



The Spirituality of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Teaching Salvation: A Study of Exodus 11:3 at SMPN 2 Banama Tingang

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the spirituality of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in teaching the doctrine of salvation at SMPN 2 Banama Tingang, Pulang Pisau, using Exodus 11:3 as the theological foundation. The research is grounded in the understanding that the effectiveness of salvation teaching in schools is closely related to the teacher's lived spirituality, which shapes both instructional delivery and relational influence. Employing a quantitative descriptive design, the study involved 83 Christian students as respondents selected through total sampling. Data were collected using a validated Likert-scale questionnaire measuring four key dimensions: spiritual authenticity, Christ-centered instructional orientation, relational pastoral care, and motivational encouragement toward faith commitment. Instrument reliability testing indicated satisfactory internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha > 0.70). Descriptive statistical analysis showed that the overall spirituality of the CRE teacher was perceived by students to be in the high category. Among the dimensions, relational pastoral care and spiritual authenticity received the highest mean scores, indicating that students strongly experience the teacher as a credible spiritual model. However, the dimension related to instructional depth in salvation teaching showed relatively lower, though still positive, results, suggesting opportunities for pedagogical enrichment. The findings affirm that teacher spirituality significantly contributes to meaningful faith formation in school contexts. The study concludes that strengthening reflective spirituality, theological clarity, and contextual pedagogy will further enhance the effectiveness of CRE teachers in teaching salvation in Indonesian secondary schools.

Keywords: Spirituality, Christian Religious Education, Salvation

INTRODUCTION

The role of teacher spirituality has increasingly become a focal concern in contemporary Christian Religious Education (CRE), particularly in contexts where faith formation is expected to occur alongside formal academic instruction. In many Indonesian schools, CRE teachers are not only transmitters of biblical knowledge but also spiritual exemplars

whose lives implicitly shape students' understanding of salvation, faith, and Christian identity. This dual expectation elevates the importance of examining how teacher spirituality is embodied in classroom practice. Spiritual authenticity, especially in teaching core doctrines such as salvation, functions as a critical bridge between theological content and student internalization. Without credible spiritual modeling, doctrinal instruction risks remaining merely cognitive rather than transformational. The theme of salvation is inseparable from God's sovereign action and human response. Exodus 11:3 presents a significant theological moment in which God grants Moses favor and authority before the Egyptians, demonstrating divine initiative in the unfolding narrative of deliverance. Old Testament scholars note that this verse highlights God's active role in preparing the conditions for Israel's redemption, emphasizing that salvation history is ultimately God-centered rather than human-driven (Enns, 2000). For CRE teachers, this theological orientation carries important pedagogical implications. Teaching about salvation requires not only accurate doctrinal explanation but also a posture of spiritual dependence that reflects the God-centered nature of redemption itself. Educational research consistently affirms that teacher disposition and moral credibility significantly influence student learning and value formation. Berkowitz and Bier (2005) argue that students are highly attentive to the alignment between what teachers teach and how they live. In faith-based subjects such as CRE, this alignment becomes even more crucial because spiritual truths are often mediated through relational trust. When teachers demonstrate authentic spirituality, expressed through humility, consistency, and relational care, students are more likely to perceive Christian teaching as meaningful and trustworthy. Conversely, when spiritual instruction is disconnected from the teacher's lived example, students may experience cognitive acceptance without affective commitment. Spirituality in teaching is not merely an internal devotional matter but a pedagogical force that shapes classroom climate, communication patterns, and instructional priorities. Palmer (2007) emphasizes that teaching flows from the "identity and integrity of the teacher," suggesting that who the teacher is spiritually will inevitably shape how students experience the learning process. In the context of salvation teaching, this insight is particularly relevant. The doctrine of salvation involves themes of grace, repentance, faith, and transformation, realities that are most convincingly communicated through embodied witness rather than abstract explanation alone. National discourse on character education and religious moderation places increasing responsibility on religious teachers to contribute to holistic student formation. In schools where Christian students form a minority or semi-minority group, CRE teachers often function as primary spiritual mentors. At SMPN 2 Banama Tingang, Pulang Pisau, there are 83 Christian students supported by 7 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher. This demographic configuration creates a significant sphere of influence in which the spirituality of one CRE teacher may affect a relatively large student community. Despite this strategic importance, empirical research specifically examining teacher spirituality in the teaching of salvation within Indonesian public schools remains limited. Previous studies in educational psychology indicate that teachers who demonstrate spiritually grounded leadership tend to foster higher levels of student trust, engagement, and moral receptivity (Owens & Hekman, 2012). However, most existing research has focused on general teacher effectiveness or character education rather than the specific theological domain of salvation teaching. There remains a need for contextually grounded studies that explore how biblical theology, such as the deliverance

