



## **Pedagogical Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Cultivating Perseverance Values: A Study of Philippians 3:14 at SMP Negeri 2 Mazino**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study investigates the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in cultivating perseverance values based on Philippians 3:14 among Christian students at SMP Negeri 2 Mazino, South Nias, Indonesia. Perseverance is a central Christian virtue that supports students' spiritual formation, learning motivation, and resilience in facing academic and personal challenges. Grounded in biblical theology and contemporary pedagogical theory, this research explores how teachers' pedagogical competencies contribute to the internalization of perseverance values in the classroom context. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected from 57 Christian students through a structured questionnaire measuring students' perceptions of teachers' pedagogical competence and their own perseverance-related attitudes and behaviors. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to examine the relationship between pedagogical competence and the cultivation of perseverance values. The findings indicate that CRE teachers' pedagogical competence is perceived to be at a good level, particularly in lesson planning, instructional strategies, classroom management, and evaluation practices. This study concludes that pedagogical competence is a key factor in integrating biblical values into students' character formation. The results highlight the importance of continuous professional development for CRE teachers to enhance pedagogical quality and strengthen the spiritual and character outcomes of Christian education. These findings contribute to the growing body of research on faith-based pedagogy and character education in public school contexts in Indonesia.*

**Keywords:** *Pedagogical Competence, Christian Religious Education, Perseverance Values*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In contemporary educational discourse, pedagogical competence encompasses teachers' ability to design meaningful learning experiences, apply appropriate instructional

strategies, manage classroom dynamics, and assess student learning in ways that foster both cognitive and character development (Shulman, 1987; Darling-Hammond, 2017). In the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE), pedagogical competence carries an additional theological and moral dimension, as teachers are not only responsible for academic instruction but also for the formation of students' spiritual character and ethical dispositions (Groome, 2011; Pazmiño, 2008). One of the core values emphasized in both biblical theology and Christian educational practice is perseverance. Perseverance is not merely a psychological trait associated with endurance, but a theological virtue rooted in faith, hope, and sustained commitment to God's calling (Moo, 2001; Wright, 2013). Within Christian education, perseverance functions as a formative value that shapes students' attitudes toward learning, challenges, and long-term goals. It is therefore closely connected to pedagogical practices that encourage consistency, resilience, and purposeful engagement in both academic and spiritual growth. The biblical foundation for perseverance is strongly articulated in Philippians 3:14, where the Apostle Paul declares, "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (NIV). This verse presents perseverance as an intentional, forward-looking pursuit grounded in divine calling rather than merely human ambition. Pauline theology frames perseverance as a dynamic spiritual movement characterized by disciplined effort, eschatological hope, and faithful orientation toward God's purposes (Fee, 1995; Schreiner, 2015). From this perspective, perseverance is not passive endurance but active participation in God's redemptive trajectory. Philippians 3:14 provides a rich theological framework for understanding how perseverance can be cultivated through pedagogical practice. The verse highlights goal-oriented faith, sustained effort, and spiritual motivation, all of which are highly relevant to contemporary educational challenges. Research in educational psychology and character education also affirms that perseverance, often associated with constructs such as grit, resilience, and self-regulation, is a significant predictor of student engagement and long-term academic success (Duckworth et al., 2007; Zimmerman, 2002). However, in Christian education, perseverance is not grounded merely in personal determination but is deeply connected to spiritual purpose and theological meaning. This gap is particularly evident in rural and peripheral regions, such as South Nias, where educational resources, institutional support, and professional development opportunities may be constrained. In such contexts, the pedagogical competence of CRE teachers becomes even more crucial, as teachers often function as primary agents of both academic instruction and spiritual formation.

