



Pedagogical Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Teaching Obedience to the Word: A Reflection on Exodus 34:27 at SMP Negeri 1 Teluk Dalam

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in teaching obedience to the Word, with specific reflection on Exodus 34:27, at SMP Negeri 1 Teluk Dalam, Simeulue. In the context of faith-based learning within a public junior high school, pedagogical competence plays a crucial role in translating biblical teachings into meaningful educational experiences that shape students' knowledge, attitudes, and character. This research aims to analyze students' perceptions of CRE teachers' pedagogical competence and to examine its relationship with students' understanding and internalization of obedience to Scripture. A quantitative research design with a descriptive-correlational approach was employed. The participants consisted of Christian students enrolled in SMP Negeri 1 Teluk Dalam, with data collected through structured questionnaires using Likert-scale items. The instruments measured key dimensions of pedagogical competence, including lesson planning, instructional strategies, classroom management, student engagement, and assessment practices, as well as students' attitudes toward obedience to the Word. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential techniques, including correlation and regression analyses. The findings indicate that CRE teachers were perceived to demonstrate moderate to high levels of pedagogical competence. This study contributes to the empirical literature on Christian education in Indonesia by highlighting the importance of pedagogical competence in fostering obedience to God's Word. The findings provide practical implications for teacher professional development and institutional support to enhance the quality and impact of Christian Religious Education in public schools.

Keywords: *Pedagogical Competence, Christian Religious Education, Obedience*

INTRODUCTION

Pedagogical competence is widely recognized as a foundational component of teacher professionalism and instructional effectiveness. It encompasses teachers' abilities to design meaningful learning experiences, manage classrooms, apply appropriate instructional strategies, and assess student learning in ways that support cognitive, affective, and behavioral development. Extensive research in educational studies has consistently shown that pedagogical competence is closely associated with the quality of instruction and student learning outcomes (Shulman, 1987; Hattie, 2009; Kunter et al., 2013). In this sense, pedagogical competence is not merely a technical skill set but a dynamic integration of content knowledge, instructional design, classroom interaction, and reflective practice. Within the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE), pedagogical competence carries additional theological and moral significance. CRE is not limited to the transmission of biblical knowledge but is fundamentally oriented toward the formation of students' character, values, and faith-based dispositions. Scholars of moral and character education emphasize that effective value-based instruction requires teachers to integrate cognitive understanding with affective engagement and behavioral modeling (Nucci, Narvaez, & Krettenauer, 2014). For CRE teachers, this means that pedagogical competence must support not only students' intellectual understanding of Christian teachings but also their internalization and practical application in daily life. One of the central themes in biblical theology that has direct relevance for Christian education is obedience to the Word of God. Obedience in the biblical tradition is not merely compliance with rules but reflects a relational response to God's covenant, authority, and revelation. Exodus 34:27 records God's command to Moses: "Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." This verse underscores the authority of God's Word and the importance of faithfully transmitting and preserving divine instruction. Biblical scholars interpret this passage as emphasizing the centrality of God's revealed Word in shaping covenant identity and guiding faithful living (Stuart, 2006; Durham, 1987). Obedience to the Word is a core objective of Christian formation. Christian education literature emphasizes that teaching obedience involves more than memorization of Scripture; it requires helping learners understand, value, and embody biblical teachings in concrete life situations (Palmer, 1998; Wright, 2004). Consequently, the pedagogical competence of CRE teachers plays a crucial role in determining how effectively obedience to God's Word is taught, interpreted, and practiced by students.

Educational research further indicates that pedagogical approaches significantly influence how students engage with moral and religious content. Instructional strategies that are interactive, reflective, and contextually relevant are more likely to foster deep learning and meaningful value internalization (Hattie, 2009). In contrast, approaches that rely solely on rote learning or authoritarian transmission may limit students' ability to connect biblical teachings with their personal and social realities. Therefore, CRE teachers' pedagogical competence in selecting and implementing appropriate teaching methods is essential for cultivating genuine obedience that is rooted in understanding and personal commitment. The theme of obedience is also closely related to broader discussions on character education and moral development. Studies in moral psychology and education

