



Faith as the Core of Personality Competence: A Reflection on Matthew 17:20 at UPTD SD Negeri 07 Beringin Jaya

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ABSTRACT

Faith is widely recognized as a central element in Christian theology, yet its role as a foundational component of teacher personality competence in Christian Religious Education (CRE) has received limited systematic scholarly attention. This study aims to examine faith as the core of personality competence in CRE teachers through a reflection on Matthew 17:20 and a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of relevant educational and theological studies. The findings indicate a strong convergence between contemporary educational theories of personality competence and Christian theological perspectives on faith and character formation. Faith emerges not merely as a doctrinal belief but as a lived spiritual orientation that shapes teacher identity, emotional regulation, moral integrity, and professional commitment. The theological interpretation of Matthew 17:20, particularly the metaphor of faith as a mustard seed, highlights the qualitative power of faith as a source of spiritual resilience and transformative capacity in the professional lives of teachers. The synthesis further demonstrates that faith-informed personality competence contributes to the development of virtues such as patience, humility, perseverance, and ethical consistency, which are essential for effective teaching and character-based education. The study concludes that integrating faith into models of teacher personality competence offers a more holistic framework for teacher development, strengthening the spiritual, moral, and professional dimensions of Christian educators for the benefit of both teachers and students.

Keywords: *Faith, Christian Religious Education, Love, Self-Control*

INTRODUCTION

Personality competence holds a distinctive position because it relates directly to teachers' character, integrity, emotional stability, and moral example. In many educational systems, including Indonesia, personality competence is viewed as a foundational element of effective teaching, as it shapes how teachers relate to students, model ethical behavior, and create a supportive learning environment (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018;

Korthagen, 2004). In the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE), personality competence is not only a professional requirement but also a theological and spiritual calling, as teachers are expected to embody the values they teach. Educational research consistently shows that teachers' personal qualities, such as sincerity, emotional maturity, consistency, and moral integrity, have a significant influence on students' attitudes, motivation, and character development (Hargreaves, 2000; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). These personal qualities shape classroom climate and affect the quality of teacher–student relationships, which in turn are closely associated with students' social, emotional, and academic outcomes (Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012). Thus, personality competence should be understood not as a secondary or peripheral aspect of teaching, but as a central component of educational effectiveness. Personality competence is deeply connected to faith. Faith is not merely a private belief but a formative orientation that shapes identity, character, and patterns of action. The integration of faith and professional identity is a central theme in Christian pedagogy, where teachers are called to live out their faith in ways that are visible, authentic, and transformative for students (Palmer, 1998; Pazmiño, 2008). From this perspective, faith functions as an inner source that informs teachers' attitudes, resilience, humility, and commitment to serving others. Consequently, faith can be understood as a core foundation of personality competence in Christian Religious Education. The biblical text of Matthew 17:20 provides a powerful theological lens for understanding the role of faith in shaping personal and relational capacities. In this passage, Jesus emphasizes that even faith as small as a mustard seed can have transformative power. Biblical scholars note that this teaching highlights not the quantity of faith, but its quality and authenticity, pointing to trust, dependence on God, and perseverance as defining features of genuine faith (France, 2007; Keener, 2009). In this sense, faith is portrayed as a dynamic and empowering force that enables believers to face challenges, remain steadfast, and act with confidence and hope. When applied to the educational context, Matthew 17:20 suggests that faith can function as a spiritual and moral resource that strengthens teachers' personality competence. Faith may contribute to emotional resilience, patience, and consistency, qualities that are essential for effective teaching, especially in contexts that involve limited resources, diverse student needs, and everyday classroom challenges. Theologically, this aligns with Christian understandings of character formation, in which faith is seen as a foundational virtue that shapes other virtues such as love, self-control, humility, and perseverance (Stassen & Gushee, 2016). Thus, faith is not only a doctrinal commitment but also a formative power that influences personal conduct and professional identity. In the Indonesian context, particularly in public schools where Christian teachers often serve as a minority or within diverse educational environments, the integration of faith and personality competence becomes especially significant. Christian teachers are frequently required to navigate institutional demands, cultural expectations, and professional responsibilities while remaining faithful to their spiritual identity. In such settings, faith can serve as a source of inner strength and moral clarity, supporting teachers in maintaining integrity, emotional balance, and a positive relational presence in the school community (Pazmiño, 2008). UPTD SD Negeri 07 Beringin Jaya, South Labuhan Batu, provides a meaningful context for examining these dynamics. With 39 Christian students and 4 Christian teachers, including CRE teachers, the school represents a relatively small but significant Christian educational community within a

