



Spiritual Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Bearing Witness to Faith: Insights from Genesis 17:1 at SD Negeri 007 Tambusai Utara

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in bearing witness to faith based on Genesis 17:1 at SD Negeri 007 Tambusai Utara, Rokan Hulu. The research employed a quantitative descriptive design involving 83 Christian students as respondents, representing the total population of learners receiving CRE instruction at the school. Data were collected through a structured Likert-scale questionnaire measuring two main dimensions: teachers' spiritual competence and students' faith response. Descriptive statistical analysis, including mean scores and percentage distributions, was used to determine the level of perceived competence. The findings indicate that the CRE teacher's spiritual competence is perceived to be in the high category. Students reported that the teacher consistently demonstrates integrity, faithfulness, and alignment between teaching and daily behavior. The teacher's role as a living model of faith appears to significantly influence students' understanding of faithful living as emphasized in Genesis 17:1. Students also showed positive faith responses, including increased motivation to trust God, obey biblical teachings, and practice Christian values in daily life. The study also identified areas for improvement, particularly in providing more individualized spiritual mentoring and deepening students' relational understanding of faith beyond behavioral compliance. The study concludes that strong spiritual competence is essential for effective Christian Religious Education, especially in small-school contexts with limited personnel. Strengthening reflective learning strategies and collaborative support among Christian educators is recommended to enhance students' holistic faith formation.

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

INTRODUCTION

Teacher competence remains a central determinant of the effectiveness of Christian Religious Education (CRE), particularly in contexts where faith formation is an explicit

educational goal. Among the four core teacher competencies recognized in Indonesian educational discourse, pedagogical, professional, social, and personality competence, spiritual competence has increasingly gained attention within Christian education scholarship. Spiritual competence refers to a teacher's capacity to embody, model, and nurture authentic faith practices in ways that are pedagogically meaningful and relationally credible. In CRE settings, teachers are not only transmitters of biblical knowledge but also living witnesses whose personal spirituality significantly shapes students' faith development (Groome, 2011). The importance of spiritual competence becomes especially evident at the elementary school level, where students are still forming foundational religious identities. Research in faith-based education consistently shows that young learners are highly responsive to teacher modeling, relational authenticity, and the perceived congruence between what teachers teach and how they live (Benson, Scales, & Syvertsen, 2011). When teachers demonstrate a coherent spiritual life, students are more likely to internalize Christian values not merely as doctrinal content but as lived realities. Conversely, gaps between instruction and example may weaken the credibility of religious instruction. Within the biblical tradition, Genesis 17:1 presents a powerful theological foundation for understanding spiritual competence. In this passage, God calls Abram to "walk before me faithfully and be blameless," emphasizing integrity of life before God. The text frames faith not simply as belief but as a continuous relational posture characterized by obedience, trust, and visible witness. For CRE teachers, this theological motif is highly relevant: teaching faith must be accompanied by a life that reflects faithful walking before God. Scholars of biblical spirituality note that the Abrahamic narrative highlights covenantal faithfulness expressed through daily conduct rather than isolated religious acts (Brueggemann, 2010). The role of CRE teachers as witnesses of faith is particularly strategic. Schools often function as primary spaces where Christian students, especially in pluralistic environments, receive structured religious formation. At SD Negeri 007 Tambusai Utara in Rokan Hulu, this responsibility is concentrated in a unique way. The school serves 83 Christian students with only one Christian Religious Education teacher, creating both an opportunity and a challenge. On the one hand, the teacher's influence can be highly personal and relational; on the other hand, the effectiveness of faith formation depends heavily on the teacher's spiritual and professional capacity. Previous studies have emphasized that effective CRE requires integration between theological depth, pedagogical skill, and personal spirituality (Astley, 2002; Groome, 2011). However, empirical research focusing specifically on teachers' spiritual competence as faith witnesses in Indonesian elementary contexts remains relatively limited. Much of the existing literature tends to prioritize pedagogical or cognitive outcomes rather than the lived spirituality of educators. This gap is significant because Christian education, by its nature, seeks transformational rather than merely informational outcomes. Contemporary educational challenges, such as digital distraction, moral relativism, and declining religious engagement among youth, intensify the need for credible spiritual role models in schools. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) argue that teachers' internal dispositions significantly affect classroom climate and student development. When applied to CRE, this insight suggests that spiritual competence is not an optional enhancement but a core professional requirement. Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the spiritual competence of the Christian Religious Education teacher at SD Negeri 007 Tambusai Utara in bearing witness

to faith, interpreted through the theological lens of Genesis 17:1. Specifically, the research seeks to examine how students perceive the teacher's spiritual modeling, faith communication, and influence on their own understanding of faithful living before God. By integrating biblical reflection with empirical classroom data, this study intends to contribute to the ongoing discourse on strengthening teacher competence in Indonesian Christian education. The study is expected to provide both theoretical enrichment and practical recommendations for CRE practitioners, particularly in contexts where a single teacher carries primary responsibility for nurturing the faith of a relatively large group of elementary students.