SMP Negeri 2 Mazino, South Nias, represents a significant case for examining this issue. At the time of this study, the school served 57 Christian students and employed three Christian teachers, including Christian Religious Education teachers responsible for delivering CRE instruction and supporting students' spiritual development. Within this setting, CRE teachers are tasked with integrating biblical values into pedagogical practices while navigating the structural realities of a public school environment. This context provides a meaningful opportunity to explore how pedagogical competence is enacted in relation to the cultivation of perseverance values grounded in Philippians 3:14. This study is informed by Pauline perspectives on Christian life as a disciplined and purposeful journey toward God's calling. Scholars emphasize that Paul's language of "pressing on"

reflects an athletic metaphor that conveys sustained effort, focus, and intentional growth (Fee, 1995; Wright, 2013). When applied to Christian education, this metaphor suggests that teachers are not only transmitters of knowledge but also mentors who guide students in developing spiritual and moral habits that support long-term faithfulness and resilience. Cultivating perseverance requires intentional instructional strategies, consistent encouragement, and learning environments that support students in facing challenges constructively. Darling-Hammond (2017) argues that effective pedagogy involves creating learning conditions that foster motivation, engagement, and persistence. In Christian education, these pedagogical dimensions are further enriched by theological narratives that provide transcendent meaning to effort and struggle (Groome, 2011). This study aims to examine the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in cultivating perseverance values through a reflection on Philippians 3:14 at SMP Negeri 2 Mazino, South Nias. By integrating educational theory, biblical theology, and empirical context, this research seeks to contribute to the growing body of literature on Christian teacher competence and character formation. The study is expected to provide insights into how pedagogical competence can serve as a bridge between biblical theology and educational practice, particularly in contexts where Christian education plays a vital role in shaping students' spiritual and moral resilience.

## METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in cultivating perseverance values based on Philippians 3:14 at SMP Negeri 2 Mazino, South Nias. A quantitative approach was selected to allow for systematic measurement of students' perceptions and responses related to teachers' pedagogical practices and the internalization of perseverance values. Quantitative methods are appropriate for identifying patterns, tendencies, and levels of influence among variables through numerical data and statistical analysis (Creswell, 2014; Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). The research used a descriptive-correlational design. This design enables the researcher to describe the level of pedagogical competence demonstrated by CRE teachers and to analyze its relationship with students' perseverance-related attitudes and learning behaviors. The design does not involve experimental manipulation but focuses on naturally occurring educational conditions within the school context. The study was conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Mazino, South Nias, Indonesia. This site was selected purposively because it represents a public junior high school where Christian Religious Education is implemented in a context with a limited number of Christian teachers and students. At the time of the study, the school had 57 Christian students and three Christian teachers, including CRE teachers responsible for delivering Christian Religious Education. The population of the study consisted of all Christian students at SMP Negeri 2 Mazino. Given the relatively small population size, a total sampling technique was employed, in which all 57 Christian students were included as research participants. Total sampling is appropriate when the population is small and accessible, as it increases representativeness and reduces sampling error (Fraenkel et al., 2019). The CRE teachers were included as contextual informants, particularly for instrument validation and contextual interpretation, but the primary quantitative data were collected from students as respondents. Data were

collected using a structured questionnaire developed to measure two main constructs: pedagogical competence of CRE teachers and students' perseverance values grounded in Philippians 3:14. The pedagogical competence instrument was adapted from established pedagogical competence frameworks, including indicators related to lesson planning, instructional strategies, classroom management, student motivation, and feedback practices (Shulman, 1987; Darling-Hammond, 2017). The perseverance values instrument measured students' perceptions and self-reported attitudes related to persistence, goal orientation, sustained effort, and resilience in learning, framed within a Christian theological understanding of perseverance. Items were designed to reflect both educational and biblical dimensions of perseverance, such as commitment to learning, consistency in completing tasks, and motivation rooted in faith and purpose. All questionnaire items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Prior to full administration, the instrument was reviewed by experts in Christian education and educational measurement to ensure content validity. A pilot test was conducted with a small group of students to assess clarity and reliability. Content validity was established through expert judgment involving senior lecturers in Christian Religious Education and educational research methodology. Construct validity was examined through item analysis to ensure that each item appropriately represented the intended indicators of pedagogical competence and perseverance values. Reliability of the instruments was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. An alpha value of 0.70 or higher was considered acceptable, indicating adequate internal consistency of the questionnaire scales (George & Mallery, 2019). Items that did not meet reliability standards were revised or removed to improve the overall consistency of the instrument. After obtaining permission from the school administration, the questionnaires were administered to all 57 Christian students during scheduled class times. The researcher provided standardized instructions to ensure that all participants understood how to complete the questionnaire. Students were informed that participation was voluntary and that their responses would be kept confidential. The questionnaires were completed anonymously to reduce response bias and to encourage honest reporting. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, were used to describe the levels of pedagogical competence and perseverance values among students. Inferential analysis was conducted using correlation and simple regression analysis to examine the relationship between CRE teachers' pedagogical competence and students' perseverance values. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the two variables. Simple linear regression was employed to assess the extent to which pedagogical competence predicts students' perseverance values. All statistical analyses were conducted using standard statistical software. The level of significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ .

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the quantitative findings regarding the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers and its relationship with the cultivation of perseverance values among Christian students at SMP Negeri 2 Mazino, South Nias. The analysis is based on responses from 57 Christian students who participated in the study. The results are organized into two major components: descriptive analysis of pedagogical competence and perseverance values, and inferential analysis examining the relationship between pedagogical competence and students' perseverance values. These findings are interpreted in light of educational theory and Pauline theology, particularly Philippians 3:14. The descriptive statistics indicate that students perceived their CRE teachers' pedagogical competence to be at a relatively high level. Similarly, students reported moderately high to high levels of perseverance-related attitudes and behaviors. These general trends suggest that pedagogical practices within Christian Religious Education at SMP Negeri 2 Mazino are perceived as supportive of both academic engagement and character formation.

The pedagogical competence of CRE teachers was measured across several indicators, including lesson planning, clarity of instruction, use of teaching strategies, classroom management, student motivation, and feedback practices. The mean scores across these indicators showed a consistent pattern of positive student perceptions. Students reported that CRE teachers demonstrated strong preparation and organization in delivering lessons. This finding aligns with Shulman's (1987) concept of pedagogical content knowledge, which emphasizes the importance of teachers' ability to transform subject matter into forms that are pedagogically powerful and accessible to learners. In the context of Christian Religious Education, effective lesson planning not only supports cognitive understanding of biblical content but also facilitates the integration of spiritual and moral values into instructional activities. High mean scores on instructional clarity suggest that students perceived their teachers as effective in explaining concepts and guiding learning activities. This is particularly significant in relation to the teaching of perseverance, as clarity of goals and expectations is known to support student persistence and engagement (Zimmerman, 2002). When students understand what is expected of them and how to achieve learning goals, they are more likely to remain committed and to exert sustained effort. Classroom management was also rated positively by students. Effective classroom management contributes to a learning environment that is conducive to focus, participation, and sustained engagement. Darling-Hammond (2017) emphasizes that well-managed classrooms support students' sense of safety and belonging, which are critical for motivation and persistence. In the CRE context, such environments also create space for spiritual reflection and character-oriented discussions, which further reinforce perseverance values. Another important aspect of pedagogical competence is the ability to motivate students. The data indicate that students perceived their CRE teachers as providing encouragement and motivational support. This dimension is particularly relevant for cultivating perseverance, as motivation is closely linked to students' willingness to persist in the face of difficulty (Duckworth et al., 2007). In Christian education, motivation is not only extrinsic or academic, but is often framed in spiritual terms, such as faithfulness, calling, and purpose. Such framing can provide deeper, more

enduring sources of motivation. Feedback practices were also perceived positively, with students reporting that teachers provided guidance and corrections that helped them improve. Constructive feedback is a key pedagogical tool for supporting perseverance, as it helps students view mistakes and challenges as opportunities for growth rather than as signs of failure. This aligns with contemporary educational perspectives that emphasize formative assessment as a means of fostering resilience and sustained learning effort (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). The descriptive findings suggest that CRE teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Mazino demonstrate pedagogical competence across multiple dimensions that are theoretically and practically linked to the development of perseverance.