public primary school setting. In this context, the personality and faith expressions of Christian teachers may have a particularly strong influence on students' spiritual and character formation. The close-knit nature of the school community also means that teachers' personal qualities are highly visible and relationally impactful. Much of the existing literature addresses teacher personality and professional identity in general terms, without closely examining how specific biblical teachings inform and shape these dimensions (Korthagen, 2004; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). This study seeks to address this gap by offering a reflective and contextualized exploration of faith as the core of personality competence, grounded in Matthew 17:20 and situated within the lived educational context of UPTD SD Negeri 07 Beringin Jaya. This study aims to explore how faith, as understood through Matthew 17:20, is reflected in the personality competence of Christian Religious Education teachers and how this integration shapes their professional and relational roles in the school. By combining theological reflection with educational perspectives, this research seeks to contribute to a more holistic understanding of teacher competence that recognizes faith as a central formative dimension of personality and professional identity in Christian education.

METHODS

The SLR approach was selected to ensure a rigorous, transparent, and replicable synthesis of existing scholarly evidence related to faith-based personality development, teacher personality competence, and biblical-theological foundations in Christian education (Snyder, 2019; Kitchenham et al., 2009). It was guided by internationally recognized standards for systematic reviews in education and social sciences, to enhance methodological rigor, minimize bias, and ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant literature (Page et al., 2021). The review was structured around the following research questions: How is faith conceptualized in Christian theology and Christian education literature in relation to personal and professional competence? What empirical and theoretical evidence supports faith as a core dimension of teacher personality competence? How is Matthew 17:20 interpreted and applied in educational and character formation contexts? What implications can be drawn for Christian Religious Education teachers in elementary school settings, particularly in relation to personality competence? A systematic search was conducted across multiple reputable academic databases to ensure broad and credible coverage of peer-reviewed literature. The keywords were adapted to the specific search syntax of each database. The search was limited to articles published in English and Indonesian to capture both international and local scholarly perspectives relevant to Christian education in Indonesia. The screening process followed Identification, all search results were exported and compiled into a reference management system. Duplicate records were removed; Title and abstract screening, titles and abstracts were reviewed to assess relevance to the review questions; Full-text screening, articles that passed the initial screening were read in full to confirm eligibility based on inclusion criteria; Final selection, only studies that directly addressed faith, personality competence, Christian education, or biblical foundations for character formation were included in the final synthesis. This involved coding recurring concepts and patterns related to faith, personality competence, and educational practice. Themes were then grouped into higher-order analytical categories, such as: Faith as a spiritual and

moral foundation of teacher identity, Faith and resilience in teaching practice, Biblical grounding of personality competence, Integration of theological and pedagogical perspectives. In addition to empirical synthesis, this SLR incorporated a theological-conceptual analysis of Matthew 17:20. Biblical commentaries and theological works were reviewed to interpret the concept of faith as presented in the passage. This theological analysis was then integrated with educational literature to construct a coherent framework linking faith with personality competence in Christian Religious Education (Wright, 2010; Groome, 2011). This integrative approach ensured that the findings were not only empirically grounded but also theologically informed, aligning with the distinctive epistemological foundations of Christian education. Although this study did not involve direct field data collection at UPTD SD Negeri 07 Beringin Jaya, South Labuhan Batu, the synthesis was contextualized to elementary school Christian education settings in Indonesia. The reviewed literature was interpreted in light of the institutional context, including the presence of Christian students and teachers, to ensure practical relevance and applicability for personality competence development among CRE teachers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the systematic screening and selection process, the final corpus of literature included peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and authoritative theological commentaries that explicitly addressed faith, teacher personality competence, Christian education, and character formation. The selected studies represented a combination of empirical research (qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods), theoretical-conceptual works, and theological reflections. This diversity of sources enabled a comprehensive synthesis of how faith is positioned as a foundational dimension of personality competence within Christian Religious Education (CRE). Across the reviewed literature, there was a consistent recognition that teacher competence extends beyond pedagogical and professional skills to include deeply embedded personal and spiritual qualities. Authors such as Day and Gu (2014) and Lickona (2012) emphasized that effective teaching is inseparable from the moral and spiritual dimensions of the teacher's identity. In Christian education contexts, this moral-spiritual dimension is frequently articulated through the concept of faith, understood not merely as doctrinal assent but as a lived, relational, and transformative commitment that shapes attitudes, behaviors, and professional dispositions (Palmer, 2007; Wright, 2010). The literature also demonstrated a strong convergence between educational theories of teacher personality competence and theological frameworks that emphasize spiritual maturity, trust in God, and ethical integrity. This convergence provided a robust foundation for interpreting Matthew 17:20 as a key theological lens through which faith can be understood as a core driver of personality competence.

