



## The Personality of Christian Religious Education Teachers as Spiritual Guides: Inspiration from Exodus 12:27 at SMP Negeri 3 Siduaori

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the personality of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers as spiritual guides at SMP Negeri 3 Siduaori, South Nias, through the theological lens of Exodus 12:27. The research was motivated by the growing recognition that effective Christian education depends not only on pedagogical competence but also on the spiritual credibility and character of the teacher. Using a quantitative descriptive design, data were collected from all 49 Christian students through a structured Likert-scale questionnaire measuring five dimensions: spiritual integrity and consistency, role modeling of Christian character, pastoral care and relational guidance, instructional encouragement toward faithful living, and communication reflecting spiritual maturity. The instrument demonstrated acceptable reliability (Cronbach's alpha > 0.70). Descriptive statistical analysis revealed that the overall perception of the CRE teacher's personality fell within the high category, indicating that students generally experience the teacher as an effective spiritual mentor. Among the measured dimensions, pastoral care and relational warmth received the strongest ratings, while opportunities for expanded dialogical engagement and experiential learning emerged as areas for further development. The findings suggest that the CRE teacher's embodied spirituality significantly contributes to a supportive faith-learning environment. The study concludes that the integration of theological authenticity, relational sensitivity, and pedagogical intentionality enables CRE teachers to function effectively as spiritual guides. These results reinforce the importance of personality formation in Christian teacher professionalism and provide an empirical basis for strengthening spiritually grounded educational practices in Indonesian school contexts.*

**Keywords:** *Personality, Christian Religious Education, Spiritual Guides*

### INTRODUCTION

The quality of teacher personality has long been recognized as a decisive factor in the effectiveness of Christian Religious Education (CRE). Beyond mastery of biblical content and pedagogical technique, CRE teachers are expected to embody spiritual maturity that

can guide students toward authentic faith formation. In many educational settings, particularly in Indonesia, students often encounter Christian values more vividly through the lived example of their teachers than through formal doctrinal instruction alone. This reality places the personality of the CRE teacher at the center of spiritual mentoring within the school environment (Pazmiño, 2008). Teacher personality in Christian education is not merely a psychological construct but a theological vocation. Scripture consistently portrays spiritual leadership as flowing from character and faithfulness rather than positional authority. Exodus 12:27 provides an important theological lens for this understanding. In the context of the Passover narrative, the Israelites are instructed to explain the meaning of God's saving act to future generations. Old Testament scholars emphasize that this command establishes a pattern of intergenerational faith transmission rooted in testimony and lived remembrance (Wright, 2004). For contemporary CRE teachers, this passage implies that teaching faith is inseparable from embodying a credible spiritual witness that helps students interpret God's work in their lives. Educational research further supports the centrality of teacher personality in shaping student outcomes. Studies on effective teaching consistently show that students respond not only to instructional clarity but also to teachers' relational warmth, integrity, and authenticity (Stronge, 2018). Within religious education, these qualities become even more critical because spiritual formation depends heavily on trust, identification, and moral exemplarity (Van Brummelen, 2009). A CRE teacher who demonstrates humility, consistency, and pastoral sensitivity is more likely to function as a spiritual guide rather than merely an information provider. The urgency of spiritually grounded teacher personality is heightened by the national emphasis on character education and religious moderation. Schools are expected to cultivate students who are not only intellectually capable but also morally responsible and socially harmonious. CRE teachers therefore carry a dual mandate: nurturing Christian identity while simultaneously promoting constructive engagement within plural communities. This dual responsibility requires a personality structure that is both theologically rooted and pedagogically responsive.

SMP Negeri 3 Siduaori in South Nias presents a meaningful context for examining this issue. The school includes 49 Christian students and 12 Christian teachers, indicating a relatively strong Christian presence within the institutional environment. Such a context provides both opportunity and responsibility for CRE teachers to function as spiritual guides who shape the faith and character of a significant student population. However, the mere presence of Christian educators does not automatically guarantee effective spiritual formation. The decisive factor lies in how teacher personality is perceived, experienced, and internalized by students in daily educational interactions. Previous studies in Christian education have often focused on curriculum, pedagogy, or general teacher competence, while fewer have specifically examined the personality of CRE teachers as spiritual guides within Indonesian public school contexts. This gap is important because personality-driven spiritual influence is often subtle, relational, and embedded in everyday classroom practice. Without empirical exploration, the practical dynamics of how teachers guide students spiritually remain insufficiently understood. Contemporary adolescents face increasing moral complexity sped by digital culture, peer influence, and shifting social values. In such a landscape, the presence of spiritually credible teachers becomes increasingly strategic. Students need mentors who not only teach biblical

narratives but also model how faith is lived in real community life. Exodus 12:27 reminds educators that faith transmission is inherently testimonial and relational, calling teachers to become living interpreters of God's redemptive work. This study aims to analyze the personality of Christian Religious Education teachers as spiritual guides through the theological inspiration of Exodus 12:27 at SMP Negeri 3 Siduaori, South Nias. By examining student perceptions and observed teacher practices, this research seeks to provide an empirically grounded portrait of how CRE teacher personality functions in contemporary school ministry. The findings are expected to contribute to the strengthening of spiritually integrated teacher professionalism and to the broader development of transformative Christian education in Indonesia.

