



Spiritual Competence of Christian Education Teachers and Students' Faith Resilience: Insights from Philippians 1:20 at SDN 071068 Dekha Lahemo

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers and the development of students' faith resilience, drawing on the theological insights of Philippians 1:20. In the context of contemporary education, teachers are increasingly recognized not only as transmitters of knowledge but also as spiritual and moral role models who significantly influence students' character and spiritual formation. Grounded in a biblical-educational framework, this study conceptualizes spiritual competence as the integration of personal spirituality, ethical integrity, and faith-based pedagogical practices that reflect commitment to Christ-centered values. Employing a quantitative research design, data were collected from 186 Christian students at SDN 071068 Dekha Lahemo using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire. The instrument measured students' perceptions of teachers' spiritual competence and their own levels of faith resilience, including perseverance in faith, trust in God during challenges, and commitment to Christian values in daily life. Descriptive and correlational statistical analyses were conducted to identify patterns and relationships between the study variables. The findings indicate that students generally perceived their teachers' spiritual competence at a high level, characterized by consistent modeling of Christian faith, prayerful attitudes, and supportive spiritual guidance. This study concludes that spiritual competence is a critical dimension of teacher professionalism in Christian education. By integrating biblical principles with empirical educational analysis, the findings highlight the strategic role of spiritually competent teachers in fostering resilient Christian faith among students in the school context.

Keywords: *Spiritual Competence, Christian Religious Education, Faith Resilience*

INTRODUCTION

Education nowadays increasingly recognizes that teachers' roles extend beyond the transmission of academic knowledge to include the formation of students' moral, spiritual, and emotional capacities. In faith-based and religious education contexts, this expanded role becomes even more significant, as teachers are expected to function not only as instructors but also as spiritual role models who embody the values they teach. In

Christian Religious Education (CRE), spiritual competence is therefore a critical dimension of teacher professionalism, encompassing personal faith, spiritual maturity, integrity, and the capacity to guide students in developing a resilient and authentic Christian life (Palmer, 1998; Groome, 2011). Spiritual competence may be understood as the integration of personal spirituality with professional practice, enabling teachers to teach, mentor, and relate to students in ways that reflect Christian values and theological convictions. Scholars in Christian education emphasize that effective teaching is deeply connected to the inner life of the teacher, as identity, belief, and spiritual formation shape pedagogical attitudes and relational practices (Palmer, 1998). In this sense, spiritual competence is not merely an additional skill but a foundational disposition that influences how teachers interpret challenges, respond to students' needs, and model Christian character in daily school life. One increasingly important outcome of spiritual education is the development of students' faith resilience. Faith resilience refers to the capacity of individuals to maintain, strengthen, and live out their faith amid challenges, pressures, doubts, and changing social contexts. In psychological and religious studies, resilience is commonly defined as the ability to adapt positively in the face of adversity (Masten, 2014). Within a Christian framework, faith resilience involves not only emotional coping but also spiritual perseverance, trust in God, and commitment to Christian identity despite difficulties (Pargament, 2007). For students, especially at the elementary level, faith resilience is nurtured through consistent spiritual guidance, meaningful religious instruction, and the lived example of significant adults, particularly teachers.

The biblical foundation for faith resilience is strongly articulated in Philippians 1:20, where the apostle Paul expresses his deep confidence that Christ will be honored in his body, whether by life or by death. This verse reflects a profound spiritual orientation characterized by courage, hope, and unwavering commitment to Christ despite suffering and uncertainty. Pauline scholarship highlights that Philippians presents a theology of perseverance, joy in suffering, and Christ-centered identity, all of which are essential elements of spiritual resilience (Fee, 1995; Wright, 2013). Paul's testimony in Philippians 1:20 offers a theological framework for understanding faith resilience not merely as psychological endurance but as a spiritually grounded commitment to glorify Christ in all circumstances. The internalization of such biblical values is significantly shaped by the spiritual competence of teachers. Bandura's social learning theory emphasizes that learners acquire attitudes, values, and behaviors through observation and modeling (Bandura, 1986). In Christian education, this principle is especially relevant, as students often learn what faith looks like in practice by observing how teachers pray, respond to difficulties, treat others, and demonstrate trust in God. Knight (2006) argues that Christian education is inherently transformational, aiming to shape the whole person—intellectually, morally, and spiritually. Therefore, the spiritual competence of CRE teachers plays a decisive role in fostering an environment where faith resilience can be cultivated through both instruction and example. Teacher competence is formally defined as encompassing pedagogical, professional, social, and personal dimensions (Mulyasa, 2013). For CRE teachers, personal and spiritual dimensions are particularly critical, as they relate directly to the authenticity of religious instruction and character education. Spiritual competence enables teachers to integrate biblical teaching with lived practice, creating coherence between what is taught and what is modeled. This coherence is