Faith as a Core Dimension of Personality Competence

One of the most prominent themes emerging from the SLR is the positioning of faith as a central and integrative dimension of personality competence. In mainstream teacher competence models, personality competence is often associated with emotional stability, integrity, responsibility, empathy, and moral character (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

In Christian education literature, these attributes are frequently reframed within a theological anthropology that views the teacher as a spiritual-moral agent whose identity is shaped by a relationship with God (Groome, 2011; Pazmiño, 2008). Several studies emphasized that faith functions as an inner orientation that informs how teachers interpret their vocation, manage challenges, and relate to students. Wright (2010) argued that faith-based identity formation provides a coherent narrative framework through which teachers make sense of their professional roles as a form of Christian calling rather than merely technical employment. This sense of calling contributes significantly to personality competence by fostering commitment, humility, and perseverance. Empirical studies in religious education contexts further support this perspective. For example, research by Buchanan (2015) and Tisdell (2012) highlighted that educators who integrate their spiritual beliefs into their professional identity demonstrate higher levels of reflective practice, ethical sensitivity, and relational awareness. These qualities are core indicators of personality competence, suggesting that faith is not peripheral but constitutive of how teachers embody their professional roles. Studies on religious and moral education have similarly underscored the importance of internalized religious values in shaping teacher character and professional conduct (Suyatno et al., 2019; Zainuddin & Rahman, 2020). Although these studies are not always explicitly framed within Christian theology, they provide important contextual evidence that faith-based values significantly contribute to teachers' personality competence, particularly in multicultural and religiously diverse educational environments.

The theological analysis of Matthew 17:20 represents a central interpretive framework in this study. The verse, which emphasizes faith "as small as a mustard seed" yet capable of moving mountains, has been widely interpreted in biblical scholarship as highlighting the qualitative rather than quantitative nature of faith. Commentators such as France (2007) and Keener (1999) emphasize that the passage underscores trust in God's power rather than human capability. Faith, in this sense, is not measured by its intensity alone but by its orientation toward divine authority and purpose. This theological interpretation has significant implications for understanding personality competence in Christian education. Faith, as depicted in Matthew 17:20, is characterized by dependence on God, openness to transformation, and confidence in God's enabling grace. These characteristics resonate strongly with educational conceptions of resilience, self-efficacy, and moral courage, which are widely recognized as essential components of teacher personality competence (Bandura, 1997; Day & Gu, 2014). The literature also suggests that the mustard-seed metaphor provides a powerful pedagogical and spiritual model for teachers. It affirms that even limited or developing faith can serve as a transformative resource in educational practice. This perspective is particularly relevant for elementary school contexts, where teachers may face structural limitations, resource constraints, and emotional labor demands. Faith, understood theologically, becomes a source of inner strength and spiritual resilience that supports sustained professional engagement. Theological educators such as Wright (2010) and Foster (2018) argue that faith, when integrated into teacher formation, contributes to the development of virtues such as patience, hope, and humility. These virtues are closely aligned with personality competence indicators in teacher education frameworks, reinforcing the theological-educational integration highlighted in this review.

