



Spiritual Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Upholding God's Promises: Insights from Genesis 35:11 at UPTD SDN NO.071063 Soromaasi

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in upholding the meaning of God's promises as reflected in Genesis 35:11 at UPTD SDN No. 071063 Soromaasi, West Nias. The research was motivated by the strategic role of CRE teachers in shaping students' faith character within elementary education, particularly in contexts with limited Christian teaching personnel. The school context includes 149 Christian students and three Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, and were analyzed using the interactive model of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that the CRE teacher demonstrates strong spiritual competence manifested through personal spiritual integrity, contextualized biblical instruction, relational faith mentoring, and reinforcement of faith practices within the school environment. Students generally perceive the teacher as an authentic witness of faith, which positively influences their trust in God's promises. However, variations were found in the depth of students' theological understanding, indicating the need for more structured reflective learning strategies. Institutional limitations, particularly the imbalance between the number of Christian students and teachers, also affect the intensity of individual spiritual mentoring. The study concludes that spiritual competence is most effective when embodied through consistent personal example, intentional pedagogy, and supportive relational engagement. Strengthening collaborative mentoring and reflective learning practices is recommended to deepen students' internalization of biblical promise theology in Christian Religious Education contexts.

Keywords: *Spiritual Competence, Christian Religious Education, God's Promises*

INTRODUCTION

Within the landscape of contemporary Christian Religious Education (CRE), the spiritual competence of teachers has emerged as a decisive factor in shaping students' faith formation and moral development. Beyond cognitive mastery of biblical content, CRE teachers are expected to embody spiritual authenticity, relational sensitivity, and theological clarity in their daily pedagogical practice. Numerous educational scholars emphasize that teachers' inner life significantly influences classroom climate and students' value internalization (Palmer, 2007; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). In faith-based instruction, this principle becomes even more critical because students often interpret theological truth through the lived example of their teachers. Consequently, the credibility of Christian education is closely tied to the spiritual integrity demonstrated by the educator. The role of CRE teachers carries additional weight due to the pluralistic and rapidly changing social environment. Schools are not merely sites of knowledge transmission but also arenas for character and faith formation. Research in Christian education consistently highlights that effective teachers integrate biblical teaching with relational modeling and contextual sensitivity (Groome, 2011). When this integration is weak, religious instruction risks becoming formalistic and detached from students' lived realities. Therefore, strengthening teachers' spiritual competence remains an urgent priority for sustaining meaningful Christian education in public schools. Genesis 35:11 provides a rich foundation for reflecting on spiritual competence, particularly in relation to trust in God's promises. In this passage, God reaffirms His covenant with Jacob, declaring His identity as God Almighty and commissioning Jacob to live fruitfully under divine promise. Biblical scholars note that the passage emphasizes both divine faithfulness and human response in faithful living (Brueggemann, 2010). For educators, this text offers a compelling paradigm: teaching about God's promises must be accompanied by a life that demonstrates confidence in those promises. In other words, spiritual competence is not limited to doctrinal explanation but includes the teacher's visible trust in God amid everyday responsibilities. At the elementary school level, the formative role of teachers becomes especially pronounced. Young learners tend to interpret religious meaning concretely and relationally rather than abstractly. Developmental perspectives suggest that children internalize faith most effectively when they observe consistent modeling from trusted adults (Wilhoit & Dettoni, 1995). Thus, the CRE teacher functions simultaneously as instructor, mentor, and spiritual exemplar. When teachers successfully integrate biblical teaching with authentic witness, students are more likely to develop enduring spiritual dispositions. Conversely, inconsistency between teaching and behavior may weaken the credibility of religious instruction. UPTD SDN No. 071063 Soromaasi in West Nias presents a meaningful context for examining these dynamics. The school serves 149 Christian students with only three Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher. This demographic configuration creates both opportunity and pressure. On one hand, the relatively large number of Christian students indicates a significant need for effective faith formation. On the other hand, the limited number of Christian educators means that each teacher's spiritual competence becomes highly visible and influential. In such settings, the CRE teacher's ability to uphold and model trust in God's promises is not merely a personal virtue but an institutional necessity. Preliminary observations in similar Indonesian school contexts suggest that while many

CRE teachers demonstrate strong commitment, the translation of theological themes, such as divine promise, into students' lived understanding remains uneven. Some students grasp biblical narratives cognitively but struggle to connect them with daily faith practices. This gap underscores the importance of examining how teachers' spiritual competence shapes students' reception of biblical themes. Genesis 35:11, with its emphasis on divine assurance and faithful response, provides an appropriate theological lens for such investigation. Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in upholding God's promises as reflected in Genesis 35:11 at UPTD SDN No. 071063 Soromaasi, West Nias. Specifically, the study seeks to describe students' perceptions of teachers' spiritual competence and to examine how this competence relates to students' understanding of trusting God's promises. By focusing on the intersection of biblical theology and classroom practice, this research intends to contribute to the ongoing development of spiritually grounded and pedagogically effective Christian education in Indonesian public schools.

