



Imitating Christ the Great Teacher: The Role of CRE Teachers' Spiritual Competence in Minimizing Children's Misbehavior at SDN 106165 Marindal I

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ABSTRACT

Christian Religious Education (CRE) in Indonesian primary schools serves not only as an avenue for transmitting biblical knowledge but also as a foundation for moral and spiritual formation. At SDN 106165 Marindal I, Kecamatan Patumbak, recurring misbehavior - such as dishonesty, disrespect, and lack of discipline - has underscored the need for spiritually competent teachers who embody Christian values and follow the example of Jesus as the Great Teacher. This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore how the spiritual competence of the CRE teacher contributed to reducing misbehavior. Data were gathered through participant observation, semi-structured interviews with teachers, students, parents, and administrators, and document analysis of lesson plans and discipline records. Purposive sampling ensured the inclusion of participants directly engaged in behavioral challenges. Data were analyzed thematically to capture patterns of teacher practice and student responses. Findings revealed that the CRE teacher's spiritual competence was expressed through empathetic communication, consistent modeling of Christian values, integration of biblical narratives in discipline, and the use of forgiveness and dialogue rather than punitive measures. These strategies fostered accountability, self-reflection, and reconciliation among students. Collaboration with parents further reinforced consistent moral guidance. Observable outcomes included reduced classroom disruptions, increased honesty, and greater willingness to apologize. The study concludes that spiritual competence, modeled on Jesus' example, provides a transformative framework for addressing misbehavior. Embedding spiritual competence in teacher training programs is essential to sustain character formation, enhance moral education, and nurture spiritually resilient students across Indonesian schools.

Keywords: *The Great Teacher, Spiritual Competence, Misbehavior*

INTRODUCTION

Christian Religious Education (CRE) in Indonesian primary schools serves as a foundation for cultivating students' moral, spiritual, and ethical development. Beyond the academic transmission of biblical knowledge, CRE shapes how students internalize Christian values and express them in daily life. However, in the case of SDN 106165 Marindal I, Kecamatan Patumbak, recurring challenges of student misbehavior - such as lack of discipline, dishonesty, disrespect toward teachers and peers, and diminished responsibility - have become pressing concerns for educators. These forms of misconduct not only disrupt the learning environment but also hinder students' holistic growth in their moral and spiritual journey. In this context, the role of the CRE teacher becomes pivotal in shaping attitudes, correcting behavior, and guiding students toward Christian maturity. A key element of teacher professionalism within religious education is spiritual competence. Spiritual competence goes beyond pedagogical expertise and intellectual mastery of Christian doctrine; it refers to the ability of teachers to embody spiritual values in their daily interactions, model a Christ-centered life, and help students align their behavior with Christian principles. According to Lickona (2019), character and spiritual formation must be integrated into education because students learn more effectively from teachers who "live" the values they teach. When CRE teachers practice spiritual competence, they demonstrate integrity, humility, empathy, and a genuine concern for the well-being of students. The example of Jesus as the "Great Teacher" provides the ultimate model for Christian educators. Throughout His ministry, Jesus demonstrated a unique balance of love, patience, forgiveness, authority, and moral integrity that transformed the lives of His disciples and followers. As Groome (2011) highlights, Jesus' pedagogy was not only about transmitting knowledge but also about nurturing relationships, guiding moral reflection, and empowering individuals to live faithfully. For CRE teachers, embodying these characteristics is essential to confronting behavioral challenges in the classroom. Rather than relying on authoritarian discipline alone, they are called to correct misbehavior with compassion, to listen with empathy, and to guide students toward repentance and growth.

