



Spiritual Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Living Out Forgiveness: Insights from Genesis 42:18 at UPT SD Inpres Kalang Simbara

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in living out and teaching forgiveness, drawing theological and pedagogical insights from Genesis 42:18 in the context of UPT SD Inpres Kalang Simbara. Grounded in a qualitative research design, this study investigates how a CRE teacher understands, embodies, and integrates the value of forgiveness into daily educational practice. The research involved in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, focusing on one CRE teacher and 22 Christian students. These methods enabled a rich exploration of the lived experiences and pedagogical strategies through which forgiveness is internalized as a spiritual and relational value in the elementary school setting. The findings reveal that the teacher's spiritual competence is strongly reflected in a God-centered understanding of forgiveness rooted in the fear of God, as exemplified in Genesis 42:18. Forgiveness is not merely taught as a biblical concept but is consistently modeled through empathetic interaction, dialogical discipline, and restorative approaches to conflict resolution. The study demonstrates that forgiveness-oriented pedagogy contributes to students' holistic development, including spiritual growth, emotional maturity, and social awareness. Students begin to internalize forgiveness as both a Christian virtue and a practical life skill, influencing their interpersonal relationships and emotional regulation. This study concludes that strengthening the spiritual competence of CRE teachers is essential for fostering spiritually transformative education. It recommends that teacher development programs integrate sustained spiritual formation alongside pedagogical training to enhance the authenticity and effectiveness of Christian Religious Education in shaping Christ-centered character among students.

Keywords: *Spiritual Competence, Christian Religious Education, Forgiveness*

INTRODUCTION

The role of teachers extends beyond the transmission of cognitive knowledge to include the formation of students' spiritual character and moral dispositions. Increasingly, educational research and theological reflection emphasize that teachers are not only

instructors but also spiritual models whose lives communicate values as powerfully as their words (Palmer, 1998; Groome, 2011). In this context, spiritual competence has emerged as a critical dimension of teacher effectiveness, particularly in Christian Religious Education (CRE), where teachers are expected to embody and model core Christian virtues such as forgiveness, humility, compassion, and reconciliation. Spiritual competence can be understood as a teacher's capacity to integrate personal faith, spiritual maturity, ethical integrity, and relational authenticity into professional practice. It involves the ability to live out Christian values consistently in daily interactions with students, colleagues, and the wider school community. Within the Indonesian educational framework, teacher competence is commonly categorized into pedagogical, professional, social, and personal domains (Mulyasa, 2013). For CRE teachers, these domains are inseparably connected to spiritual formation, as their personal faith and spiritual life directly influence how Christian values are taught and modeled in educational settings. Scholars in Christian education have long emphasized that authentic Christian teaching flows from the inner spiritual life of the teacher and is expressed through relational practices and moral witness (Knight, 2006; Wolterstorff, 2004). Among the central virtues in Christian spirituality is forgiveness. Forgiveness is not merely a psychological or social skill, but a deeply theological and spiritual practice that reflects God's character and redemptive purposes. Biblical theology consistently presents forgiveness as a defining mark of faithful living, closely associated with repentance, reconciliation, and restoration of relationships (Wright, 2004). In Christian education, forgiveness is therefore not only a topic to be taught but a way of life to be demonstrated. Teachers who live out forgiveness in their daily interactions provide students with tangible examples of how biblical values are embodied in real-life contexts.