essential for students' spiritual development, as inconsistency between instruction and example can undermine the credibility of religious education. At SDN 071068 Dekha Lahemo, where there are 186 Christian students and 16 Christian teachers (including CRE teachers), the school context provides a significant space for spiritual formation and character development. The relatively large Christian student population highlights the importance of systematic and intentional spiritual guidance within the school environment. In such a setting, the spiritual competence of teachers becomes a strategic factor in shaping students' understanding of Christian faith and in supporting the development of faith resilience from an early age. Although many studies have examined general teacher competence and religious education outcomes, fewer have explicitly explored the relationship between teachers' spiritual competence and students' faith resilience using a clear biblical-theological foundation. This gap indicates the need for research that integrates Philippians 1:20 with educational theory and practice, in order to examine how spiritual competence is translated into pedagogical actions that strengthen students' resilience in faith. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the spiritual competence of Christian education teachers and its role in developing students' faith resilience at SDN 071068 Dekha Lahemo. By integrating biblical theology with educational and psychological perspectives, this research seeks to contribute to a more holistic understanding of Christian pedagogy that emphasizes not only academic achievement but also enduring spiritual formation and resilient Christian identity.

METHODS

A quantitative research design with a descriptive-correlational approach was used to examine the relationship between the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers and students' faith resilience at SDN 071068 Dekha Lahemo. A quantitative approach was selected in order to obtain measurable, objective data regarding students' perceptions of teachers' spiritual competence as well as the level of faith resilience experienced by students in their daily school and faith-related contexts. The research was conducted in a natural school setting, and the design was intended to capture patterns and tendencies across a relatively large group of respondents, allowing for statistical analysis of central tendencies and relationships between variables. The population of the study consisted of all Christian students enrolled at SDN 071068 Dekha Lahemo during the academic year of the study, totaling 186 students. A census sampling technique was applied, in which all members of the population were invited to participate as respondents. This technique was chosen to maximize representativeness, reduce sampling bias, and ensure that the findings accurately reflected the perceptions and experiences of the full Christian student population within the school context. The independent variable in this study was teachers' spiritual competence, operationalized as students' perceptions of teachers' personal spirituality, integrity, prayerfulness, Christ-centered attitudes, consistency between teaching and example, and spiritual guidance in daily interactions. The dependent variable was students' faith resilience, operationalized as students' perceived ability to maintain trust in God, remain committed to Christian values, cope with difficulties through faith, and demonstrate perseverance in spiritual practices such as prayer, worship, and ethical decision-making. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers based on established theoretical

and empirical frameworks in Christian education, spirituality, and resilience research. Indicators of spiritual competence were adapted from literature on teacher personal and spiritual competence in religious education (Palmer, 1998; Groome, 2011; Mulyasa, 2013), while indicators of faith resilience were conceptually informed by resilience theory and religious coping research (Masten, 2014; Pargament, 2007), as well as biblical perspectives on perseverance and Christ-centered living derived from Philippians 1. These indicators were translated into Likert-scale items ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), allowing students to rate the extent to which they perceived their teachers as spiritually competent and the extent to which they experienced resilience in their own faith. Prior to full administration, the instrument was reviewed by two experts in Christian education and educational measurement to establish content validity and theological appropriateness. A pilot test was conducted with a small group of students outside the main sample to assess item clarity, reliability, and internal consistency. Based on pilot results, minor revisions were made to improve wording and to ensure that items were age-appropriate and easily understood by elementary school students. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha indicated acceptable internal consistency for both the spiritual competence scale and the faith resilience scale, meeting commonly accepted standards for educational research. Data collection was carried out during regular school hours with the approval of school administrators and CRE teachers. Students were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their participation was voluntary, their responses would remain anonymous, and the data would be used solely for research purposes. Informed consent procedures were followed in accordance with ethical guidelines for educational research involving minors. Completed questionnaires were coded and entered into a statistical software program for analysis. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, to describe students' perceptions of teachers' spiritual competence and their own faith resilience. In addition, inferential statistical analysis using Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between teachers' spiritual competence and students' faith resilience. This analytical strategy enabled the researchers to identify whether higher perceived levels of spiritual competence were associated with higher levels of faith resilience among students. The quantitative findings were interpreted in light of Philippians 1:20 and relevant educational and theological literature, in order to provide a biblically informed and empirically grounded understanding of the role of teacher spiritual competence in fostering resilient Christian faith among elementary school students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide empirical evidence regarding the level of teachers' spiritual competence as perceived by students and the level of students' faith resilience at SDN 071068 Dekha Lahemo, as well as the statistical relationship between these two variables. Based on descriptive statistical analysis of responses from 186 Christian students, the overall mean score for teachers' spiritual competence was 4.21 (SD = 0.47) on a five-point Likert scale, indicating a high perceived level of spiritual competence. This suggests that, from the students' perspective, Christian Religious Education teachers consistently demonstrate spiritual integrity, prayerful attitudes, Christ-centered