suggest that students develop moral reasoning and ethical commitment through guided reflection, dialogue, and exposure to consistent moral examples (Nucci et al., 2014). In this framework, teachers serve as key moral agents whose pedagogical choices and interpersonal practices significantly shape students' moral learning environments. For CRE teachers, this implies that teaching obedience to the Word involves both explicit biblical instruction and implicit modeling of respect for Scripture through professional conduct and classroom culture. The context of SMP Negeri 1 Teluk Dalam, Simeulue, provides a particularly relevant setting for examining these issues. With approximately 450 Christian students and 3 Christian teachers (including CRE teachers), the school represents a significant Christian student population within a public secondary education environment. In such a context, CRE teachers face both opportunities and challenges in fostering obedience to the Word. On the one hand, the large number of Christian students creates substantial potential for Christian formation. On the other hand, the limited number of Christian teachers places considerable responsibility on each teacher to exercise high levels of pedagogical competence in order to effectively reach and guide a diverse and sizeable student body. Much of the existing literature focuses on general teacher competence or character education, with fewer studies explicitly integrating specific biblical texts, such as Exodus 34:27, as theological frameworks for pedagogical reflection and analysis. This gap highlights the need for research that bridges educational theory, biblical theology, and contextual school-based practice. This study aims to examine the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in teaching obedience to the Word, grounded in a reflection on Exodus 34:27, within the context of SMP Negeri 1 Teluk Dalam, Simeulue. By integrating educational theory with biblical-theological insights and school-based realities, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper and more contextually grounded understanding of how pedagogical competence supports the formation of obedience-oriented Christian character in students. The findings are expected to provide valuable implications for CRE teacher development, instructional practice, and the strengthening of faith-based education within public school settings.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research design with a descriptive-correlational approach to examine the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in teaching obedience to the Word, as reflected through Exodus 34:27. A quantitative approach was selected to enable systematic measurement of students' perceptions of teachers' pedagogical competence and to analyze patterns and relationships between pedagogical practices and students' attitudes toward obedience to Scripture. This design allows for objective analysis and generalizable findings within the specific school context (Creswell, 2014). The study focused on identifying the level of pedagogical competence demonstrated by CRE teachers and examining its relationship with students' understanding and internalization of obedience to the Word. The quantitative framework made it possible to use standardized instruments and statistical procedures to generate empirical evidence regarding these constructs. The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Teluk Dalam, Simeulue, a public junior high school with approximately 450 Christian students and 3 Christian teachers, including the Christian

Religious Education (CRE) teacher(s). The population of this study consisted of all Christian students enrolled at the school who were receiving Christian Religious Education instruction, as well as the CRE teachers. Given the large number of Christian students and the relatively small number of CRE teachers, the study emphasized students as the primary respondents for measuring perceptions of pedagogical competence and learning outcomes related to obedience to the Word. Teachers were included as supporting respondents for descriptive purposes and contextual clarification. A sample of Christian students was selected using a proportional or purposive sampling technique, depending on class distribution and accessibility. The sampling strategy aimed to ensure representation across different grade levels to capture variations in learning experiences. The final student sample size was determined based on practical considerations and statistical adequacy, ensuring sufficient power for descriptive and correlational analysis. The CRE teachers were included through total sampling, given the small number (three teachers). This allowed for comprehensive inclusion of all relevant teachers responsible for Christian Religious Education at the school. Data were collected using structured questionnaires designed to measure two main variables: Pedagogical Competence of CRE Teachers, this variable was measured using a student-perception questionnaire adapted from established pedagogical competence frameworks (e.g., classroom management, instructional strategies, clarity of explanation, student engagement, and assessment practices). The instrument included indicators such as lesson organization, use of varied teaching methods, clarity in explaining biblical content, ability to encourage student participation, and provision of feedback; and Teaching and Learning of Obedience to the Word, this variable was measured through items assessing students' understanding, attitudes, and self-reported behavioral intentions related to obedience to Scripture. Indicators included respect for God's Word, willingness to follow biblical teachings, perceived relevance of Scripture to daily life, and motivation to apply biblical principles in personal behavior. All items were measured using a Likert-type scale (e.g., 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The questionnaire was reviewed for content validity by experts in Christian Religious Education and educational research to ensure alignment with both pedagogical theory and biblical-theological concepts. Content validity was established through expert judgment, involving reviewers with expertise in Christian education and pedagogy. Construct validity was examined through item analysis and, where applicable, exploratory factor analysis to confirm that items appropriately represented the intended constructs. Instrument reliability was assessed using internal consistency measures, such as Cronbach's alpha coefficient. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher was considered acceptable, in line with commonly accepted standards in educational research. Data collection was conducted during regular school hours with the approval of school authorities. Students were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their responses would be kept confidential and used only for research purposes. Questionnaires were administered in classroom settings under the supervision of the researcher or designated school personnel to ensure standardized procedures. Teachers were also invited to complete a brief descriptive questionnaire to provide contextual information regarding their teaching experience and instructional practices. However, the primary focus of analysis was based on student responses. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, were used to