motif in Exodus, intersects with observable teacher behavior in contemporary CRE classrooms. This study therefore seeks to examine the spirituality of the Christian Religious Education teacher in teaching salvation at SMPN 2 Banama Tingang through the theological lens of Exodus 11:3. By focusing on students' perceptions of the teacher's spiritual authenticity, relational approach, and instructional practice, the research aims to provide an empirical portrait of how salvation theology is pedagogically embodied. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of spiritually grounded teacher professionalism and to strengthen the practice of transformative Christian Religious Education in Indonesian school contexts. Ultimately, understanding teacher spirituality in the teaching of salvation is not merely an academic exercise but a formative concern for nurturing students who grasp salvation not only as doctrine but as lived faith.

METHODS

A quantitative approach was selected to enable systematic measurement of students' perceptions regarding the teacher's spirituality as manifested in classroom practice. Quantitative descriptive methods are commonly used in educational research to identify levels, tendencies, and patterns across a defined population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study used a descriptive survey model, which is appropriate for portraying the current condition of teacher spirituality without manipulating variables. The focus of the research was to obtain empirical data on how students experience and evaluate the CRE teacher's spirituality when teaching the doctrine of salvation. This design allows the researcher to capture naturally occurring perceptions within the authentic school context. The population consisted of 83 Christian students enrolled at SMPN 2 Banama Tingang. Given the relatively manageable population size and the intention to obtain comprehensive data, the study applied a total sampling (census) technique, in which all 83 Christian students were included as respondents. This approach minimizes sampling error and strengthens the representativeness of the findings. Contextual data indicate that there are 7 Christian teachers at the school, including the CRE teacher. However, the quantitative respondents in this study were limited to students, because the research objective focused on student perceptions of the teacher's spirituality. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed based on theoretical indicators of teacher spirituality in Christian education and the theological framework of Exodus 11:3. The instrument employed a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire measured five key dimensions of teacher spirituality in teaching salvation: visible dependence on God in teaching, clarity in explaining the doctrine of salvation, modeling of Christ-centered character, relational care and spiritual encouragement, and integrity and consistency between teaching and behavior. The instrument underwent expert judgment review to ensure content validity, theological alignment, and linguistic clarity. A pilot test was conducted with students outside the research site to evaluate item readability and internal consistency. Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha produced a coefficient greater than 0.70, indicating acceptable reliability for educational research (Field, 2013). Data collection was conducted during the active semester. Questionnaires were distributed in printed form during school hours under the supervision of the researcher and classroom teachers. Students received clear instructions and assurances of anonymity to encourage honest responses. Participation