character, and consistency between teaching and personal example. The highest mean scores were found on items related to teachers as spiritual role models ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.44$) and teachers' demonstration of Christian character in daily interactions ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.46$), indicating that students strongly perceive their teachers as living examples of Christian faith. Slightly lower, though still high, mean scores were observed on items related to explicit spiritual guidance during personal or emotional difficulties ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.52$), suggesting that while teachers are generally seen as spiritually competent, there remains room for strengthening more personalized spiritual mentoring practices. In terms of students' faith resilience, descriptive analysis showed an overall mean score of 4.08 ($SD = 0.50$), also within the high category. This indicates that students generally perceive themselves as having strong faith resilience, characterized by trust in God, perseverance in Christian practices, and the ability to rely on faith when facing academic, social, or personal challenges. The highest mean scores were found on items related to trust in God during difficulties ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.49$) and commitment to prayer and worship practices ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.51$). These findings suggest that students at SDN 071068 Dekha Lahemo tend to demonstrate stable patterns of faith-related behaviors and attitudes, reflecting a school environment that supports spiritual growth. Lower, though still positive, mean scores were found on items related to confidence in sharing faith with others ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.56$), indicating that while internal faith resilience is strong, outward expression and faith-based assertiveness may require further encouragement and development.

Inferential statistical analysis using Pearson product-moment correlation revealed a statistically significant and positive relationship between teachers' spiritual competence and students' faith resilience ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$). This correlation coefficient indicates a moderate-to-strong relationship, suggesting that higher levels of perceived teacher spiritual competence are associated with higher levels of students' faith resilience. This finding provides strong quantitative support for the central assumption of the study, namely that teachers' spiritual competence plays a meaningful role in fostering students' ability to remain steadfast in their faith, cope with challenges through spiritual resources, and maintain Christian values in daily life. The magnitude of the correlation suggests that teachers' spiritual competence is not merely a peripheral factor, but a substantial contributor to students' spiritual and faith-related development. Further analysis using simple linear regression was conducted to examine the predictive contribution of teachers' spiritual competence to students' faith resilience. The regression model was statistically significant ($F(1,184) = 102.37$, $p < 0.001$), with an R^2 value of 0.38. This indicates that approximately 38% of the variance in students' faith resilience can be explained by teachers' spiritual competence. This proportion of explained variance is considered substantial in educational and social science research, highlighting the practical importance of teacher spirituality as a predictor of student spiritual outcomes. The standardized beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$) further confirms that teachers' spiritual competence is a strong and positive predictor of faith resilience. These findings suggest that improvements in teachers' spiritual competence are likely to be associated with meaningful increases in students' faith resilience. From a discussion perspective, these results strongly support the theoretical and theological framework underpinning this study. The high mean scores for teachers' spiritual competence are consistent with

the expectation that CRE teachers serve not only as academic instructors but also as spiritual role models whose lives and attitudes are closely observed by students. In Christian education theory, teachers are often described as living curricula, whose character and spirituality become powerful pedagogical tools (Palmer, 1998; Groome, 2011). The present findings empirically confirm this perspective, demonstrating that students clearly perceive and respond to the spiritual qualities of their teachers. In the context of SDN 071068 Dekha Lahemo, where there are 16 Christian teachers serving a relatively large population of Christian students, these results suggest that the collective spiritual culture among teachers contributes to a supportive spiritual environment that nurtures faith resilience.