## METHODS

A quantitative descriptive research design was implemented to examine the personality of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher as a spiritual guide at SMP Negeri 3 Siduaori, South Nias, in light of the theological inspiration of Exodus 12:27. A quantitative approach was selected to enable systematic measurement of students' perceptions regarding the teacher's spiritual-guiding personality and its observable manifestation in classroom practice. Quantitative descriptive designs are widely used in educational research to identify trends, levels, and patterns across a defined population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research used a descriptive survey model, which is appropriate for portraying the existing condition of teacher personality as perceived by students without manipulating variables. The primary objective was to obtain empirical data regarding how students experience the CRE teacher's role as a spiritual guide within the natural school setting. The population of the study consisted of 49 Christian students enrolled at SMP Negeri 3 Siduaori. Because the population size was relatively small and accessible, the study employed a total sampling (census) technique, in which all 49 Christian students were included as respondents. This approach was chosen to maximize data accuracy and eliminate sampling bias. Contextual institutional data indicated the presence of 12 Christian teachers (including the CRE teacher), which helped describe the school's religious environment but did not function as the primary respondent group. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed from theoretical indicators of CRE teacher personality as a spiritual guide and the theological framework of Exodus 12:27. The instrument used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire measured five key dimensions: spiritual integrity and consistency, role modeling of Christian character, pastoral care and relational guidance, instructional encouragement toward faithful living, and communication that reflects spiritual maturity. Prior to the main study, the instrument underwent expert judgment review to ensure content validity and theological alignment. A pilot test with students outside the research site was conducted to examine clarity and reliability. Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha produced a coefficient above 0.70, indicating acceptable internal consistency for educational research (Field, 2013). Data collection was conducted during the active semester. Questionnaires were distributed in printed form during school hours under researcher supervision. Students were given clear instructions, and anonymity was assured to encourage honest responses. Participation was voluntary, and all completed questionnaires were collected immediately to maintain data integrity. The

collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including mean scores, standard deviations, and percentage distributions. Interpretation of the mean scores followed a five-level category (very low, low, moderate, high, very high) to determine the overall level of the CRE teacher's personality as a spiritual guide. Through this quantitative methodology, the study seeks to provide an objective and measurable portrait of how the personality of the CRE teacher at SMP Negeri 3 Siduaori functions as a guiding spiritual influence among Christian students.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study investigated the personality of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher as a spiritual guide at SMP Negeri 3 Siduaori, South Nias, through students' perceptions grounded in the theological inspiration of Exodus 12:27. Data were obtained from 49 Christian students using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire measuring five dimensions of teacher personality: spiritual integrity and consistency, role modeling of Christian character, pastoral care and relational guidance, instructional encouragement toward faithful living, and communication that reflects spiritual maturity. All returned questionnaires were complete and met the criteria for analysis, yielding a 100% usable response rate. Reliability testing prior to the main study had produced a Cronbach's alpha coefficient above the accepted threshold of 0.70, indicating that the instrument demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency. Descriptive statistical analysis revealed that the overall mean score of the CRE teacher's personality as a spiritual guide fell within the high category, suggesting that students generally perceive the teacher as a credible and effective spiritual mentor within the school context. The relatively moderate standard deviation indicates that student perceptions were fairly consistent across the respondent group, implying that the teacher's influence is broadly experienced rather than limited to specific subgroups of students. This finding is significant in light of the school's demographic composition, where 49 Christian students are supported by 12 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher, creating an environment in which spiritual modeling can be highly visible and influential. Spiritual integrity and consistency received a high mean score, indicating that students perceive the CRE teacher as demonstrating congruence between professed faith and daily behavior. Items in this dimension assessed observable indicators such as consistency between teaching and actions, visible personal devotion, fairness in treatment of students, and faith-informed decision-making. Students largely agreed that the teacher's conduct reflects authentic Christian commitment rather than merely formal religious instruction. This finding aligns closely with the theological thrust of Exodus 12:27, where faith transmission is grounded in credible testimony about God's saving work. In the biblical narrative, the instruction to explain the meaning of the Passover assumes that the storyteller's life is integrated with the message being conveyed. Similarly, the high student ratings suggest that the CRE teacher at SMP Negeri 3 Siduaori functions as a trustworthy witness whose life reinforces the content of instruction. From an educational perspective, this congruence is critical because research consistently shows that students are highly sensitive to discrepancies between teacher speech and behavior. When teachers demonstrate integrity, students are more likely to internalize the values being taught. However, item-level analysis reveals slight variation: a small proportion of students selected neutral responses regarding the teacher's explicit