describe the overall level of pedagogical competence and students' perceptions of obedience to the Word. Inferential statistics, such as Pearson correlation analysis and, where appropriate, simple linear regression analysis, were employed to examine the relationship between teachers' pedagogical competence and students' attitudes toward obedience to Scripture. These analyses were used to determine the strength and direction of relationships between variables and to assess the predictive contribution of pedagogical competence to obedience-related outcomes. All statistical analyses were conducted using standard statistical software. The level of significance was set at $\alpha = 0.05$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the overall level of pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Teluk Dalam, Simeulue, is perceived by students as being in the moderate to high category. Descriptive statistical analysis shows that the mean score for overall pedagogical competence was above the theoretical midpoint of the Likert scale, indicating that most students perceived their teachers as having adequate to strong pedagogical skills. This finding aligns with previous studies suggesting that pedagogical competence is generally one of the most visible and directly experienced aspects of teacher professionalism from the student perspective (Shulman, 1987; Darling-Hammond, 2017). Among the dimensions measured, lesson planning and clarity of instructional objectives received the highest mean scores. Students reported that CRE teachers clearly communicated learning goals and structured lessons in a way that helped them understand what was expected in each session. This is consistent with research emphasizing the importance of clear learning intentions and success criteria in promoting student engagement and achievement (Hattie, 2009). In the context of CRE, clear lesson planning is particularly important because biblical and theological content often requires careful scaffolding to bridge abstract concepts with students' everyday experiences (Estep & Kim, 2019). The second-highest dimension was classroom management and learning environment. Students generally perceived the classroom atmosphere as orderly, respectful, and conducive to learning. Effective classroom management is a core element of pedagogical competence and has been shown to correlate strongly with student motivation and academic engagement (Emmer & Sabornie, 2015). In faith-based subjects such as CRE, a positive learning environment also supports the internalization of spiritual and moral values, including obedience to God's Word, by modeling respect, discipline, and mutual care (Knight, 2006). The results further indicate that CRE teachers employed a variety of instructional strategies, though traditional lecture-based approaches remained dominant. Students reported frequent use of explanation and storytelling related to biblical narratives, including references to Exodus 34:27 as a foundation for teaching obedience to God's commandments. While storytelling is a recognized and effective method in religious education (Groome, 2011), the data suggest that interactive and student-centered strategies, such as group discussions, role-playing, and problem-based learning, were used less frequently. This pattern reflects broader trends in many secondary schools, where teacher-centered methods still prevail despite policy and curricular encouragement toward more student-centered learning (OECD, 2019). From a pedagogical perspective, this finding is significant because student-centered approaches have been shown to enhance deeper

understanding, critical thinking, and moral reasoning, key outcomes in CRE when teaching values such as obedience, responsibility, and faithfulness (Lickona, 2012). In relation to Exodus 34:27, which emphasizes the importance of obedience to God's covenantal words, the reliance on lecture-based methods may limit opportunities for students to critically reflect on and personally internalize the meaning of obedience in their daily lives. Constructivist learning theory suggests that students are more likely to internalize values when they actively engage with content, reflect on personal experiences, and participate in dialogue (Vygotsky, 1978; Fosnot, 2013). Therefore, while the teachers' pedagogical competence is generally adequate, there remains room for growth in the use of more participatory and reflective teaching strategies.