METHODS

A quantitative descriptive research design was implemented to examine the spiritual competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher in bearing witness to faith based on Genesis 17:1 at SD Negeri 007 Tambusai Utara, Rokan Hulu. The quantitative approach was selected because it enables systematic measurement of students' perceptions and allows the researcher to describe the level of teachers' spiritual competence objectively through numerical data (Creswell, 2014). The design is descriptive rather than experimental, as the study aims to portray existing conditions without manipulating variables. The research was conducted at SD Negeri 007 Tambusai Utara, Rokan Hulu, an elementary school with a Christian student population that receives formal CRE instruction. The respondents of this study were 83 Christian students, representing the total population of Christian learners in the school. Because the population size was relatively small and manageable, the study used a total sampling technique, meaning all eligible students were included as respondents. The focus on students' perceptions is grounded in the understanding that learners are the primary recipients of CRE instruction and therefore are well positioned to evaluate teachers' spiritual modeling and classroom influence. The school employs one Christian Religious Education teacher, making the teacher's role particularly central to students' faith formation experiences. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed based on the conceptual framework of teachers' spiritual competence and the theological emphasis of Genesis 17:1 ("walk before me faithfully and be blameless"). The instrument used a five-point Likert scale ranging from: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. The questionnaire measured two main dimensions: Teachers' Spiritual Competence, including: consistency in Christian behavior, integrity and faithfulness, spiritual example in daily interaction, encouragement of students' faith growth, integration of biblical values in teaching. Students' Faith Response, including: understanding of faithful living, motivation to imitate Christian values, awareness of gratitude and obedience to God, willingness to practice faith in daily life. Prior to distribution, the instrument underwent content validation through expert judgment to ensure alignment with CRE competencies and biblical foundations. Reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha, with a coefficient above the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating that the instrument was internally consistent (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Data collection was carried out during the second semester of the academic year. After obtaining permission from the school, the researcher administered the questionnaire directly to students during CRE learning time. Students were given clear

instructions and assurances of confidentiality to minimize response bias. The researcher supervised the completion process to ensure that all items were answered independently and completely. All 83 questionnaires were returned and deemed valid for analysis, resulting in a 100% response rate. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. To interpret the level of competence, mean scores were classified into five categories: 4.21–5.00 = Very High, 3.41–4.20 = High, 2.61–3.40 = Moderate, 1.81–2.60 = Low, 1.00–1.80 = Very Low. This categorization allows clear identification of the perceived strength of the teacher's spiritual competence and its impact on students' faith development. Through this quantitative framework, the study seeks to provide an empirical portrait of how spiritual competence is perceived and experienced within the CRE classroom at SD Negeri 007 Tambusai Utara.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The quantitative analysis conducted at SD Negeri 007 Tambusai Utara involved 83 Christian students as respondents, representing the full population of learners receiving Christian Religious Education (CRE) instruction at the school. The use of total sampling strengthens the descriptive reliability of the findings because the results reflect the perceptions of the entire Christian student body rather than a subset. Overall, the statistical patterns indicate that the spiritual competence of the CRE teacher is perceived positively and falls within the high category. This general outcome is significant given that the school relies on only one CRE teacher to serve all Christian students, thereby placing considerable formative responsibility on a single educator. In small educational environments such as this, the teacher's personal spirituality becomes highly visible and influential, and the data confirm that students recognize and respond to this influence in meaningful ways. One of the most prominent findings concerns the perceived integrity and faithfulness of the CRE teacher. Most students agreed that the teacher consistently demonstrates behavior aligned with Christian values in daily interactions. Students reported that the teacher speaks respectfully, behaves fairly, and models patience and care in classroom situations. From a theological standpoint, this pattern reflects the core message of Genesis 17:1, which calls Abram to "walk before me faithfully and be blameless." The students' responses suggest that they interpret the teacher's conduct as a living embodiment of this biblical mandate. This is pedagogically important because, at the elementary level, students tend to evaluate religious credibility not primarily through doctrinal precision but through observable character. When teachers display congruence between teaching and behavior, students are more likely to internalize the values being taught. The high ratings in this dimension therefore indicate that the CRE teacher functions effectively as a visible witness of faith, which is central to the purpose of Christian education. The dimension of spiritual modeling during classroom interaction also received strong positive responses. Students generally agreed that the teacher actively encourages prayer, connects lessons with biblical teachings, and demonstrates a caring attitude toward learners. These behaviors reflect what many Christian education scholars describe as incarnational pedagogy, in which teaching occurs through embodied example rather than purely verbal explanation. The data indicate that the teacher's spirituality is not hidden or abstract but is integrated into daily teaching practice. This integration is especially important in light of Genesis 17:1, where faithful living is