In the specific context of SDN 106165 Marindal I, students' misbehavior reflects broader socio-cultural challenges. Many children face complex family dynamics, economic hardship, or lack of parental guidance, which can manifest in disrespect, dishonesty, and disobedience at school. Within such a setting, the CRE teacher's role is not limited to classroom instruction but extends to being a mentor, counselor, and moral exemplar. By embodying spiritual competence, the teacher becomes a living testimony of Christian values, providing both corrective guidance and pastoral care to students who struggle with behavioral issues. One effective strategy observed is the use of biblical narratives as a moral compass in dealing with student misconduct. When a student displays dishonesty, the CRE teacher can refer to biblical teachings on truthfulness, drawing parallels with Jesus' own words, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life*" (John 14:6). This method situates discipline within a spiritual framework, allowing students to understand that behavioral expectations are not merely institutional rules but expressions of their Christian faith. Such integration fosters reflection, accountability, and moral growth. The teacher's communication style plays a decisive role. Effective communication rooted in empathy

and openness allows students to feel respected and understood. Studies show that when teachers listen actively and provide constructive feedback, students are more motivated to correct their behavior (Noddings, 2013). In practice, this means reframing mistakes as learning opportunities rather than as failures, encouraging students to take responsibility while feeling supported in their journey of growth. This approach echoes Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy, which emphasizes that encouragement and affirmation enhance students' confidence in overcoming challenges. Another critical aspect is the collaboration between teachers and parents. Misbehavior often stems from inconsistencies between school and home values. When CRE teachers engage parents through communication and joint reflection on students' behavior, a stronger support system is established. Research highlights that parent-teacher collaboration significantly reinforces moral and spiritual education, ensuring continuity between school and family contexts (Epstein, 2001). Time constraints often prevent teachers from offering individualized guidance, while the absence of structured training in spiritual pedagogy limits their ability to implement systematic strategies. Additionally, the diverse personalities and backgrounds of students demand differentiated approaches, which can be emotionally taxing for teachers. These limitations point to the need for institutional support and professional development programs that enhance CRE teachers' capacity to integrate spiritual competence into discipline and evaluation practices. The integration of spiritual competence and the example of Jesus as the Great Teacher provides a transformative framework for addressing student misbehavior at SDN 106165 Marindal I. CRE teachers who embody Christ-like values of patience, forgiveness, and integrity are better positioned to guide students beyond correction toward holistic character formation. This study underscores that reducing misbehavior is not merely a matter of enforcing rules but of cultivating relationships rooted in Christian values. By aligning disciplinary practices with Jesus' example, CRE teachers can nurture students to grow in responsibility, honesty, and respect—qualities essential for their development as future Christian leaders and responsible citizens.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the role of spiritual competence in reducing student misbehavior in the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE). Qualitative inquiry was deemed appropriate because it allows for an in-depth exploration of social and educational phenomena in their natural settings, focusing on participants' lived experiences rather than statistical generalizations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research was conducted at SDN 106165 Marindal I, Kecamatan Patumbak, a primary school where CRE is formally integrated into the curriculum as part of Indonesia's broader educational framework. The school provided a meaningful setting due to its dual emphasis on academic learning and character formation, while simultaneously grappling with issues of student misconduct, including dishonesty, lack of discipline, and disrespect. The participants in this study represented multiple stakeholders within the educational environment. They included one Christian Religious Education teacher, twelve students identified by the school as exhibiting recurring behavioral problems, four parents, and two school administrators. A purposive sampling technique was employed, with