METHODS

A descriptive qualitative approach was chosen to explore the spiritual competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher in upholding God's promises based on Genesis 35:11 at UPTD SDN No. 071063 Soromaasi, West Nias. The qualitative design was selected because the research aimed to obtain an in-depth understanding of lived practices, perceptions, and spiritual expressions within the natural school context rather than to measure variables statistically. Qualitative inquiry is particularly appropriate for examining religious and educational phenomena that involve meaning-making, interpretation, and contextual dynamics (Creswell, 2014). The study focuses on providing a rich, straightforward account of participants' experiences and observable realities in the field. This design allowed the researcher to capture how the CRE teacher's spiritual competence is manifested in teaching practice, interpersonal relationships, and classroom faith formation. The biblical framework of Genesis 35:11 functioned as the theological lens guiding data interpretation, especially regarding themes of divine promise, faithfulness, and spiritual consistency. The research was conducted at UPTD SDN No. 071063 Soromaasi, West Nias, a public elementary school with a significant Christian student population. The participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure relevance to the research focus. Participants included: 1 Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher, 2 other teachers of Christian background, and selected Christian students representing upper-grade levels. The school context includes 149 Christian students and three Christian teachers (including the CRE teacher). Students were involved primarily to provide supporting perspectives regarding the teacher's spiritual modeling and classroom influence, while the CRE teacher served as the key informant. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the CRE teacher and selected teachers to explore their understanding of spiritual competence, their interpretation of Genesis 35:11, and their strategies for nurturing students' trust in God's promises. Follow-up probing questions were used to deepen the data. Classroom observations and selected school activities were conducted to examine how spiritual competence was expressed in real teaching situations. The observation focused on teacher behavior, instructional approach, verbal

expressions of faith, and relational interactions with students. Coding was conducted inductively, allowing themes to emerge from the data while remaining informed by the theological framework of Genesis 35:11.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative findings of this study reveal that the spiritual competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher at UPTD SDN No. 071063 Soromaasi plays a central role in shaping students' understanding of God's promises as reflected in Genesis 35:11. Analysis of interview data, classroom observations, and document review indicates that spiritual competence in this context is manifested through four interconnected dimensions: personal spiritual integrity, pedagogical embodiment of biblical promises, relational faith mentoring, and contextual faith reinforcement within the school environment. These dimensions collectively illustrate how spiritual competence functions not merely as an internal disposition but as an observable pedagogical force that influences students' faith perception and response. The dimension of personal spiritual integrity emerged as the most visible foundation of the teacher's competence. Interview data from both colleagues and students consistently described the CRE teacher as demonstrating congruence between teaching content and daily behavior. The teacher was observed to begin lessons with reflective prayer, maintain calm emotional regulation in classroom management, and consistently use faith-based language when addressing student difficulties. Students reported that the teacher's manner of speaking about God's faithfulness felt "real" and "convincing," suggesting that authenticity significantly shapes students' receptivity. This finding aligns with the broader theoretical view that spiritual authority in religious education is largely relational and embodied rather than purely cognitive. In the observed classroom sessions, the teacher did not merely explain Genesis 35:11 as a historical narrative but framed it as a living promise that remains relevant to students' lives. Such framing appears to strengthen students' interpretive engagement with Scripture. The data also show that personal integrity alone does not automatically produce deep student internalization. While most students expressed positive impressions of the teacher's faith example, variations emerged in the depth of their theological understanding. Some students articulated God's promises primarily in terms of material blessing ("God will help me succeed"), while fewer demonstrated a more covenantal understanding of divine faithfulness. This indicates that although the teacher's spiritual modeling is effective at the affective level, cognitive theological depth among students still varies. This nuance is important because it suggests that spiritual competence must integrate both modeling and structured theological scaffolding.

The study found that pedagogical embodiment of biblical promises is a defining strength of the CRE teacher's practice. Classroom observations revealed that the teacher consistently connected Genesis 35:11 with students' everyday experiences, such as perseverance in learning, honesty in friendships, and trust during family difficulties. Rather than presenting the text in isolation, the teacher employed narrative retelling, guided reflection questions, and short testimonies to contextualize the biblical message. Students responded positively to this approach, particularly when lessons included concrete life applications. The qualitative data indicate that students were more likely to