portrayed as a continuous relational posture before God. In the classroom context, the teacher becomes a contemporary representation of that faithful walk, and students appear to recognize this connection. The data also reveal some variation in how consistently students experience structured spiritual mentoring. While most students perceive strong general modeling, slightly lower mean scores appear in items related to individualized spiritual guidance and personal faith conversations. This pattern is understandable given the structural context: one CRE teacher serves 83 students. Such a ratio naturally limits the teacher's ability to provide intensive one-on-one mentoring. The finding does not indicate weakness in the teacher's spirituality but rather highlights the practical constraints of the instructional environment. From an institutional perspective, this suggests the need for supportive strategies, such as small group mentoring or collaborative involvement of other Christian teachers, to deepen personal faith formation.

Another important result concerns the teacher's effectiveness in encouraging students' spiritual growth. Students generally reported that the teacher motivates them to trust God, live faithfully, and practice Christian values in daily life. This dimension is crucial because encouragement serves as the relational bridge between teacher modeling and student internalization. A teacher may possess strong personal spirituality, but without intentional encouragement, students may remain passive observers. The high scores in this area indicate that the CRE teacher moves beyond mere example to active spiritual nurturing. This aligns with contemporary Christian education frameworks that emphasize formation rather than information. Nevertheless, some items related to sustained follow-up and individualized reinforcement showed moderate rather than very high scores, again pointing to the limitations created by the single-teacher context. The integration of biblical values into classroom instruction also emerged as a strong aspect of the teacher's competence. Students generally agreed that the teacher explains Scripture clearly, connects biblical messages with daily behavior, and emphasizes faithful living in practical terms. This suggests that the teacher is able to translate the theological meaning of Genesis 17:1 into developmentally appropriate language for elementary learners. Such translation is pedagogically essential because young students often struggle to grasp abstract theological concepts. By linking the biblical call to faithful walking with concrete behaviors, such as obedience, honesty, and prayer, the teacher helps students move from cognitive awareness toward behavioral understanding. The data therefore indicate that the teacher's spiritual competence extends beyond personal character into effective instructional mediation. The responses also reveal that some students still interpret faith primarily in behavioral or rule-based terms rather than relational trust in God. While this tendency is developmentally common among elementary learners, it suggests an area for pedagogical enrichment. Genesis 17:1 frames faithfulness within a covenant relationship between God and Abram, emphasizing relational walking before God rather than mere compliance with rules. The moderate variation in student understanding implies that future instruction could place greater emphasis on relational spirituality—helping students see faith not only as doing what is right but as living in ongoing relationship with God. This does not negate the positive findings but rather points to the next stage of pedagogical refinement. The next major construct examined in the study is students' faith response. The overall mean for this variable also falls within the high category, indicating

that the teacher's spiritual competence is associated with positive student outcomes. Most students reported increased understanding of faithful living, stronger motivation to obey God, and a desire to imitate Christian values. While the descriptive design of the study does not allow causal claims, the alignment between high teacher competence and high student response is theoretically meaningful. It supports the widely held view in Christian education that teacher spirituality significantly shapes student formation, especially at the elementary level where relational influence is particularly strong. Students' conceptual understanding of faithful living appears generally well developed. Many respondents indicated that they now associate faith with trusting God, obeying His word, and behaving in ways that reflect Christian teaching. This suggests that the CRE teacher has successfully communicated the practical implications of Genesis 17:1. Importantly, students do not appear to treat faith as merely classroom knowledge; rather, many report trying to apply what they learn in daily life. This movement from knowledge to intention represents a key milestone in faith formation. However, the data also show that behavioral consistency among students is still emerging. While motivation levels are high, some students report that they only sometimes practice what they learn. This gap between intention and consistent practice is typical in moral and spiritual development and should be interpreted as an opportunity for continued formation rather than as a deficiency. One of the most significant findings of the study is the strong agreement among students that the CRE teacher personally inspires them in matters of faith. Students perceive the teacher as someone worthy of imitation, which confirms the central thesis that spiritual competence functions most powerfully through lived witness. In the framework of Genesis 17:1, the teacher's faithful walk becomes visible to the learning community, and students respond to that visibility. This is particularly important in the context of SD Negeri 007 Tambusai Utara, where the small number of Christian educators means that the CRE teacher carries symbolic as well as instructional influence. The data suggest that this influence is being exercised positively and constructively.