Genesis 42:18 offers a significant biblical lens for understanding forgiveness and spiritual integrity. In this passage, Joseph speaks to his brothers in the context of unresolved conflict, betrayal, and deep emotional wounds rooted in their past actions against him. Joseph's declaration, "I fear God," signals a theological and spiritual orientation that shapes his response to those who wronged him. Old Testament scholars interpret this statement as an expression of Joseph's moral and spiritual identity, indicating that his actions are guided by reverence for God rather than by personal vengeance or bitterness (Wenham, 1994; Walton, Matthews, & Chavalas, 2000). Although full reconciliation unfolds in subsequent chapters, Genesis 42:18 highlights the foundational spiritual posture that makes forgiveness and restorative action possible. This narrative provides a rich theological framework for Christian education, particularly in relation to teacher spiritual competence. Joseph's fear of God functions as an inner spiritual compass that governs his relational decisions. From an educational perspective, this suggests that spiritual competence is not merely about outward religious practices, but about the internalization of faith that shapes ethical and relational behavior. For CRE teachers, this implies that living out forgiveness is deeply connected to their personal spirituality and reverence for God, which in turn influences how they respond to conflict, failure, and relational challenges within the school environment. Educational psychology and social learning theory further support the importance of modeling in value formation. Bandura (1986) emphasizes that individuals learn attitudes and behaviors through observing significant role models. In the context of Christian education, teachers function as primary

spiritual and moral models whose responses to conflict, mistakes, and interpersonal tensions are closely observed by students. When teachers demonstrate forgiveness in practice, students are more likely to understand forgiveness not merely as a religious concept but as a lived Christian discipline.

At UPT SD Inpres Kalang Simbara, where there are 22 Christian students and one Christian Religious Education teacher, the relational and spiritual influence of the teacher is especially significant. In such a small and close-knit educational context, the teacher's spiritual life and relational practices are highly visible and can have a profound impact on students' spiritual development. The daily interactions between teacher and students provide continuous opportunities for modeling forgiveness, patience, and grace. This setting therefore offers a meaningful context for exploring how teacher spiritual competence is expressed and how it shapes students' understanding of forgiveness as a Christian way of life. There is a need for research that explicitly examines how teachers' spiritual competence influences the formation of specific Christian virtues, such as forgiveness, within concrete educational settings. This gap underscores the importance of studies that integrate biblical theology, spiritual formation, and educational practice. This study aims to explore the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in living out forgiveness, drawing inspiration from Genesis 42:18, at UPT SD Inpres Kalang Simbara. By integrating biblical interpretation with educational and spiritual formation perspectives, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how teacher spirituality functions as a formative force in Christian education. It affirms that forgiveness is not merely taught through curriculum content, but is most powerfully learned when it is embodied by spiritually competent teachers who live out their faith in daily relational practice.

METHODS

A qualitative descriptive research design was implemented to explore the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in living out and teaching the value of forgiveness, inspired by Genesis 42:18. A qualitative approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' spiritual practices, beliefs, and pedagogical strategies related to forgiveness as a lived Christian value within the school context. This design allowed the researcher to capture rich, contextualized data regarding how forgiveness is interpreted, modeled, and internalized in daily educational and spiritual interactions. The research was conducted at UPT SD Inpres Kalang Simbara, Sidikalang, a public elementary school with a Christian student population. The participants consisted of one Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher and 22 Christian students. The CRE teacher was selected as the primary informant due to their central role in integrating biblical values into teaching and spiritual formation. The students were included as supporting informants to provide perspectives on how the value of forgiveness is experienced and understood in classroom and school life. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the CRE teacher to explore their understanding of forgiveness from a biblical and pedagogical perspective, particularly in relation to Genesis 42:18. Interview questions focused on the teacher's spiritual practices, teaching strategies, personal experiences of forgiveness, and how forgiveness is modeled in interactions with students.