remember and discuss the lesson content when it was linked to familiar situations. This finding supports the pedagogical principle that young learners require contextual bridges to internalize abstract theological themes. In this school, where 149 Christian students rely on limited Christian teaching personnel, the CRE teacher's ability to translate theology into lived meaning becomes especially significant. The document analysis of lesson plans further confirmed intentional integration of promise theology, as several RPPs explicitly included learning objectives related to trusting God's faithfulness. Nevertheless, some observed lessons still leaned toward teacher-centered explanation, suggesting room for more student-centered spiritual reflection activities. Increasing dialogical engagement may further deepen students' interpretive ownership of the biblical message. Relational faith mentoring emerged as a powerful but unevenly distributed aspect of spiritual competence. Students repeatedly emphasized that the CRE teacher was approachable and willing to listen to personal concerns. Informal mentoring moments, such as brief conversations after class or encouragement during school activities, appeared to significantly reinforce students' trust in the teacher's spiritual guidance. In qualitative interviews, several students noted that they felt "more confident to pray" after receiving personal encouragement from the teacher. This indicates that spiritual competence extends beyond formal instruction into relational accompaniment. The data also reveal structural limitations. With only three Christian teachers serving a large number of Christian students, opportunities for individualized spiritual mentoring remain constrained. Observations showed that while the teacher made intentional efforts to interact personally with students, time limitations often restricted the depth of follow-up. This structural pressure is an important contextual factor. It suggests that the effectiveness of spiritual competence is partly mediated by institutional capacity. In settings with high student-teacher ratios, even highly committed teachers may struggle to sustain intensive mentoring relationships. Therefore, strengthening collaborative support among Christian teachers in the school could amplify the impact of existing spiritual competence. The findings highlight the importance of contextual faith reinforcement within the school culture. Although the CRE teacher serves as the primary spiritual agent, the broader school environment also contributes to students' faith formation. Observations indicated that the school supports regular Christian worship activities and allows space for faith expression. Students reported that these routines helped them remember the message of God's promises beyond the CRE classroom. The presence of two additional Christian teachers, although not CRE specialists, also provided informal reinforcement of Christian values in daily interactions. The study found that students' understanding of Genesis 35:11 became more stable when classroom teaching was reinforced by repeated symbolic practices such as prayer routines and short devotional moments. This suggests that spiritual competence operates most effectively when embedded within a supportive micro-culture of faith. Where reinforcement was less frequent, students tended to revert to more superficial interpretations of the biblical message. This pattern underscores the ecological nature of faith formation in elementary education.

The data demonstrate that the theme of divine promise in Genesis 35:11 is particularly resonant for elementary students when communicated through relational assurance rather than abstract doctrine. Many students interpreted God's promise primarily

through the lens of God's presence and care in daily life. While this reflects an age-appropriate understanding, it also highlights the teacher's strategic role in gradually expanding students' theological depth. The CRE teacher in this study appears to be successfully establishing the affective foundation of trust, which is a crucial first step in covenantal theology formation. At the same time, the findings point to several developmental opportunities. First, more structured reflective activities, such as guided journaling, small-group faith discussions, or student testimony sharing, could help students move from passive reception to active theological articulation. Second, collaborative mentoring among the three Christian teachers could distribute the responsibility of spiritual accompaniment more evenly. Third, integrating family-based faith reinforcement may strengthen continuity between school teaching and home environment, particularly in rural contexts like West Nias. The results indicate that the CRE teacher at UPTD SDN No. 071063 Soromaasi demonstrates a strong level of spiritual competence as evidenced by authentic modeling, contextualized biblical teaching, and relational engagement with students. Students generally perceive the teacher as a credible witness of faith, and this perception positively shapes their understanding of trusting God's promises. Nevertheless, the study also reveals that sustaining deep faith internalization requires ongoing pedagogical refinement and structural support. The qualitative evidence suggests that spiritual competence in Christian Religious Education is most effective when it operates as an integrated ecosystem of personal authenticity, pedagogical intentionality, relational mentoring, and supportive school culture. Where these elements converge, students are more likely to interpret biblical promises not merely as distant religious statements but as meaningful guides for daily faithful living.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the spiritual competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher in upholding the meaning of God's promises as reflected in Genesis 35:11 at UPTD SDN No. 071063 Soromaasi, West Nias. Based on qualitative analysis of interviews, classroom observations, and document review, the findings demonstrate that the CRE teacher exhibits a strong and credible level of spiritual competence that positively influences students' faith formation. The teacher's effectiveness is particularly evident in the integration of personal spiritual integrity, contextual biblical instruction, and relational engagement with students. The research confirms that spiritual competence in Christian education is most impactful when it is embodied rather than merely conceptual. Students responded positively not only to what the teacher taught about God's promises but also to how the teacher consistently modeled faith through attitudes, language, and classroom presence. This congruence between belief and behavior strengthened the teacher's credibility as a witness of faith and made the message of Genesis 35:11 more meaningful for learners. The findings therefore reinforce the view that the teacher's lived spirituality is a primary pedagogical resource in CRE contexts, especially at the elementary level. At the instructional level, the teacher demonstrated the ability to translate the theological theme of divine promise into concrete life applications relevant to students' daily experiences. This contextualization helped students grasp the practical implications of trusting God. However, the study also

identified that students' theological depth varies, indicating the need for more structured reflective learning strategies that can move learners beyond affective appreciation toward deeper cognitive and spiritual internalization. The CRE teacher has established a supportive and approachable presence that encourages students' spiritual confidence. Nevertheless, institutional limitations, particularly the small number of Christian teachers relative to the 149 Christian students, constrain the possibility of intensive individual mentoring. Strengthening collaborative support among Christian educators and expanding structured faith-nurturing activities would likely enhance the sustainability of students' spiritual growth. The study affirms that strong spiritual competence among CRE teachers is a decisive factor in helping students understand and live out the assurance of God's promises. Future efforts should focus on deepening reflective pedagogy, strengthening mentoring structures, and fostering a more integrated faith-supportive school ecosystem to maximize holistic faith formation among students.

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