sharing of personal spiritual experiences. This suggests that while integrity is broadly visible, intentional narrative testimony could further strengthen the teacher's role as a spiritual guide. Role modeling of Christian character also achieved a high mean score, with several items approaching the very high category. Students strongly affirmed that the CRE teacher models patience, humility, respect, and self-control in classroom interactions. Observable behaviors included calm responses to student mistakes, respectful treatment of all learners, and avoidance of harsh or humiliating correction. This dimension is central to the concept of the teacher as a living curriculum. In the context of Exodus 12:27, the act of explaining God's deliverance is embedded within a community that embodies covenant faithfulness. Likewise, the CRE teacher's character modeling serves as a practical demonstration of what faithful living looks like in everyday school life. The high level of student agreement indicates that character modeling is one of the teacher's strongest contributions. This is pedagogically important because adolescents often learn moral dispositions through imitation and relational identification rather than abstract moral instruction. Within the South Nias cultural context, where respect for authority figures remains strong, the teacher's visible humility and patience likely amplify this modeling effect. Nevertheless, the distribution of responses shows that a small minority of students rated certain items in the moderate range, particularly those related to the teacher's encouragement of student initiative. This suggests that while the teacher models admirable character, there may be opportunities to further empower students to practice these virtues actively rather than primarily observing them. Pastoral care and relational guidance yielded one of the highest mean scores in the study. Students overwhelmingly perceived the CRE teacher as approachable, caring, and willing to listen to personal or academic concerns. Indicators in this dimension included the teacher's availability for consultation, empathy toward struggling students, fairness in conflict situations, and willingness to provide moral encouragement. The strong performance in this domain highlights the relational foundation of effective spiritual guidance. In many Indonesian school settings, the teacher-student relationship can be formal and hierarchical; therefore, the presence of a relationally warm CRE teacher represents a significant pastoral resource. The findings suggest that the teacher at SMP Negeri 3 Siduaori has cultivated a classroom climate characterized by emotional safety and trust. This relational credibility is crucial for faith formation because students are more receptive to spiritual influence when they feel personally valued. Theologically, this reflects the communal dimension implicit in Exodus 12:27, where faith is transmitted within relational networks rather than through detached instruction. Despite the overall strength of this dimension, a closer look at item responses indicates slightly lower agreement on statements related to follow-up mentoring outside class time. This may reflect practical constraints such as limited time, large teaching loads, or institutional boundaries. Strengthening structured mentoring opportunities could further enhance the teacher's pastoral impact. Instructional encouragement toward faithful living also fell within the high category, indicating that students perceive the CRE teacher as intentionally connecting biblical teaching with daily life application. Students reported that the teacher frequently encourages prayer, responsible behavior, forgiveness, and respectful interaction with peers. This finding demonstrates that the teacher's influence extends beyond relational warmth into purposeful spiritual formation. In the framework of Exodus 12:27, the act of explaining God's deliverance is inherently formative, it shapes how the community lives

in response to divine action. Similarly, the CRE teacher appears to frame lessons in ways that call students toward practical obedience and ethical living. From a pedagogical standpoint, this reflects effective value internalization strategies, where cognitive understanding is paired with behavioral exhortation. However, item-level analysis reveals modest variability in student responses concerning opportunities for experiential learning, such as role-play, group reflection, or service-based activities. While verbal encouragement is strong, the data suggest that experiential and participatory learning strategies could be expanded to deepen student ownership of faith practices. Communication that reflects spiritual maturity produced a high mean score with relatively tight dispersion, indicating consistent student perceptions. Students generally agreed that the CRE teacher communicates politely, uses encouraging language, avoids self-centered expressions, and corrects students constructively. Communication style is often the most immediate and observable expression of teacher personality, and the findings suggest that the teacher demonstrates verbal humility consistent with spiritual leadership. This aligns with the testimonial nature of Exodus 12:27, where the act of explaining God's work requires clarity, reverence, and pedagogical sensitivity. The CRE teacher's communication patterns appear to support a dialogical rather than authoritarian classroom environment. Nevertheless, a small cluster of responses indicated moderate agreement regarding the teacher's openness to extended student questioning. This suggests an opportunity to further cultivate dialogical space where students feel even more empowered to explore faith questions critically and reflectively. When the five dimensions are examined holistically, a coherent pattern emerges: the CRE teacher at SMP Negeri 3 Siduaori is widely perceived as an effective spiritual guide whose personality supports both faith formation and positive classroom climate. The high overall mean confirms that students experience the teacher not merely as an academic instructor but as a credible spiritual mentor. This finding reinforces the theoretical perspective that in Christian education, teacher identity and character function as primary pedagogical instruments. The presence of 12 Christian teachers in the school environment likely contributes to a supportive institutional climate; however, the CRE teacher remains uniquely positioned as the focal agent of structured spiritual instruction. The data suggest that this role is being carried out with considerable effectiveness.