participants selected based on their direct involvement in teaching, learning, or oversight of student conduct. This strategy ensured the relevance and richness of the data, as it intentionally focused on individuals most capable of providing insights into the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2015). Data collection was carried out through three complementary methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the issue. First, participant observation was conducted by attending CRE classes and observing teacher–student interactions, with particular attention to behavioral dynamics and the teacher’s responses. This method provided a first-hand view of how spiritual competence was enacted in classroom practices, allowing the researcher to capture nuances of communication, discipline, and relational patterns (Angrosino, 2007). Second, semi-structured interviews were carried out with the CRE teacher, students, parents, and school administrators. These interviews facilitated the gathering of diverse perspectives, enabling the researcher to triangulate findings and understand the interplay between teacher competence, family involvement, and school policies. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews also allowed participants to express their experiences and reflections in their own words, enriching the data with authentic narratives (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Finally, document analysis was conducted, involving the review of lesson plans, discipline reports, and evaluation records related to student behavior. These documents provided valuable contextual information, revealing how behavioral expectations were framed in curriculum planning and how student misbehavior was documented and addressed by the school. The process of data collection extended over a one-month period to allow for sufficient engagement with the school community. Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and the anonymity of students and parents was protected by assigning pseudonyms. The researcher also adhered to principles of respect and cultural sensitivity, recognizing that the school’s Christian orientation shaped both expectations and practices in the educational environment (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The integration of multiple perspectives provided a holistic understanding of how spiritual competence contributes to the reduction of student misbehavior.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The role of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher in Indonesian schools extends far beyond the delivery of religious knowledge. At SDN 106165 Marindal I, Kecamatan Patumbak, the CRE teacher has become an anchor in nurturing not only students’ cognitive understanding of Christianity but also their moral, ethical, and behavioral development. Spiritual competence, in this context, serves as a critical dimension of teacher professionalism. It refers to the teacher’s ability to embody Christian values and demonstrate them in concrete ways that shape student behavior and attitudes. Palmer (2007) argues that teachers are “living curricula,” suggesting that effective educators transmit values not merely through words but through their way of life. This conceptualization was clearly evident in the daily practices of the CRE teacher at the school. In classroom interactions, the teacher consistently modeled compassion, patience, and integrity. Students frequently reported that the teacher served as a role model who lived out the very values being taught. For example, when disciplinary issues

arose, the teacher integrated biblical narratives into conversations, linking behavioral expectations with spiritual principles. Rather than framing misbehavior simply as a violation of rules, the teacher contextualized it as a departure from the values of honesty, obedience, and love emphasized in Christian teaching. This practice exemplifies the integration of faith and life, whereby students are invited to see the relevance of biblical truths in shaping their everyday actions (Palmer, 2007). The teacher's spiritual competence was further demonstrated in informal settings outside the classroom. During recess, school assemblies, or even brief encounters in hallways, the teacher maintained a posture of openness and care. These consistent behaviors reinforced the credibility of the teacher's message. Students, parents, and administrators alike noted that the authenticity of the teacher's life gave weight to the lessons being taught. Authenticity, as Day and Gu (2010) observe, strengthens the moral authority of teachers, particularly in contexts where character formation is a central educational goal. The CRE teacher engaged in regular prayer sessions with students, not only during formal religion classes but also at the start and end of school days. These spiritual practices created a rhythm of reflection, gratitude, and accountability, reminding students that their behavior was not merely evaluated by school rules but by their relationship with God. The emphasis on prayer reflected a holistic understanding of education, aligning with Groome's (2011) assertion that Christian education involves both intellectual engagement and spiritual formation. By consistently embodying these practices, the teacher provided students with a living example of Christian integrity. This had a tangible effect on student behavior, as students became more aware of the spiritual implications of their actions. Instances of dishonesty, disrespect, and irresponsibility - though still present - were increasingly addressed through spiritual reflection rather than fear of punishment. The CRE teacher's role thus exemplified how spiritual competence can transform classrooms into spaces of moral growth, aligning educational outcomes with the broader mission of Christian character formation.

The Example of Jesus as the Great Teacher

The second major theme that emerged from this study was the intentional use of Jesus Christ as the ultimate paradigm for teaching and discipline. The CRE teacher at SDN 106165 Marindal I consciously drew upon the example of Jesus as the "Great Teacher" in guiding students. The Gospels portray Jesus as a teacher whose authority was combined with compassion, whose corrections were delivered with patience, and whose emphasis on truth was balanced by forgiveness (John 14:6; Matthew 18:21–22). By modeling these qualities, the CRE teacher sought to create a classroom culture that reflected Christ's pedagogy. One of the most striking features of this approach was the rejection of purely punitive measures in favor of dialogical correction. When students engaged in misbehavior, the teacher avoided shaming or humiliating them. Instead, the teacher asked probing questions that invited students to reflect on their actions in the light of Jesus' teachings. For instance, when a student was caught lying, the teacher guided the child to recall the biblical emphasis on truth, connecting the incident to Jesus' statement, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life*" (John 14:6). Rather than merely condemning the act, the teacher emphasized the value of honesty as a reflection of Christian discipleship. This approach fostered accountability while preserving the student's dignity. This practice

