



Moral Firmness of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Teaching the Ten Commandments at SMP Negeri 1 Lahomi

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ABSTRACT

Moral education plays a vital role in shaping students' character, particularly within *Christian Religious Education (CRE)*, where biblical values serve as the foundation of ethical instruction. One of the core moral frameworks in Christian theology is the Ten Commandments as recorded in Exodus 20, which provide guidance for human relationships with God and others. This study aims to analyze the moral firmness of Christian Religious Education teachers in teaching the Ten Commandments at SMP Negeri 1 Lahomi. Moral firmness is understood as the teacher's consistency, clarity, and integrity in upholding and communicating moral values grounded in biblical principles. This research employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method to synthesize scholarly works related to moral firmness, teacher moral authority, Christian pedagogy, and the teaching of the Ten Commandments. Relevant literature was collected from reputable academic databases and theological journals, selected based on predefined inclusion and quality criteria. The selected studies were analyzed using thematic synthesis to identify recurring concepts and patterns related to moral firmness in Christian education. The findings indicate that moral firmness is a crucial pedagogical quality that enhances teacher moral authority, supports adolescent moral development, and strengthens the effectiveness of teaching biblical moral principles. CRE teachers who demonstrate moral firmness are better able to contextualize the Ten Commandments, promote moral reflection, and guide students toward internalizing Christian values. The study also reveals that moral firmness differs from authoritarianism, as it integrates ethical conviction with relational sensitivity and grace. Moral firmness is essential for effective teaching of the Ten Commandments in Christian Religious Education. This study contributes theoretically to Christian education scholarship and offers practical insights for CRE teachers seeking to strengthen moral instruction in junior high school contexts.

Keywords: Moral firmness, Christian Religious Education, Ten Commandments, teacher moral authority

INTRODUCTION

Moral education remains a fundamental concern within formal schooling, particularly in the context of increasing ethical challenges faced by adolescents in contemporary society. Rapid social change, digital exposure, and shifting cultural values have contributed to moral ambiguity among students, making the role of teachers in moral formation increasingly significant. Within Christian Religious Education (CRE), moral instruction is not merely cognitive but integrative, aiming to shape students' character, conscience, and behavior in accordance with biblical principles. One of the most foundational moral frameworks in Christian theology is the Ten Commandments as recorded in Exodus 20, which function as a normative guide for ethical living, relational responsibility, and reverence toward God and others. Consequently, the manner in which CRE teachers convey these commandments becomes a crucial factor in students' moral development. In the Indonesian educational context, Christian Religious Education is formally mandated to contribute to the holistic development of students, encompassing spiritual, moral, and social dimensions. Teachers of Christian Religious Education are therefore expected not only to transmit doctrinal knowledge but also to model moral integrity and firmness in their pedagogical practices. Moral firmness refers to a teacher's consistency, clarity, and courage in upholding moral principles while guiding students toward ethical understanding and behavior. This quality is particularly relevant when teaching the Ten Commandments, which address fundamental moral issues such as honesty, respect for authority, responsibility, and self-control. Without moral firmness, the teaching of these commandments risks becoming abstract, normative, or merely ritualistic, detached from students' lived experiences.

The Ten Commandments hold a central position in Judeo-Christian moral theology as divine instructions that regulate both vertical relationships with God and horizontal relationships among human beings. In Christian education, these commandments are not taught as legalistic rules but as expressions of God's moral will intended to cultivate responsible and ethical believers. However, translating these theological principles into meaningful moral learning for junior high school students presents pedagogical challenges. Adolescents at the junior high school level are in a critical stage of moral and identity formation, often characterized by questioning authority, seeking autonomy, and navigating peer influence. In this context, the teacher's moral firmness plays a decisive role in helping students internalize moral values rather than merely memorizing biblical texts. Previous studies in moral and religious education emphasize that teacher character significantly influences students' moral attitudes and behavior. Teachers who demonstrate moral consistency, fairness, and integrity tend to be more effective in moral instruction than those who rely solely on verbal explanations or disciplinary measures. In Christian Religious Education, the teacher is often perceived as a moral exemplar whose actions reinforce or undermine the credibility of biblical teachings. Moral firmness, therefore, involves not only assertiveness in moral guidance but also coherence between teaching, personal conduct, and classroom management. When CRE teachers teach the Ten Commandments with moral firmness, they provide students with concrete models of ethical decision-making grounded in Christian faith. Many existing studies tend to focus on curriculum content, learning outcomes, or general character education, without sufficiently examining the teacher's moral stance and pedagogical authority in biblical

instruction. This gap highlights the need for context-specific research that explores how moral firmness is enacted in classroom practice and how it shapes students' moral understanding.