Faith, Teacher Identity, and Professional Calling

Another dominant theme in the reviewed literature is the strong link between faith and teacher identity formation. Teacher identity is increasingly recognized in educational research as a critical factor influencing professional practice, motivation, and long-term commitment (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). In Christian education, identity formation is frequently framed as a spiritual and vocational process grounded in faith. Palmer (2007) emphasized that good teaching flows from the integrity of the teacher's inner life. This insight is echoed in Christian education literature, where faith is understood as shaping not only beliefs but also the moral and emotional contours of the teacher's self-understanding. Groome (2011) similarly argued that Christian educators are called to teach from a place of spiritual authenticity, where faith informs both pedagogical choices and interpersonal relationships. The SLR findings suggest that faith-based identity formation contributes to personality competence by fostering congruence between personal values and professional behavior. Teachers who perceive their work as a calling are more likely to demonstrate ethical consistency, relational commitment, and emotional availability to students (Wright, 2010; Buchanan, 2015). These traits are central to personality competence and are especially significant in elementary school settings, where teachers play a formative role in students' moral and emotional development. In the Indonesian Christian education context, faith-informed teacher identity also serves as a buffer against professional burnout and role conflict. Studies on teacher spirituality in Southeast Asia indicate that religious meaning-making can enhance teachers' sense of purpose and emotional well-being, thereby strengthening their personality competence and professional sustainability (Suyatno et al., 2019).

A further theme emerging from the literature concerns the relationship between faith, emotional regulation, and moral integrity. Personality competence is closely associated with a teacher's ability to manage emotions, respond constructively to stress, and maintain ethical standards in complex classroom situations (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). The SLR revealed that faith-based frameworks offer distinctive resources for emotional and moral self-regulation. Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy provides a useful conceptual bridge in this regard. While Bandura's framework is not explicitly theological, several Christian education scholars have argued that faith can enhance perceived self-efficacy by grounding confidence in trust in God rather than solely in personal competence (Wright, 2010). This theological reframing suggests that faith contributes to emotional stability by reducing anxiety, fostering hope, and supporting adaptive coping strategies. Theological literature further emphasizes that faith nurtures virtues such as patience, forgiveness, and self-control, which are directly relevant to classroom management and interpersonal relationships (Foster, 2018). These virtues support personality competence by enabling teachers to respond to challenging student behaviors with empathy and moral clarity rather than frustration or punitive reactivity. Empirical studies in religious education contexts also indicate that teachers who draw on spiritual practices, such as prayer and reflective devotion, report greater emotional balance and ethical sensitivity (Tisdell, 2012). These findings reinforce the argument that faith is not merely a private belief system but a practical resource that shapes emotional and moral dimensions of teacher personality competence.

Although the SLR did not include direct field data from UPTD SD Negeri 07 Beringin Jaya, the synthesized findings have clear implications for elementary-level Christian education. The reviewed literature consistently emphasizes that early educational contexts are particularly sensitive to the personal and moral qualities of teachers. At the elementary level, teachers function not only as instructors but also as moral exemplars and relational figures who significantly influence students' character formation (Lickona, 2012). In this context, faith-informed personality competence becomes especially critical. The theological interpretation of Matthew 17:20 offers a framework for understanding how even modest expressions of faith can have a profound formative impact. Teachers who embody trust in God, humility, and perseverance model spiritual and moral dispositions that are likely to be internalized by students. The literature suggests that integrating faith into teacher formation programs can strengthen the alignment between spiritual identity and professional practice. This alignment enhances personality competence by fostering coherence, authenticity, and moral credibility. For Christian Religious Education teachers, this integration supports a holistic approach to education that addresses cognitive, emotional, moral, and spiritual dimensions of student development. A key contribution of this SLR is the demonstration of strong conceptual alignment between theological interpretations of faith and contemporary educational theories of personality competence. While educational frameworks often emphasize psychological constructs such as emotional intelligence, self-regulation, and ethical decision-making, theological perspectives provide a deeper spiritual narrative that situates these constructs within a faith-based worldview. The mustard-seed metaphor in Matthew 17:20 serves as a powerful integrative symbol in this regard. It affirms that faith, even when seemingly small, can serve as a catalyst for significant personal and professional transformation. This theological insight complements educational research that emphasizes the cumulative impact of small but consistent dispositions, such as patience, empathy, and reflective practice, on long-term teaching effectiveness (Day & Gu, 2014). By integrating these frameworks, this study contributes to a more holistic understanding of personality competence in Christian education. It moves beyond purely technical or psychological models to incorporate spiritual and theological dimensions that are central to the identity and mission of Christian educators. There is a relative scarcity of empirical studies that explicitly operationalize faith as a measurable or observable component of personality competence. Many studies address faith at a conceptual or narrative level but do not provide systematic empirical indicators for assessing its impact on teacher behavior and student outcomes. There is limited context-specific research in Indonesian Christian elementary education settings. While broader studies on teacher spirituality and religious education provide valuable insights, there is a need for more localized empirical research that examines how faith-based personality competence is enacted in specific institutional and cultural contexts. The integration of biblical exegesis with empirical educational research remains underdeveloped. Few studies systematically combine rigorous theological interpretation with educational data analysis. This gap suggests an important direction for future research, particularly for scholars seeking to strengthen the academic legitimacy and practical relevance of faith-based educational models.