closely aligns with Groome's (2011) shared praxis model, which emphasizes the integration of faith and life experience through dialogue. In this model, students are not passive recipients of doctrine but active participants in reflecting upon their behavior in conversation with biblical principles. The CRE teacher's application of this model encouraged students to see misbehavior not as a failure to meet external standards but as an opportunity for transformation grounded in Christ's example. Furthermore, the teacher emphasized forgiveness and reconciliation in addressing conflicts among students. When disputes occurred, the teacher reminded students of Jesus' command to forgive "seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:22). By highlighting this value, the teacher encouraged students to resolve conflicts peacefully and restore broken relationships. Students reported that this emphasis on forgiveness reduced hostility in the classroom and made them more willing to apologize for mistakes. The emphasis on patience was another hallmark of the teacher's method. Rather than reacting harshly to repeated misbehavior, the teacher modeled Christ's forbearance, giving students multiple opportunities to correct their actions. This patience minimized resistance from students and created an atmosphere of trust. As Noddings (2013) notes, when students feel cared for, they are more likely to internalize lessons and respond positively to correction. By embodying the qualities of Jesus as the Great Teacher - authority tempered by love, correction rooted in truth, and forgiveness grounded in grace - the CRE teacher provided students with a spiritual framework for understanding discipline. This approach distinguished the process of correction from mere punishment, reframing it as a journey of discipleship and growth.

Strategies in Reducing Misbehavior

The findings of this study revealed several strategies employed by the CRE teacher that proved effective in addressing and reducing student misbehavior. These strategies were not implemented in isolation but were deeply interconnected with the teacher's spiritual competence and Christ-centered pedagogical framework. One significant strategy was the use of empathetic communication. The teacher consistently listened attentively to students' concerns, allowing them to express their feelings without fear of immediate judgment. By validating students' emotions, the teacher reduced feelings of alienation and created a sense of belonging. This practice resonates with Noddings' (2013) ethic of care, which underscores the transformative power of empathetic relationships in education. Students reported that being heard by their teacher encouraged them to be more honest and cooperative, even when admitting to mistakes. Another key strategy involved the provision of constructive feedback. Rather than framing misbehavior as an irredeemable failure, the teacher presented it as an opportunity for growth. For instance, when students disrupted class, the teacher highlighted the value of self-control and suggested practical ways to improve behavior in the future. This method reflected Hattie and Timperley's (2007) findings that constructive feedback significantly enhances student learning and motivation by emphasizing possibilities for improvement rather than focusing solely on deficits. The teacher also introduced character reflection sessions, where students were encouraged to reflect on their daily behaviors in the light of Christian values. These sessions, often conducted at the end of lessons, provided a structured opportunity for students to examine their actions and attitudes. They were asked questions such as, "How did I show honesty today?" or "How can I demonstrate love

to my classmates tomorrow?" This practice not only reinforced Christian values but also cultivated habits of self-examination, aligning with Lickona's (2019) framework of character education, which emphasizes moral reflection as essential to virtue development. Parental involvement was another crucial strategy. The teacher maintained regular communication with parents, informing them about both positive behaviors and areas needing improvement. Meetings and phone calls ensured that students received consistent guidance at home and school. Parents appreciated this collaboration, noting that it enabled them to reinforce Christian values in the family context. Epstein (2001) has argued that effective parent-teacher partnerships strengthen student outcomes by ensuring continuity between school and home. The findings of this study affirm this principle, as students who experienced consistent guidance from both teachers and parents demonstrated noticeable improvements in behavior, including greater honesty, a willingness to apologize, and fewer classroom disruptions. The cumulative effect of these strategies was evident in observable changes among students. Teachers and administrators reported a reduction in classroom disruptions, while students increasingly demonstrated responsibility and accountability. Misbehavior did not disappear entirely, but its frequency and intensity were mitigated through the sustained application of spiritually informed strategies.