From a contextual perspective, the South Nias setting adds important nuance to the interpretation. Communities in Nias traditionally place high value on relational closeness, respect for elders, and communal harmony. The CRE teacher's strong performance in relational warmth and pastoral care may resonate particularly well within this cultural framework, enhancing student receptivity. At the same time, contemporary adolescents in the region are increasingly exposed to digital culture and external influences, which heightens the need for intentional and dialogical faith guidance. The moderate variability observed in items related to student participation and questioning indicates that future pedagogical development could focus on balancing cultural respect with critical engagement. The findings demonstrate meaningful alignment between the teacher's practice and the formative pattern implied in Exodus 12:27. The passage emphasizes remembering and explaining God's saving work across generations. In the observed school context, this intergenerational transmission is occurring not only through verbal instruction but through embodied teacher personality. Students encounter faith as

something lived, relational, and ethically expressed. This supports the view that effective CRE ministry requires integration of theological conviction, pedagogical competence, and relational authenticity. The study also identifies constructive areas for professional growth. The teacher could further strengthen explicit testimonial teaching by more intentionally sharing personal faith narratives that connect biblical themes with lived experience. Expanding student-centered and experiential learning strategies would likely deepen internalization of faithful living. Creating more structured opportunities for mentoring and open theological dialogue could enhance the teacher's role as a spiritual guide in an increasingly complex adolescent environment. The results affirm that the personality of the CRE teacher at SMP Negeri 3 Siduaori functions as a significant formative influence. The teacher demonstrates strong spiritual integrity, credible character modeling, relational care, practical faith encouragement, and mature communication. These qualities collectively position the teacher as an effective guide for Christian students navigating faith within a contemporary school context. The findings contribute to the growing recognition that in Christian Religious Education, the most powerful curriculum is often the teacher's lived spirituality, through which biblical truth becomes visible, relational, and transformative for students.

## CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the personality of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher as a spiritual guide at SMP Negeri 3 Siduaori, South Nias, through the theological inspiration of Exodus 12:27. Based on quantitative analysis of responses from 49 Christian students, the findings clearly indicate that the CRE teacher demonstrates a high level of personality effectiveness in guiding students spiritually. Students generally perceive the teacher as consistent in faith, exemplary in Christian character, relationally caring, instructional in encouraging faithful living, and mature in communication. These results confirm that teacher personality functions as a central pedagogical and spiritual resource within the CRE learning environment. The study affirms that the pattern implied in Exodus 12:27, intergenerational transmission of faith through credible testimony, is meaningfully reflected in the teacher's practice. The CRE teacher does not merely convey biblical knowledge but embodies a lived witness that helps students interpret and apply faith in daily life. This embodiment strengthens the credibility of religious instruction and supports students' moral and spiritual formation. In the context of SMP Negeri 3 Siduaori, where Christian students form a significant community, the teacher's personality serves as a strategic channel for sustaining faith identity within a plural educational environment. The findings highlight the strong relational foundation built by the teacher, particularly in pastoral care and respectful communication. These strengths contribute to a classroom climate characterized by trust, emotional safety, and openness to spiritual guidance. Nevertheless, the study also identifies areas for continued professional development. Greater intentionality in sharing personal faith testimony, expanding student-centered experiential learning, and fostering more dialogical engagement could further deepen the teacher's impact as a spiritual guide. The CRE teacher at SMP Negeri 3 Siduaori effectively fulfills the role of spiritual mentor through an integrated personality that is theologically grounded and pedagogically functional. The study reinforces an important insight for Indonesian Christian education: transformative CRE depends not

only on curricular content but significantly on the spiritual authenticity and relational credibility of the teacher. Future research involving broader samples and longitudinal designs is recommended to further explore how teacher personality shapes long-term student faith development.

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