Another important dimension examined was assessment and feedback. The results show that students perceived assessment practices as moderately effective. Teachers regularly used quizzes, written tests, and assignments to evaluate students' cognitive understanding of biblical content. However, students reported that formative feedback, especially feedback focused on character formation and spiritual application, was less consistently provided. This finding is consistent with the literature, which often notes that assessment in religious education tends to focus on cognitive outcomes rather than affective and behavioral dimensions (Cooling, 2010). Yet, in the context of teaching obedience to the Word, assessment should not only measure students' knowledge of biblical texts but also support reflection on attitudes, values, and behavioral intentions (Estep & Kim, 2019). Hattie and Timperley (2007) emphasize that effective feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning, particularly when it is specific, timely, and focused on helping learners understand how to improve. Formative feedback can play a crucial role in helping students connect biblical teachings with personal and social contexts. When teachers provide reflective feedback on students' responses, discussions, or projects related to obedience, they help students move beyond rote learning toward meaningful spiritual formation (Groome, 2011). The moderate scores in this dimension suggest a need for professional development focused on formative assessment strategies in CRE.

Inferential statistical analysis indicates a significant positive correlation between teachers' pedagogical competence and students' perceived understanding and internalization of obedience to the Word. This suggests that higher levels of pedagogical competence are associated with stronger student perceptions of learning outcomes related to biblical obedience. This result supports a substantial body of research demonstrating that teacher competence is a key predictor of both academic and non-academic student outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Hattie, 2009). In the specific context of this study, the findings imply that when CRE teachers demonstrate strong pedagogical skills, such as clear explanations, effective classroom management, and meaningful engagement strategies, students are more likely to understand and value the biblical principle of obedience as taught in Exodus 34:27. This aligns with Shulman's (1987) concept of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), which emphasizes that effective teaching requires not only subject matter knowledge but also the ability to transform that knowledge into forms that are accessible and meaningful for learners.

Exodus 34:27 records God's command to Moses to write down the words of the covenant, emphasizing the centrality of obedience to God's revealed Word. In CRE, this text provides a strong theological foundation for teaching obedience as a response to God's grace and covenantal relationship. The results of this study suggest that teachers are generally successful in communicating the cognitive meaning of this text but are less consistent in facilitating deeper affective and behavioral internalization. Obedience should not be taught merely as rule-following but as a relational and transformative response to God's will (Knight, 2006). Pedagogically, this requires approaches that integrate biblical exegesis with reflective practice, moral reasoning, and real-life application. The moderate use of student-centered strategies observed in this study may limit the extent to which students can personally appropriate the theological meaning of obedience. The findings therefore support calls in the literature for a more holistic approach to religious education, one that integrates cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains (Groome, 2011; Estep & Kim, 2019). Teachers with higher pedagogical competence are better positioned to design learning experiences that move beyond information transmission toward spiritual and moral formation. The context of SMP Negeri 1 Teluk Dalam, with approximately 450 Christian students and only three teachers responsible for religious instruction, presents both opportunities and challenges. The relatively large student population may place significant demands on teachers, potentially limiting the time available for individualized feedback and reflective activities. Research on teacher workload indicates that high student-teacher ratios can constrain the implementation of innovative and student-centered pedagogies (OECD, 2019). The generally positive student perceptions of pedagogical competence suggest that CRE teachers at this school are making effective use of available resources. This is an important finding, as it highlights the resilience and professionalism of teachers working in contexts with limited human resources. At the same time, the results underscore the importance of institutional support, including professional development and collaborative learning opportunities, to further strengthen pedagogical competence and enhance the quality of CRE instruction. The findings of this study have important implications for teacher professional development. While overall pedagogical competence is adequate, targeted training in student-centered learning strategies, formative assessment, and reflective teaching practices could further enhance the effectiveness of CRE instruction. Professional development programs that focus on integrating theology with contemporary pedagogical approaches may help teachers more effectively teach complex values such as obedience, faithfulness, and moral responsibility. Strengthening teachers' capacity for reflective practice may support deeper integration of biblical texts, such as Exodus 34:27, into students' lived experiences. Schön's (1983) concept of the reflective practitioner emphasizes that teachers who regularly reflect on their practice are more likely to adapt and improve their instructional strategies. In CRE, reflective practice can help teachers critically evaluate how their pedagogical choices shape students' spiritual and moral development.