SMP Negeri 1 Lahomi provides a relevant educational setting for examining this issue, as it represents a public junior high school where Christian Religious Education is delivered within a pluralistic and formal educational framework. In such a setting, CRE teachers are required to balance biblical fidelity, pedagogical professionalism, and sensitivity to the broader school environment. Investigating moral firmness in this context allows for a deeper understanding of how Christian moral values, particularly those embodied in the Ten Commandments, are communicated effectively to students in a modern educational setting. This study aims to analyze the moral firmness of Christian Religious Education teachers in teaching the Ten Commandments at SMP Negeri 1 Lahomi. By focusing on teachers' pedagogical approaches, moral attitudes, and classroom practices, this research seeks to contribute to the discourse on effective moral instruction in Christian education. The findings are expected to provide theoretical insights for Christian pedagogy and practical implications for CRE teachers, school administrators, and curriculum developers seeking to strengthen moral education grounded in biblical values.

METHODS

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to examine the concept of moral firmness among Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in teaching the Ten Commandments, particularly within the context of junior high school education. The SLR method was chosen to ensure a rigorous, transparent, and replicable process in synthesizing existing scholarly evidence related to teacher moral authority, biblical moral instruction, and Christian pedagogy. By systematically reviewing relevant literature, this study aimed to identify key themes, theoretical frameworks, and pedagogical implications that inform effective moral teaching practices grounded in Exodus 20. The review process followed established SLR guidelines, including problem formulation, literature search, selection and screening, quality assessment, data extraction, and synthesis. The research questions guiding the review focused on how moral firmness is conceptualized in educational and theological literature, how CRE teachers implement moral firmness in classroom practice, and how the Ten Commandments are positioned as a moral framework in Christian education. These guiding questions ensured that the review remained aligned with the objectives of the study. Data sources included reputable academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, Google Scholar, and reputable theological journals specializing in Christian education and religious pedagogy. The literature search was conducted using a combination of keywords and Boolean operators, including *"moral firmness," "teacher moral authority," "Christian Religious Education," "Ten Commandments," "Exodus 20,"* and *"moral education."* Articles published in English between 2014 and 2024 were prioritized to ensure relevance and contemporary academic perspectives, although seminal works in moral and Christian education were also considered where necessary. The inclusion criteria consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and conference proceedings that addressed moral education, teacher ethics, Christian pedagogy, or biblical moral instruction at the primary or secondary school level. Studies were excluded if they lacked academic rigor, did not

explicitly discuss teacher morality or religious education, or focused solely on secular moral education without reference to Christian or biblical frameworks. Following the initial identification stage, titles and abstracts were screened to assess relevance, after which full-text articles were evaluated for eligibility. Quality assessment was conducted to ensure the credibility and reliability of the selected studies. Each article was evaluated based on clarity of research objectives, methodological soundness, theoretical contribution, and relevance to Christian Religious Education. Only studies that met these quality standards were included in the final synthesis. Data extraction involved identifying key concepts, definitions, findings, and pedagogical implications related to moral firmness and the teaching of the Ten Commandments. The selected literature was analyzed using thematic synthesis, allowing patterns and recurring themes to emerge across studies. These themes were then organized into analytical categories such as teacher moral integrity, pedagogical authority, biblical moral instruction, and student moral formation. Through this systematic process, the SLR provided a comprehensive and theoretically grounded understanding of moral firmness in Christian Religious Education, forming the basis for the discussion and conclusions of this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The systematic literature review reveals that moral firmness is consistently conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing moral integrity, pedagogical authority, consistency in ethical decision-making, and commitment to biblical values. In the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE), moral firmness is not equated with authoritarianism or rigid discipline, but rather with a principled stance rooted in Christian ethics and pastoral responsibility. Several studies emphasize that CRE teachers are expected to embody moral clarity while maintaining relational sensitivity, especially when addressing moral commandments derived from Scripture (Lickona, 2018; Palmer, 2017). Within Christian pedagogy, moral firmness is closely linked to the teacher's role as a moral exemplar. The literature highlights that students tend to internalize moral values more effectively when teachers demonstrate congruence between moral instruction and personal conduct. This finding aligns with biblical pedagogy, where moral teaching is inseparable from lived testimony (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). In teaching the Ten Commandments, moral firmness thus requires teachers to present God's commands with clarity, seriousness, and relevance, while avoiding moral relativism that could dilute their ethical significance.