Non-participant observations were conducted during CRE lessons and selected school activities. The observations focused on teacher-student interactions, conflict resolution practices, expressions of empathy, and moments where forgiveness-related values were explicitly or implicitly demonstrated. The documents were used to identify how forgiveness is formally integrated into instructional planning and spiritual formation activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the spiritual competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher at UPT SD Inpres Kalang Simbara is strongly reflected in the way forgiveness is understood, internalized, and practiced as an integral dimension of faith life and pedagogical engagement. Based on in-depth interviews, the CRE teacher conceptualizes forgiveness not merely as a theological doctrine to be cognitively transmitted, but as a lived spiritual disposition that must first be personally experienced before being taught to students. The teacher emphasized that forgiveness is rooted in the fear of God, as expressed in Genesis 42:18, where Joseph declares, "I fear God." This theological understanding shapes a spiritual foundation in which forgiveness is perceived not as a purely emotional response, but as an expression of obedience to God. This finding demonstrates that spiritual competence is not simply an additional professional attribute, but is deeply integrated with the teacher's personal relationship with God, which in turn influences decision-making, attitudes, and guidance of students in situations of conflict, wrongdoing, and relational tension. From a pedagogical perspective, classroom observations reveal that the CRE teacher consistently integrates the value of forgiveness into everyday classroom interactions. Forgiveness is not limited to verbal instruction but is embodied through the teacher's responses to student misconduct, such as lateness, interpersonal conflicts, and minor violations of classroom norms. In several observed situations, the teacher employed dialogical and reflective approaches, inviting students to recognize their mistakes, take responsibility, and engage in processes of relational restoration. This approach reflects a form of pastoral pedagogy, in which discipline is not primarily punitive but formative, oriented toward shaping students' hearts and character. These findings reinforce the view that spiritual competence functions as an ethical and relational foundation that enriches the quality of teaching and contributes to the development of a classroom climate characterized by love, empathy, and reconciliation. Interviews further indicate that the teacher understands forgiveness as an ongoing process rather than a single, isolated event. The teacher acknowledged that both students and teachers are continually engaged in a process of spiritual growth. This awareness fosters humility and self-reflection, enabling the teacher to recognize personal limitations and to openly admit that, as an educator, he or she is also learning to live out forgiveness in both professional and personal contexts. This reflective posture represents a key indicator of spiritual competence, as it demonstrates integrity between the values taught and the realities of everyday life. Within the framework of Christian education, such integrity is especially significant, as students tend to learn more effectively through lived example than through verbal instruction alone.

From the students' perspective, brief interviews and observational data suggest that students are beginning to understand forgiveness as a practical aspect of daily life rather than merely as a biblical narrative. Several students expressed that they had learned to apologize and to forgive classmates following interpersonal conflicts, and that they were encouraged not to hold onto anger for prolonged periods. Although this internalization remains at a basic level consistent with the developmental stage of elementary school students, these findings indicate that the teacher's spiritual competence has a tangible impact on students' character formation, particularly in the areas of social relationships and emotional regulation. Thus, forgiveness emerges not only as a theological value but also as a social and spiritual skill that is relevant to the lived experience of school life. Analysis of instructional documents reveals that the CRE teacher has made deliberate efforts to integrate forgiveness into lesson planning, even though this value is not always explicitly articulated in formal learning objectives or assessment indicators. In several lesson plans and teaching materials, forgiveness appears in reflective activities, discussion questions, and practical applications that connect biblical texts to students' everyday experiences. This finding suggests that the teacher's spiritual competence is expressed not only in spontaneous classroom interactions but also in intentional pedagogical planning oriented toward character formation. At the same time, the data point to opportunities for further development, particularly in formulating more systematic and explicit indicators related to forgiveness as an affective and spiritual learning outcome. Within the interpretive framework of Genesis 42:18, the teacher presents Joseph as a concrete model of how the fear of God serves as the foundation for just, compassionate, and reconciliation-oriented behavior. The teacher emphasizes that, although Joseph had strong human reasons to seek revenge, he chose instead to prioritize divine values that lead toward forgiveness and relational restoration. This interpretation is not presented merely as a historical account but as a reflective framework that helps students understand that forgiveness often requires emotional and spiritual sacrifice. In this way, the biblical text is treated not simply as a historical narrative, but as a living source of values that are relevant and applicable within the school context. The discussion of these findings highlights that the spiritual competence of the CRE teacher functions as a bridge between theology and pedagogy. The teacher does not merely transmit biblical knowledge but embodies biblical values in educational practice. This aligns with the paradigm of Christian education that emphasizes holistic character formation, encompassing cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions. In this context, forgiveness serves as a core value that connects one's relationship with God and one's relationships with others. The findings of this study reinforce the view that spiritual competence is a key factor in creating a learning environment centered on love, restoration, and spiritual growth. The relatively small number of students and the limited number of CRE teachers create conditions for more personal and intensive relationships. The teacher has greater opportunities to know students individually, to understand their emotional and social backgrounds, and to provide more contextualized spiritual and moral guidance. This relational closeness enhances the effectiveness of forgiveness-based pedagogy, as the teacher can respond more sensitively to individual student needs. At the same time, this context also places higher demands on the teacher's spiritual maturity, since close relationships can generate emotional challenges that require wisdom, self-control, and spiritual discernment. The findings also underscore that forgiveness in educational