The findings of this SLR strongly support the conceptualization of faith as a core dimension of personality competence in Christian Religious Education. Faith, as interpreted through

Matthew 17:20 and supported by educational and theological literature, functions as a foundational orientation that shapes teacher identity, emotional regulation, moral integrity, and professional commitment. This synthesis underscores that personality competence in Christian education cannot be fully understood apart from faith. Faith provides the spiritual and moral framework that gives coherence and depth to professional dispositions. In elementary education contexts, this framework is particularly significant, as teachers' personal qualities play a decisive role in shaping students' character and spiritual development. By situating faith at the center of personality competence, this study contributes to ongoing scholarly conversations about holistic teacher development. It affirms that effective Christian educators are not formed solely through technical training but through integrated processes of spiritual, moral, and professional formation grounded in faith.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine faith as the core of personality competence in Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers through a systematic literature review and a theological reflection on Matthew 17:20. By synthesizing educational, theological, and empirical scholarship, this research has demonstrated that faith is not a peripheral or supplementary dimension of teacher competence, but a foundational orientation that shapes identity, professional dispositions, and ethical conduct. The findings affirm that faith plays a central role in forming the inner life of the teacher, which in turn profoundly influences classroom practices, relationships with students, and long-term professional commitment. The systematic literature review revealed a consistent convergence between contemporary theories of teacher personality competence and Christian theological perspectives on spiritual formation. Educational research emphasizes traits such as emotional stability, integrity, empathy, and responsibility as key components of personality competence. Theological scholarship, when interpreted through Matthew 17:20, reframes these traits as expressions of faith lived out in trust, humility, perseverance, and dependence on God. The mustard-seed metaphor underscores that even seemingly small or developing faith can function as a powerful spiritual resource that enables teachers to face professional challenges with resilience and hope. This integration of educational and theological frameworks highlights the holistic nature of teacher development in Christian education. Personality competence cannot be reduced to psychological or behavioral attributes alone; it must be understood as deeply connected to the teacher's spiritual identity and relationship with God. Faith provides a unifying narrative that gives coherence to professional values and practices. As a result, teachers who cultivate faith as a central aspect of their identity are more likely to demonstrate authenticity, moral consistency, and emotional maturity, qualities that are essential for effective and ethical teaching. The findings also suggest that faith significantly contributes to teacher identity formation and professional calling. Teachers who perceive their vocation as rooted in faith are more inclined to view teaching as a form of service and ministry rather than merely a technical occupation. This sense of calling strengthens commitment, reduces vulnerability to burnout, and enhances moral accountability. In elementary education contexts, where teachers serve as key moral and relational figures, faith-informed personality competence is especially critical for

supporting students' character formation and spiritual development. This study underscores the role of faith in emotional regulation and moral integrity. Faith-based practices and beliefs provide teachers with internal resources for managing stress, responding constructively to conflict, and maintaining ethical standards in complex classroom situations. In this sense, faith functions as a form of spiritual capital that supports emotional balance, patience, and compassionate engagement with students. These capacities are central to personality competence and are indispensable for fostering a positive and nurturing learning environment. This study also identifies important directions for future research. There remains a need for empirical studies that operationalize faith as a measurable dimension of personality competence and examine its direct impact on teaching practices and student outcomes. Context-specific research in Indonesian Christian elementary education settings is also needed to deepen understanding of how faith-based personality competence is enacted within particular cultural, institutional, and policy environments. Future research should further integrate rigorous biblical exegesis with empirical educational methodologies to strengthen the theoretical and practical foundations of faith-based teacher competence models. This study affirms that faith, as reflected in Matthew 17:20, constitutes the core of personality competence for Christian Religious Education teachers. Faith shapes identity, sustains emotional and moral resilience, and provides a spiritual framework for professional practice. By placing faith at the center of personality competence, Christian education can promote a more holistic model of teacher development, one that integrates spiritual formation with professional excellence for the benefit of both teachers and students.

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