The Ten Commandments as a Foundational Moral Framework

The reviewed literature consistently affirms the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) as a foundational moral framework in Christian education. Scholars argue that the Decalogue provides an integrative ethical structure governing both the relationship between humans and God (the first four commandments) and relationships among human beings (the remaining six commandments). In CRE contexts, the Ten Commandments are understood not merely as prohibitive rules but as divine guidance fostering moral responsibility, social harmony, and spiritual maturity (Wright, 2019). The literature also identifies challenges in teaching the Ten Commandments to adolescent learners. Junior high school students often perceive moral rules as restrictive or outdated, particularly when instruction lacks contextualization. The SLR findings suggest that moral

firmness enables teachers to address these challenges by articulating the enduring relevance of the commandments to contemporary moral issues such as honesty, respect, digital ethics, and responsibility. Teachers who demonstrate moral firmness are better positioned to explain the ethical rationale behind the commandments and to guide students toward reflective moral reasoning rather than blind obedience.

Teacher Moral Authority and Pedagogical Leadership

A dominant theme emerging from the review is the relationship between moral firmness and teacher moral authority. Moral authority is defined as the teacher's legitimate influence derived from ethical consistency, professional competence, and relational trust. In Christian Religious Education, moral authority is strengthened when teachers teach the Ten Commandments with confidence grounded in biblical understanding and pedagogical expertise. Studies indicate that students are more receptive to moral instruction when teachers exhibit firmness that is perceived as fair, compassionate, and principled (Nucci, 2016). The literature further suggests that moral firmness enhances classroom leadership by establishing clear moral boundaries and expectations. CRE teachers who consistently uphold moral standards contribute to a learning environment characterized by respect, discipline, and moral accountability. This finding is particularly relevant in public school contexts such as SMP Negeri 1 Lahomi, where Christian moral instruction operates within a pluralistic educational setting. Moral firmness enables CRE teachers to maintain biblical integrity while respecting institutional norms and student diversity.

Moral Firmness and Adolescent Moral Development

The SLR findings underscore the significance of moral firmness in supporting adolescent moral development. Adolescence is widely recognized as a critical period for moral reasoning, identity formation, and value internalization. Literature grounded in moral psychology and Christian education indicates that adolescents benefit from moral guidance that combines firmness with empathy. Teachers who exhibit moral firmness provide students with stable moral reference points during a stage often marked by confusion and experimentation (Kohlberg, 1984; Lapsley & Narvaez, 2020). In teaching the Ten Commandments, moral firmness helps students move beyond surface-level compliance toward deeper moral understanding. For example, commandments related to honesty, respect for parents, and respect for others' property can be contextualized through real-life scenarios relevant to students' experiences. The literature indicates that CRE teachers who firmly address moral violations while offering redemptive guidance foster moral accountability without alienation. This approach reflects a distinctly Christian pedagogical ethos that balances justice and grace.

Moral Firmness versus Moral Authoritarianism

An important distinction highlighted in the reviewed studies is the difference between moral firmness and moral authoritarianism. Moral firmness is characterized by consistency, clarity, and ethical conviction, whereas authoritarianism relies on coercion, fear, and unilateral control. The literature cautions that authoritarian approaches to teaching the Ten Commandments may hinder moral internalization and provoke resistance among students. In contrast, moral firmness rooted in relational trust encourages moral reflection and voluntary commitment to ethical values. Christian

education scholars argue that Jesus' teaching model exemplifies moral firmness without authoritarianism. His approach combined moral clarity with compassion, inviting followers to internalize moral truths rather than merely conform externally. CRE teachers who emulate this model demonstrate firmness by upholding biblical standards while engaging students dialogically. The SLR findings suggest that such an approach is particularly effective in junior high school settings, where students are developing critical thinking and moral autonomy.

Biblical Reflection on Exodus 20 and Moral Instruction

The literature review also engages theological reflections on Exodus 20 as a pedagogical text. Scholars interpret the Ten Commandments as covenantal instructions given within a relationship of grace, following God's redemptive act in delivering Israel from Egypt. This theological perspective reinforces the idea that moral firmness in teaching the commandments should be grounded in God's redemptive love rather than legalism. CRE teachers who emphasize this theological foundation help students understand moral obedience as a response to divine grace. The reviewed literature suggests that moral firmness involves faithfully communicating the seriousness of God's moral law while situating it within a narrative of covenant and relationship. This approach prevents moral instruction from becoming purely rule-based and encourages students to view the Ten Commandments as expressions of God's care for human well-being. In this sense, moral firmness supports theological depth and ethical coherence in Christian Religious Education.