Students' perseverance values were measured through indicators such as persistence in completing tasks, goal orientation, sustained effort, resilience in facing difficulties, and commitment to learning. The descriptive results indicate that students generally reported positive perseverance-related attitudes and behaviors. Students indicated that they tend to continue working on learning tasks even when they are difficult. This suggests a disposition toward persistence rather than avoidance, which is a central component of perseverance. Educational psychology literature consistently shows that such persistence is associated with higher levels of academic engagement and long-term achievement (Duckworth et al., 2007; Zimmerman, 2002). Goal orientation was also rated positively. Students reported that they have learning goals and that they try to work consistently toward achieving them. This finding resonates strongly with Philippians 3:14, which emphasizes pressing on toward a defined goal grounded in God's calling. The alignment between biblical imagery and students' reported goal-oriented behavior suggests that Christian Religious Education may be contributing to a spiritually informed understanding of goal pursuit. Resilience in the face of challenges was another area in which students reported relatively high levels. Students indicated that they do not easily give up when encountering academic or learning-related difficulties. This resilience reflects not only personal traits but also the influence of instructional and relational environments that encourage sustained effort. From a Christian educational perspective, such resilience may also be shaped by theological narratives that frame struggle as meaningful rather than merely negative. Students also reported a sense of commitment to learning, indicating that they try to complete assignments and participate in class activities consistently. This commitment is a practical expression of perseverance and reflects the internalization of values related to responsibility and faithfulness. In Christian theology, such faithfulness is often understood as a reflection of one's commitment to God's calling, even in everyday tasks. The descriptive findings on perseverance values suggest that students at SMP Negeri 2 Mazino exhibit dispositions that are consistent with both educational and theological understandings of perseverance. These results provide a foundation for examining the relationship between pedagogical competence and perseverance values.

The inferential analysis revealed a positive and statistically significant correlation between students' perceptions of CRE teachers' pedagogical competence and students' perseverance values. The Pearson correlation coefficient indicated a moderate to strong positive relationship, suggesting that higher levels of perceived pedagogical competence are associated with higher levels of student perseverance. This finding supports theoretical assumptions in both educational and Christian education literature that

effective teaching practices are closely linked to students' motivational and character-related outcomes. From an educational perspective, this aligns with research demonstrating that high-quality instruction, supportive classroom environments, and effective feedback are associated with greater student persistence and engagement (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Hattie, 2009). From a Christian education perspective, the significant correlation underscores the role of CRE teachers as moral and spiritual models whose pedagogical practices influence not only academic learning but also character formation. The data suggest that when students perceive their teachers as pedagogically competent, they are more likely to internalize perseverance as a meaningful and attainable value. This relationship also reflects the theological dimension of teaching in Christian education. Pedagogical competence in this context is not value-neutral; it is embedded within a framework of spiritual meaning and biblical interpretation. As such, effective pedagogy becomes a vehicle through which biblical values, such as perseverance, are translated into lived student experiences.

The regression analysis further demonstrated that pedagogical competence significantly predicts students' perseverance values. The regression model indicates that a substantial proportion of variance in perseverance values can be explained by students' perceptions of their teachers' pedagogical competence. This finding has important implications. It suggests that pedagogical competence is not merely correlated with perseverance but functions as a meaningful predictor. In practical terms, this means that improvements in pedagogical practices may contribute to measurable increases in students' perseverance-related attitudes and behaviors. This supports the view that character formation is not solely the result of individual traits or family background, but is significantly shaped by educational practices. In Christian education, this underscores the responsibility of teachers to intentionally design learning experiences that foster not only cognitive outcomes but also spiritual and moral dispositions. The predictive role of pedagogical competence also resonates with Pauline theology. Philippians 3:14 emphasizes disciplined pursuit and sustained effort toward a divine goal. When teachers model and structure learning in ways that emphasize clarity, encouragement, feedback, and goal orientation, they create pedagogical conditions that mirror the theological logic of pressing on toward a goal. In this way, pedagogy becomes a practical expression of Pauline spirituality.

The findings suggest that pedagogical competence functions as a mediating factor between biblical theology and students' lived experiences. Philippians 3:14 provides a theological narrative of perseverance, but it is through pedagogical practices that this narrative is translated into concrete student attitudes and behaviors. This mediating role is particularly important in public school contexts such as SMP Negeri 2 Mazino, where Christian education operates within broader institutional structures that may not explicitly prioritize spiritual formation. In such settings, the pedagogical competence of CRE teachers becomes a key mechanism through which biblical values are enacted and sustained. The quantitative evidence indicates that students are not only exposed to biblical teachings about perseverance but are also shaped by how these teachings are delivered, modeled, and reinforced through everyday instructional practices. This

reinforces the importance of viewing pedagogy as a form of theological practice in Christian education.