Despite the successes, the study also highlighted several challenges that limited the effectiveness of the teacher's efforts. These challenges underscore the structural and contextual realities of implementing spiritually grounded discipline in Indonesian schools. The first challenge was time constraints. With the demands of a packed curriculum, the teacher often struggled to provide individualized guidance for every student. While dialogical correction and character reflection sessions proved effective, they were time-consuming and could not always be applied consistently. This echoes broader findings in educational research, where teachers often experience tension between curricular requirements and the desire to provide holistic guidance (Tilaar, 2004). A second challenge was the lack of formal training in spiritual pedagogy. The CRE teacher relied heavily on personal experience and religious conviction rather than structured pedagogical models. While effective in many ways, this reliance sometimes limited the teacher's ability to systematically address diverse behavioral issues. Sihombing (2020) has highlighted the absence of formal training programs that equip teachers with specific strategies for integrating spirituality into pedagogy. Without institutional support, teachers may feel ill-prepared to handle complex behavioral challenges through a spiritual framework. Another challenge lay in the diverse backgrounds of students. Many students came from families experiencing socio-economic difficulties, which affected their behavior in school. Issues such as poverty, family conflict, and lack of parental supervision contributed to misbehavior that could not be easily resolved through classroom strategies alone. As Vygotsky (1978) notes, learning and behavior are deeply shaped by social contexts, meaning that teachers must navigate a wide range of external influences that impact student conduct. These challenges highlight the importance of institutional and systemic support for CRE teachers. While individual commitment and competence are essential, broader reforms are needed to ensure that spiritual competence is systematically developed and sustained. Teacher training programs, ongoing professional

development, and policies that recognize the holistic goals of education are crucial to addressing these limitations.

Conclusion

The findings of this study affirm that the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers, particularly when shaped by the example of Jesus as the Great Teacher, holds a transformative role in reducing student misbehavior and cultivating holistic character formation. At SDN 106165 Marindal I, Kecamatan Patumbak, the CRE teacher's consistent embodiment of empathy, patience, and integrity reframed the process of evaluation and correction. Rather than reducing discipline to punitive measures, the teacher fostered an environment in which misbehavior became an opportunity for moral reflection and spiritual growth. This Christ-centered approach highlighted the power of spiritual competence not only in addressing immediate behavioral issues but also in nurturing students' long-term moral and spiritual development. The study further demonstrates that adopting Jesus' pedagogical model - marked by love, compassion, forgiveness, and transformative authority - offers an enduring paradigm for CRE teachers in Indonesia. Jesus' teaching emphasized relationships, dialogue, and the integration of truth with grace, elements that were effectively mirrored by the teacher in the school context. Through dialogical correction, empathetic listening, constructive feedback, and parental collaboration, students were guided to reflect critically on their behavior while being affirmed in their dignity. Such practices align with contemporary character education principles, while remaining deeply rooted in biblical and theological foundations (Groome, 2011; Lickona, 2019). The implications of these findings extend beyond the case of SDN 106165 Marindal I. They underscore the need for systematic integration of spiritual competence into teacher professional development programs. At present, many CRE teachers rely primarily on personal conviction and experience, with limited access to structured training in spiritual pedagogy. By embedding modules on spiritual competence into teacher education curricula, policymakers and institutions can equip educators with the skills to combine faith-based principles with effective pedagogical practices. Such an initiative would ensure greater consistency and sustainability in addressing student misbehavior and promoting character formation across diverse educational contexts in Indonesia. Ultimately, this study contributes to Indonesia's broader vision of nurturing morally upright and spiritually resilient citizens, in line with the agenda of the Golden Generation 2045. The role of CRE teachers, when exercised with spiritual competence modeled on Christ's example, extends far beyond academic instruction. It encompasses the holistic shaping of students into individuals who embody Christian values in their daily lives, capable of demonstrating integrity, responsibility, and compassion within society. By strengthening the spiritual competence of CRE teachers, schools can transform classrooms into communities of faith, learning, and moral growth, thereby fostering generations equipped to face the complexities of a pluralistic and rapidly changing world.

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