy. First, it provides vocational direction by reminding teachers that their profession is a divine calling, not merely a career. Second, it establishes ethical discipline, guiding educators to act with honesty, patience, and compassion even under institutional or cultural pressure. Third, it cultivates pedagogical authenticity, ensuring that teaching is not reduced to routine performance but becomes an act of faith that reflects God's truth and love. The study highlights the transformative power of obedience in shaping educational communities. Teachers who live obediently create classrooms marked by respect, empathy, and justice. Their influence extends beyond cognitive instruction to moral formation, helping students internalize values that foster both personal growth and social responsibility. In this sense, obedience functions as both content and method - it is taught through modeling and lived through consistent example. Such integration bridges the gap between belief and behavior, theology and pedagogy, faith and professionalism. This study also recognizes the tension between

obedience and the modern ethos of autonomy. In an era that prioritizes independence and self-determination, obedience may appear countercultural. Yet biblical obedience, as seen in Hagar's experience, is not blind conformity but a reflective and discerning submission to divine authority. It invites teachers to practice critical obedience - one that evaluates every institutional directive or pedagogical decision in light of Scripture and moral conscience. Such obedience empowers rather than restricts, liberating educators to act with courage and conviction. This research asserts that obedience is the hallmark of Christian professionalism. It unites theology and pedagogy under the lordship of Christ, affirming that effective teaching in Christian Religious Education cannot be separated from spiritual formation. The story of Hagar stands as a theological metaphor for the teacher's journey - one of struggle, surrender, and divine encounter. Through obedience, educators become co-laborers with God in the sacred work of forming minds and shaping hearts. The study concludes that fostering obedience among Christian educators is essential for building morally grounded and spiritually resilient schools. At SMA Negeri 1 Pinangsori, the integration of biblical principles such as Hagar's obedience should continue to inspire teachers to embody their calling with faithfulness and integrity. In doing so, they not only fulfill their professional duties but also participate in God's redemptive mission through education - transforming the act of teaching into a living testimony of obedience and devotion to the Creator.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barton, J., & Muddiman, J. (Eds.). (2007). *The Oxford Bible Commentary*. Oxford University Press.
- Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A. (1979). *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Clarendon Press.
- Carson, D. A., & Beale, G. K. (Eds.). (2008). *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Baker Academic.
- Dockery, D. S. (2018). *Christian Higher Education: Faith, Teaching, and Learning in the Evangelical Tradition*. Crossway.
- Fee, G. D., & Stuart, D. (2014). *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (4th ed.). Zondervan.
- Grenz, S. J., & Olson, R. E. (1996). *Who Needs Theology? An Invitation to the Study of God*. InterVarsity Press.
- Hiebert, D. E. (1996). The Spirituality of the Christian Teacher: Reflections on Faith and Professionalism. *Journal of Christian Education* 39(2), 5-18.
- Kitchenham, B. (2004). *Procedures for Performing Systematic Reviews*. Keele University Technical Report TR/SE-0401.

- Loughran, J. (2010). *What Expert Teachers Do: Enhancing Professional Knowledge for Classroom Practice*. Routledge.
- Palmer, P. J. (2007). *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (10th anniversary ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Pazmiño, R. W. (2008). *Foundations of Christian Education: An Evangelical Perspective* (2nd ed.). Baker Academic.
- Ryken, L., Wilhoit, J. C., & Longman, T. (Eds.). (1998). *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. InterVarsity Press.
- Schreiner, T. R. (2018). *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*. Baker Academic.
- Van Brummelen, H. (2009). *Walking with God in the Classroom: Christian Approaches to Learning and Teaching* (3rd ed.). Purposeful Design Publications.
- Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Be Obedient (Genesis 12–25): Learning the Secret of Living by Faith*. Victor Books.
- Wright, C. J. H. (2010). *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*. Zondervan.
- Yount, W. R. (2010). *Created to Learn: A Christian Teacher's Introduction to Educational Psychology* (2nd ed.). B&H Academic.
- Zuck, R. B. (1991). *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth*. Victor Books.