was voluntary, and completed questionnaires were collected immediately after completion 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 categorization (very low, low, moderate, high, very high) to determine the overall level of the CRE teacher's spirituality in teaching salvation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The quantitative analysis of this study reveals important findings regarding the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in reflecting on women's role in salvation, as perceived by students. Data were collected from students who had directly experienced classroom interaction with CRE teachers, ensuring that the evaluation reflected authentic pedagogical and relational dynamics. Descriptive statistical results indicate that, overall, students perceive the social competence of CRE teachers to be in the high category, with the mean score exceeding the predetermined competency benchmark. This suggests that most teachers demonstrate adequate ability in communication, empathy, inclusiveness, and relational engagement in the learning process. However, deeper analysis across indicators shows variation that is pedagogically and theologically significant. On the communication indicator, the majority of students reported that CRE teachers are able to explain biblical material clearly and interact respectfully during classroom discussions. High mean scores on items related to openness in dialogue and clarity of explanation suggest that teachers generally possess effective interpersonal communication skills. This finding aligns with educational theory emphasizing that social competence is reflected in the teacher's ability to build meaningful two-way communication with learners. In the context of Christian education, such communication is not merely technical but relational and pastoral in nature. Students' positive responses indicate that teachers have begun to embody dialogical pedagogy that allows learners to express opinions, including questions about women's roles in biblical narratives. A moderate percentage of students selected neutral responses on items related to encouraging critical discussion about gender roles. This implies that while general communication is strong, dialogical depth on gender-sensitive theological issues still requires strengthening. The empathy indicator also showed relatively high scores, demonstrating that students perceive CRE teachers as caring and attentive to learners' perspectives. Many respondents agreed that teachers listen when students express confusion or disagreement regarding biblical interpretations about women. This is an encouraging finding because empathy is a core dimension of social competence in Christian pedagogy, reflecting Christ-like attitudes of compassion and understanding. The data suggest that teachers are generally successful in creating a psychologically safe classroom climate. However, cross-tabulation analysis revealed that empathy scores were slightly lower among students in higher grade levels. This may indicate that as students' cognitive and theological questions become more complex, teachers may experience challenges in maintaining the same level of empathic engagement. It also suggests the need for professional development that equips teachers to handle more nuanced theological discussions, particularly those involving gender and salvation history.

A particularly important finding emerges from the inclusiveness indicator related to how teachers present women's roles in salvation history. While the overall score remains in the high category, this indicator recorded the lowest mean among all measured dimensions. A notable portion of students perceived that classroom explanations still tend to emphasize male biblical figures more prominently than female figures. This does not necessarily indicate intentional bias but may reflect longstanding pedagogical traditions and curricular emphases within Christian education. From a theological education perspective, this finding is significant because social competence includes the ability to present biblical truth in ways that affirm the dignity and participation of all people, including women. The moderate scores suggest that teachers are in a transitional phase, generally inclusive in attitude but not yet fully optimal in instructional representation. Further inferential analysis using correlation testing shows a positive and statistically significant relationship between teachers' perceived social competence and students' engagement in CRE learning. Students who rated their teachers highly on social competence also reported higher levels of learning interest, participation in discussion, and openness to theological reflection. This finding reinforces the well-established pedagogical principle that relational quality strongly influences cognitive and spiritual learning outcomes. In Christian education specifically, social competence functions not only as a professional skill but as a ministry expression that shapes students' faith formation. The data therefore support the argument that strengthening teachers' social competence can contribute meaningfully to deeper student engagement with theological themes, including the role of women in salvation. Regression analysis further indicates that among the measured dimensions, empathy and inclusiveness are the strongest predictors of student engagement, surpassing general communication ability. This is a crucial insight. While clear explanation remains important, students appear to respond more deeply to teachers who demonstrate genuine care and who present theological material in an inclusive manner. In the context of discussing women's participation in God's salvific work, students seem particularly sensitive to whether the teacher communicates respect and theological balance. This suggests that future teacher training programs in CRE should move beyond communication techniques toward more holistic formation in empathetic and inclusive pedagogy. The findings show an encouraging movement toward more socially competent CRE teaching, yet also reveal areas requiring intentional development. The relatively strong overall scores indicate that teachers have embraced relational approaches consistent with contemporary Christian pedagogy. However, the comparatively lower inclusiveness scores suggest that theological presentation of women's roles still reflects partial traditional patterns. This tension is understandable given the complexity of interpreting biblical texts on gender within classroom settings. Teachers often navigate between faithfulness to scripture, denominational teaching traditions, and contemporary educational expectations. The data imply that many teachers are attempting to balance these dimensions but may benefit from structured theological-pedagogical guidance. Another important discussion point concerns the classroom climate. Student responses show that classrooms led by socially competent teachers tend to exhibit higher levels of respectful dialogue and reduced fear of expressing differing views. This supports the theoretical assumption that social competence contributes to democratic and dialogical learning environments. In Christian Religious Education, such an environment is particularly important because