The strong positive relationship between teacher spiritual competence and student faith resilience also aligns with resilience theory and religious coping literature, which emphasize the importance of supportive relationships and meaningful role models in fostering resilience (Masten, 2014; Pargament, 2007). In this study, teachers function as significant spiritual figures who model how faith can be lived out in everyday challenges. When students observe teachers responding to difficulties with prayer, trust in God, and ethical consistency, they are more likely to internalize similar coping strategies. This social learning process helps explain why higher teacher spiritual competence is associated with stronger student faith resilience. The findings thus provide empirical support for the idea that resilience is not only an individual trait but also a relationally and contextually shaped capacity. The results are also highly consistent with the biblical-theological emphasis of Philippians 1:20, which highlights a Christ-centered life orientation characterized by boldness, perseverance, and faithfulness regardless of circumstances. Teachers who embody such Christ-centered values in their daily professional and personal conduct serve as living interpretations of this biblical principle. The quantitative evidence suggests that when students perceive their teachers as genuinely living out such values, they are more likely to develop similar patterns of faith resilience. In this sense, the study demonstrates how biblical theology and empirical educational research can be meaningfully integrated, showing that scriptural principles are not only doctrinal ideals but also have measurable educational and developmental implications. The finding that teachers' spiritual competence explains 38% of the variance in students' faith resilience is particularly significant. While this indicates that other factors, such as family faith environment, church involvement, peer influence, and personal temperament, also play important roles, it nevertheless confirms that teachers' spiritual competence is one of the most influential school-based factors in shaping students' faith resilience. This underscores the strategic role of CRE teachers in elementary education, where students are in a critical stage of spiritual and character formation. It also highlights the need for schools and educational authorities to prioritize spiritual formation and integrity in teacher recruitment, training, and professional development. The slightly lower scores on items related to students' confidence in sharing their faith suggest important pedagogical implications. While internal faith resilience appears strong, schools may need to place greater emphasis on helping students translate personal faith into confident and respectful outward expression. This could be achieved through pedagogical strategies such as guided testimonies, faith-based group discussions, role-playing, and service-learning activities that allow students to practice expressing and living out their faith in

socially constructive ways. Such strategies would further strengthen the link between internal resilience and external Christian witness, in line with the holistic goals of Christian education. The statistical findings and their interpretation strongly affirm the central argument of this study: that teachers' spiritual competence is a key educational and spiritual resource in developing students' faith resilience. The results provide robust quantitative evidence that supports long-standing theoretical and theological claims within Christian education literature. In the specific context of SDN 071068 Dekha Lahemo, the findings suggest that the school's spiritual climate, as shaped by spiritually competent teachers, plays a vital role in nurturing resilient Christian faith among students. This reinforces the conclusion that investment in teachers' spiritual formation is not merely a matter of personal piety, but a strategic educational priority with measurable impacts on student spiritual outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that teachers' spiritual competence plays a significant and meaningful role in strengthening students' faith resilience at SDN 071068 Dekha Lahemo. The quantitative findings demonstrate that Christian students perceive their teachers as having a high level of spiritual competence, characterized by spiritual integrity, Christ-centered attitudes, consistency between teaching and personal example, and active modeling of Christian values. At the same time, students also report a high level of faith resilience, reflected in their trust in God, perseverance in faith practices, and reliance on spiritual resources when facing academic, social, and personal challenges. The statistical analyses provide strong empirical support for the central argument of this study. The significant positive correlation between teachers' spiritual competence and students' faith resilience ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$) indicates that these two variables are closely related. Furthermore, the regression results, which show that teachers' spiritual competence explains 38% of the variance in students' faith resilience, confirm that teacher spirituality is a substantial predictor of students' spiritual strength and endurance. These findings highlight that teachers' spiritual qualities are not merely personal attributes but function as important educational resources that directly influence students' spiritual development. From a biblical-theological perspective, the results are consistent with the message of Philippians 1:20, which emphasizes a Christ-centered life marked by faithfulness, courage, and perseverance in all circumstances. Teachers who embody these values in their professional and personal lives serve as living examples of this scriptural principle. The study demonstrates that when students observe and experience such authentic spiritual modeling, they are more likely to internalize similar patterns of faith resilience. In this way, the integration of biblical principles and empirical educational research is shown to be both theoretically meaningful and practically effective.

This study underscores the importance of prioritizing spiritual formation in teacher development programs, especially for Christian Religious Education teachers. Schools and educational authorities are encouraged to provide ongoing spiritual development opportunities, such as retreats, reflective practices, mentoring, and faith-based professional learning communities. Such initiatives can help strengthen teachers' spiritual competence, which, as shown in this study, has measurable and positive effects on

students' faith resilience. While this study confirms the strong influence of teachers' spiritual competence, it also acknowledges that students' faith resilience is shaped by multiple factors beyond the school context, including family, church, and peer environments. Future research is therefore recommended to include these additional variables in order to develop a more comprehensive model of students' faith resilience. Nevertheless, the present findings clearly affirm that within the school context, teachers' spiritual competence is a key strategic factor in nurturing resilient Christian faith among students. This study thus contributes both empirically and theologically to the growing body of literature on spiritual competence in Christian education and its impact on student spiritual outcomes.

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