Implications for CRE Teaching Practice at SMP Negeri 1 Lahomi

Although this study is based on an SLR, the findings offer meaningful implications for CRE teaching practice at SMP Negeri 1 Lahomi. As a public junior high school, the institution represents a context where Christian moral instruction must be delivered professionally, respectfully, and pedagogically sound. The literature indicates that CRE teachers in such settings benefit from developing moral firmness through continuous theological reflection, pedagogical training, and personal spiritual formation. Moral firmness enables teachers to address moral issues consistently across classroom interactions, disciplinary situations, and instructional content. When teaching the Ten Commandments, teachers who demonstrate moral firmness are more likely to connect biblical principles with students' daily realities, thereby enhancing moral relevance. This approach supports the broader educational goal of character formation, which is emphasized in Indonesia's national education framework. This systematic literature review contributes to Christian education scholarship by synthesizing interdisciplinary perspectives on moral firmness, teacher authority, and biblical moral instruction. The findings highlight the central role of CRE teachers in mediating biblical ethics to adolescent learners through morally firm yet relationally sensitive pedagogy. By focusing on the Ten Commandments, this study reinforces the enduring relevance of biblical moral frameworks in contemporary education. The review addresses a research gap by explicitly linking moral firmness to the teaching of the Ten Commandments within junior high school contexts. This focus provides a conceptual foundation for future empirical research, including qualitative or mixed-methods studies that explore how moral firmness is enacted in specific classroom settings such as SMP Negeri 1 Lahomi. The research results indicate that moral firmness

is a critical pedagogical quality for Christian Religious Education teachers teaching the Ten Commandments. Moral firmness strengthens teacher moral authority, supports adolescent moral development, and enhances the credibility of biblical moral instruction. The literature consistently emphasizes that moral firmness must be grounded in biblical theology, professional ethics, and relational pedagogy. Through moral firmness, CRE teachers can effectively guide students toward internalizing the moral values embedded in Exodus 20, thereby contributing to holistic character formation.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the concept of moral firmness of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in teaching the Ten Commandments through a Systematic Literature Review approach. The findings highlight that moral firmness is a crucial pedagogical and ethical quality that enables CRE teachers to convey biblical moral principles effectively, particularly within the context of junior high school education. Moral firmness is not merely a matter of discipline or authority, but a holistic integration of moral integrity, pedagogical consistency, and theological commitment grounded in Scripture, especially Exodus 20. The synthesis of the reviewed literature demonstrates that moral firmness strengthens teacher moral authority and enhances the credibility of moral instruction. CRE teachers who consistently uphold biblical values, align their teaching with personal conduct, and demonstrate ethical clarity are more likely to influence students' moral understanding and behavior. In teaching the Ten Commandments, moral firmness allows teachers to present God's moral law with seriousness while contextualizing its relevance to contemporary student experiences. This approach supports students in moving beyond surface-level compliance toward deeper moral reflection and internalization of Christian values. The findings emphasize the significance of moral firmness in supporting adolescent moral development. Junior high school students are at a formative stage where moral reasoning, identity construction, and value orientation are actively developing. Teachers who demonstrate moral firmness provide stable moral reference points, helping students navigate ethical challenges with discernment and responsibility. Importantly, the literature distinguishes moral firmness from authoritarianism, underscoring that effective moral teaching combines ethical conviction with relational sensitivity, empathy, and grace. This balance reflects a distinctly Christian pedagogical model rooted in covenantal theology and redemptive love.

In the context of SMP Negeri 1 Lahomi, this study offers theoretical and practical implications for strengthening Christian Religious Education. As a public school operating within a pluralistic environment, CRE teachers are called to exercise moral firmness professionally and respectfully, ensuring that biblical instruction remains faithful, relevant, and pedagogically sound. The findings suggest that continuous teacher formation, spiritually, theologically, and pedagogically, is essential for sustaining moral firmness in classroom practice. Moral firmness emerges as a foundational element in teaching the Ten Commandments effectively within Christian Religious Education. By embodying moral integrity and pedagogical consistency, CRE teachers play a vital role in shaping students' moral character in accordance with biblical principles. Future research is encouraged to extend this study through empirical investigations that explore how

moral firmness is enacted in classroom interactions and its impact on students' moral outcomes in specific educational settings.

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