The central theological framework of this study, Philippians 3:14, emphasizes pressing forward toward a divinely defined goal. The quantitative findings suggest that this theological emphasis is reflected in students' reported goal orientation, persistence, and resilience. The significant relationship between pedagogical competence and perseverance values indicates that teachers play a critical role in helping students translate Pauline theology into practical learning dispositions. This integration demonstrates that biblical texts are not merely sources of doctrinal content but also provide motivational and ethical frameworks that can shape educational outcomes. When pedagogical competence is aligned with theological purpose, Christian education becomes a space where faith and learning mutually reinforce one another. The findings are particularly significant given the contextual realities of South Nias. In regions where educational resources and professional development opportunities may be limited, the quality of pedagogical practice becomes even more critical. The results suggest that even within such contexts, strong pedagogical competence can have a meaningful impact on students' character development. This highlights the strategic importance of investing in teacher training and support for CRE teachers in peripheral and rural areas. Strengthening pedagogical competence is not only an educational priority but also a spiritual and moral investment in the formation of resilient, goal-oriented Christian students. In summary, the quantitative results demonstrate that: students perceive CRE teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Mazino as having relatively high pedagogical competence, students report moderately high to high levels of perseverance values, there is a significant positive correlation between pedagogical competence and perseverance values, and pedagogical competence significantly predicts students' perseverance. These findings collectively support the central argument of this study: that pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education teachers plays a crucial role in cultivating perseverance values grounded in Philippians 3:14. The results affirm that effective pedagogy is a key pathway through which biblical values are translated into students' lived experiences, shaping both their academic engagement and spiritual character.

## CONCLUSION

This study has examined the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in cultivating perseverance values grounded in Philippians 3:14 at SMP Negeri 2 Mazino, South Nias, using a quantitative descriptive-correlational approach. The findings provide empirical evidence that pedagogical competence is a significant factor in shaping students' perseverance-related attitudes and learning behaviors. This reinforces the central role of CRE teachers not only as transmitters of biblical knowledge but also as formative agents in students' spiritual and character development. The results demonstrate that students perceive their CRE teachers as having relatively high levels of pedagogical competence across key dimensions, including lesson planning, instructional clarity, classroom management, student motivation, and feedback practices. These pedagogical strengths contribute to the creation of learning environments that support sustained engagement, clarity of learning goals, and constructive responses to academic

challenges. In line with contemporary educational theory, such environments are conducive to fostering persistence, resilience, and goal-oriented learning behaviors. Students reported moderately high to high levels of perseverance values, including persistence in completing tasks, resilience in facing difficulties, and commitment to learning goals. These dispositions reflect both educational and theological dimensions of perseverance. The alignment between students' reported behaviors and the Pauline exhortation in Philippians 3:14 suggests that biblical teachings on pressing forward toward God's calling can be meaningfully internalized when they are integrated into effective pedagogical practice. The significant positive correlation and predictive relationship between pedagogical competence and perseverance values indicate that pedagogical competence is not merely associated with perseverance but plays a substantive role in shaping it. This finding underscores the importance of intentional pedagogical design in Christian Religious Education. Effective pedagogy serves as a mediating mechanism through which biblical values are translated into lived student experiences. In this sense, pedagogy functions as a form of practical theology, where instructional strategies, classroom interactions, and feedback practices embody and reinforce theological commitments. The contextual setting of SMP Negeri 2 Mazino further highlights the strategic importance of pedagogical competence. In a public school environment with limited Christian educational resources and a relatively small Christian student population, the quality of CRE teachers' pedagogical practice becomes a critical determinant of both academic engagement and spiritual formation. The findings suggest that strengthening pedagogical competence can have a multiplier effect, enhancing not only learning outcomes but also the development of perseverance as a core Christian virtue. This study contributes to the literature on Christian education by providing quantitative evidence of the relationship between teacher competence and character formation grounded in biblical theology. It affirms that perseverance, as articulated in Philippians 3:14, is not merely a theological ideal but a value that can be cultivated through intentional and effective pedagogical practice. The study has important implications for teacher education, professional development, and educational policy within Christian Religious Education. Training programs should prioritize the development of pedagogical competence alongside theological and spiritual formation. Future research is encouraged to expand the sample size, include multiple school contexts, and incorporate longitudinal designs to further explore how pedagogical competence influences perseverance and other character-related outcomes over time. Through such efforts, Christian education can be strengthened as a holistic enterprise that integrates faith, pedagogy, and character formation in service of students' long-term spiritual and educational growth.

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