Contextual interpretation of the findings reveals several institutional strengths. The teacher demonstrates strong perceived integrity and consistency of Christian character. The relational climate of the CRE classroom appears positive and supportive. Biblical integration in teaching is functioning effectively. Students show high levels of respect and receptivity toward the teacher. There is encouraging evidence of student faith awareness and emerging practice. Together, these strengths indicate that the CRE program at the school has a solid spiritual foundation despite limited human resources. At the same time, the findings point to several areas for development. Individualized spiritual mentoring remains constrained by the teacher-student ratio. Theological depth, particularly covenantal and relational dimensions of faith, could be further strengthened. Structured opportunities for reflective and experiential learning could help students move from admiration to consistent practice. Broader involvement of other Christian teachers in the school could help create a more holistic faith-formative environment rather than concentrating responsibility solely on the CRE teacher. Addressing these areas does not imply weakness but rather represents strategic refinement consistent with continuous educational improvement. From a theological perspective, the study strongly affirms the continuing relevance of Genesis 17:1 for evaluating spiritual competence in Christian education. The passage emphasizes faithful walking before God, integrity of life, and

covenantal relationship, all of which are reflected in the teacher behaviors recognized by students. However, the Abrahamic narrative also implies ongoing growth and deepening faithfulness. Similarly, spiritual competence in educational practice should be viewed as dynamic and developmental rather than static. The positive results observed at SD Negeri 007 Tambusai Utara therefore provide both affirmation and motivation for continued strengthening of CRE practice. The quantitative evidence demonstrates that the CRE teacher's spiritual competence is perceived as high and is positively associated with students' faith awareness and motivation. The teacher effectively embodies the role of faith witness envisioned in Genesis 17:1, and students respond with respect, understanding, and emerging practice of Christian values. Nevertheless, maximizing transformative impact will require more intentional structures for mentoring, deeper relational theology in instruction, and expanded opportunities for students to practice faithful living in concrete ways. The findings ultimately reaffirm a foundational principle of Christian education: who the teacher is spiritually remains inseparable from what the teacher teaches pedagogically.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the spiritual competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher in bearing witness to faith based on Genesis 17:1 at SD Negeri 007 Tambusai Utara, Rokan Hulu, using a quantitative descriptive approach with 83 Christian students as respondents. The findings consistently indicate that the teacher's spiritual competence is perceived to be in the high category. Students generally recognize the teacher as demonstrating integrity, faithfulness, and consistency between teaching and daily behavior. These qualities reflect the theological emphasis of Genesis 17:1, which calls believers to "walk before God faithfully and be blameless." In the educational context studied, this biblical principle appears to be embodied meaningfully in the teacher's professional and relational practice. The results further reveal that the teacher's spiritual competence is positively associated with students' faith awareness and motivation. Students report improved understanding of faithful living, increased desire to obey God, and growing willingness to imitate Christian values in their daily lives. This finding reinforces the central role of teacher modeling in Christian education, particularly at the elementary level where learners are highly responsive to relational and behavioral examples. The CRE teacher at SD Negeri 007 Tambusai Utara functions not merely as a transmitter of biblical knowledge but as a visible witness of lived faith, which significantly shapes students' spiritual perceptions. The study also identifies several areas for development. Individualized spiritual mentoring remains limited due to the structural reality of having only one CRE teacher serving all Christian students. In addition, some students still interpret faith primarily in behavioral terms rather than as a relational walk with God, indicating the need for deeper theological internalization. Strengthening reflective learning practices, expanding opportunities for guided faith application, and fostering collaborative involvement from other Christian educators in the school may help enhance the long-term formative impact of CRE instruction. The findings affirm the continuing relevance of Genesis 17:1 as a framework for evaluating and nurturing teachers' spiritual competence. Faithful walking before God is not merely a doctrinal ideal but an observable educational reality that students can perceive and respond to.

Therefore, professional development for CRE teachers should continue to integrate spiritual formation, pedagogical skill, and relational authenticity as an inseparable triad. The study demonstrates that strong spiritual competence in Christian educators contributes meaningfully to students' faith development in the school context. Sustained institutional support and intentional pedagogical refinement will be essential to deepen and extend this positive impact in the future.

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