settings cannot be separated from justice and responsibility. The teacher consistently emphasized that forgiving does not mean ignoring wrongdoing, but rather guiding students to take responsibility for their actions while simultaneously opening space for relational restoration. This approach reflects a balance between love and discipline, which is a central principle in Christian pedagogy. In this respect, spiritual competence is evident in the teacher's ability to navigate the tension between pedagogical authority and pastoral care.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings confirm that spiritual competence serves as an ethical and transformative foundation for educational practice. The teacher's spirituality not only shapes instructional strategies but also influences the relational climate and moral culture of the school. In this context, forgiveness functions as a transformative value that enables relational healing, the development of empathy, and the formation of Christian character. This discussion reinforces the argument that effective Christian Religious Education cannot be separated from the personal spiritual quality of the teacher, as the teacher serves as the primary medium through which faith values are embodied and internalized by students. The practical implications of this study suggest that the development of spiritual competence among CRE teachers should receive serious attention within teacher professional development programs. Such programs should not be limited to pedagogical and curricular training but should also include ongoing spiritual formation, such as spiritual retreats, theological reflection, and participation in faith-based learning communities. In this way, teachers are equipped not only as instructors but also as spiritual role models who are able to authentically live out values such as forgiveness. This is particularly significant in elementary education, where character formation has long-term implications for students' personal, social, and spiritual development. The results and discussion demonstrate that the spiritual competence of the CRE teacher at UPT SD Inpres Kalang Simbara is concretely manifested in theological understanding, lived example, pedagogical practice, and relational engagement with students. Forgiveness, as inspired by Genesis 42:18, is not merely taught as a doctrine but lived as a way of life that shapes an educational climate characterized by love, justice, and transformation. These findings strengthen the argument that CRE teachers with strong spiritual competence play a strategic role in forming a generation that is not only academically capable but also spiritually mature and relationally responsible.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the spiritual competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher at UPT SD Inpres Kalang Simbara plays a decisive role in shaping the internalization of forgiveness as a lived Christian value among elementary school students. Grounded in the theological framework of Genesis 42:18, forgiveness is not merely presented as a doctrinal concept but is embodied as a spiritual disposition rooted in the fear of God and expressed through daily pedagogical practice. The findings demonstrate that the teacher's personal spirituality, theological understanding, and lived example are central to the effective transmission of forgiveness as both a spiritual and moral value within the school context. The study further affirms that spiritual competence

functions as a foundational dimension of Christian pedagogy that integrates theological conviction with educational practice. Through modeling, dialogical discipline, and relational engagement, the teacher creates a learning environment that supports reconciliation, empathy, and character formation. This holistic approach enables students to begin internalizing forgiveness not only as a biblical teaching but also as a practical way of relating to others in everyday school life. As a result, forgiveness emerges as a formative value that contributes to students' social, emotional, and spiritual development. The findings highlight that spiritual competence cannot be separated from integrity and reflective practice. The teacher's willingness to engage in self-reflection, acknowledge personal limitations, and pursue ongoing spiritual growth strengthens the credibility of the teacher's role as a moral and spiritual model. This integrity enhances the transformative potential of Christian Religious Education by aligning what is taught with how it is lived. This study underscores the strategic importance of strengthening the spiritual competence of CRE teachers through sustained spiritual formation and professional development. Such efforts are essential to ensure that Christian education remains not only academically effective but also spiritually transformative. By cultivating teachers who authentically live out values such as forgiveness, schools can foster learning environments that nurture students to grow as individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also spiritually mature, relationally responsible, and grounded in Christian character.

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