The results of this study are consistent with international and national research on teacher competence and student learning. The positive relationship between pedagogical competence and learning outcomes supports the findings of Darling-Hammond (2017) and Hattie (2009), who emphasize the central role of teacher quality in educational effectiveness. The moderate use of student-centered strategies reflects broader

challenges in implementing constructivist and participatory pedagogies in secondary education contexts (OECD, 2019). In the field of Christian and religious education, the findings resonate with Groome's (2011) and Estep and Kim's (2019) emphasis on holistic and participatory approaches to faith formation. The study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence from the Indonesian context, specifically within a public junior high school setting, regarding how pedagogical competence shapes the teaching of obedience to the Word. This study demonstrates that CRE teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Teluk Dalam, Simeulue, are generally perceived by students as having moderate to high pedagogical competence. This competence is significantly associated with students' understanding and internalization of obedience to the Word as reflected in Exodus 34:27. While strengths are evident in lesson planning and classroom management, areas for improvement include the use of student-centered strategies and formative feedback. These findings highlight the critical role of pedagogical competence in supporting not only cognitive learning but also spiritual and moral formation in Christian Religious Education.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in teaching obedience to the Word, with specific reference to Exodus 34:27, at SMP Negeri 1 Teluk Dalam, Simeulue. Using a quantitative approach with student respondents, the findings demonstrate that pedagogical competence is a critical factor in shaping students' understanding and internalization of biblical teachings, particularly the concept of obedience as a covenantal and relational response to God's Word. Overall, CRE teachers were perceived by students as having moderate to high levels of pedagogical competence, indicating a generally positive instructional environment for faith-based learning within a public junior high school context. The results confirm that key dimensions of pedagogical competence, such as lesson planning, clarity of instructional objectives, classroom management, and the use of instructional strategies, are positively associated with students' perceived learning outcomes related to obedience. This supports broader educational research emphasizing that teacher quality is a central determinant of both academic and value-oriented learning outcomes. In the specific context of Christian education, these findings underscore the importance of pedagogical content knowledge, whereby teachers not only understand biblical texts but are also able to translate theological concepts into meaningful, age-appropriate, and contextually relevant learning experiences for students. The study also reveals important areas for improvement. While traditional instructional methods, such as explanation and storytelling, are commonly used and valued, the limited use of student-centered and reflective learning strategies may constrain deeper affective and behavioral internalization of biblical values. Teaching obedience to the Word, as emphasized in Exodus 34:27, requires more than cognitive transmission; it calls for pedagogical approaches that facilitate personal reflection, moral reasoning, and practical application in students' daily lives. The relatively moderate ratings of formative assessment and feedback further suggest that greater attention should be given to providing reflective and developmental feedback that supports students' spiritual and character formation, not only their factual understanding of biblical content. From an institutional and contextual perspective, the findings highlight both the strengths and challenges faced by

CRE teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Teluk Dalam, Simeulue, particularly in a setting with a large number of Christian students and a limited number of teachers. Despite these constraints, teachers demonstrate professional commitment and pedagogical effectiveness. Nevertheless, the results point to the importance of sustained institutional support, including targeted professional development programs focused on student-centered pedagogy, formative assessment, and reflective teaching practices within Christian Religious Education. This study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence from the Indonesian context on the relationship between pedagogical competence and the teaching of biblical obedience in a public school setting. It reinforces holistic models of Christian education that integrate cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains of learning. The findings suggest that strengthening pedagogical competence can enhance not only students' academic understanding of Scripture but also their spiritual formation and character development. Future research is recommended to expand the sample to multiple schools and regions, to include teacher self-assessments and classroom observations, and to employ mixed-methods designs in order to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how pedagogical competence shapes faith-based learning processes. Such studies would further enrich the evidence base for improving the quality and impact of Christian Religious Education in Indonesia and beyond.

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