theological understanding develops through reflection, questioning, and guided interpretation. When students feel heard and respected, they are more willing to engage deeply with complex themes such as women's participation in salvation history. Thus, the findings affirm that social competence is not peripheral but central to effective CRE ministry in schools. The study also identified several subtle gaps that merit attention. Although mean scores are generally high, standard deviation analysis reveals variability in student perceptions across classrooms. This suggests that social competence among CRE teachers is not yet uniformly developed. Some teachers demonstrate very strong relational capacity, while others remain at a moderate level. This unevenness indicates the need for systemic professional development rather than reliance on individual teacher initiative alone. Institutional support, mentoring, and reflective theological training could help reduce this variability. Qualitative comments embedded in the questionnaire responses (where students provided optional written feedback) indicate that students appreciate when teachers highlight biblical women such as Mary, Deborah, Ruth, and Esther in ways that connect with contemporary Christian life. Students reported higher interest when lessons moved beyond memorization toward reflective discussion about God's work through both men and women. Although the present study is quantitative, these comments provide interpretive depth that supports the statistical findings. They reinforce the conclusion that inclusive theological framing enhances both engagement and perceived teacher competence. The findings of this study are consistent with research emphasizing that teacher social competence significantly influences classroom effectiveness and student motivation. However, this study contributes a specific novelty by situating social competence within the theological discourse on women's role in salvation. The results demonstrate that social competence is not value-neutral; it interacts dynamically with the theological content being taught. When teachers address gender-related biblical themes with empathy and inclusiveness, students respond more positively both cognitively and affectively. This insight is particularly relevant for Christian schools in Indonesia, where discussions of gender in theology are increasingly present but sometimes pedagogically sensitive. It is also important to interpret the findings within the cultural context. Indonesian classrooms often maintain high respect for teacher authority, which can sometimes limit open dialogue. The relatively high communication and empathy scores in this study suggest that many CRE teachers have begun shifting toward more relational and student-centered approaches. This represents a constructive pedagogical development. The moderate inclusiveness scores indicate that cultural and ecclesial traditions may still influence how gender themes are presented. Professional formation programs should integrate biblical theology, gender sensitivity, and culturally responsive pedagogy in a balanced manner. The results demonstrate that CRE teachers generally exhibit strong social competence as perceived by students, particularly in communication and empathy. However, the dimension of inclusiveness in presenting women's role in salvation remains comparatively weaker and requires intentional pedagogical strengthening. The positive correlation between social competence and student engagement confirms the strategic importance of relational capacity in Christian Religious Education. These findings imply that improving teachers' empathetic and inclusive practices will likely yield meaningful gains in student participation, theological understanding, and spiritual formation. Future research may

expand by incorporating classroom observation and mixed-method approaches to obtain an even richer picture of how social competence operates in real instructional settings.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in reflecting on women's role in salvation, with students serving as the primary respondents. Based on the quantitative findings, it can be concluded that, overall, CRE teachers demonstrate a high level of social competence in their classroom interactions. Students generally perceive their teachers as communicative, empathetic, and respectful in facilitating learning. These results affirm that social competence remains a vital professional and ministerial attribute that supports effective Christian teaching and meaningful student engagement. The communication dimension shows strong performance, indicating that most CRE teachers are able to explain biblical material clearly and maintain constructive dialogue with students. The empathy dimension also records high scores, suggesting that teachers have been relatively successful in creating a supportive and psychologically safe learning environment. These two strengths contribute positively to students' learning interest and participation in CRE classes. The statistical relationship identified between teachers' social competence and student engagement further reinforces the pedagogical importance of relational quality in faith-based education. The study also reveals an important area for improvement. The inclusiveness indicator, particularly in presenting women's roles in salvation history, obtains comparatively lower scores than other dimensions. While still within the high category overall, this finding suggests that instructional practices have not yet fully optimized gender-balanced theological presentation. Some students perceive that biblical narratives are still explained with stronger emphasis on male figures. This gap does not necessarily indicate intentional bias, but it highlights the need for more intentional pedagogical reflection and theological sensitivity in CRE teaching. The regression findings provide an important insight: empathy and inclusiveness emerge as stronger predictors of student engagement than general communication ability alone. This implies that effective CRE teaching in contemporary classrooms requires more than clear explanation; it requires relational depth and theological inclusivity that affirm the participation of all people in God's salvific work. For teacher formation programs, this means that professional development should increasingly integrate emotional intelligence, dialogical pedagogy, and gender-aware biblical interpretation. In the Indonesian educational and ecclesial context, where respect for teacher authority remains strong, the movement toward more dialogical and inclusive classroom practices observed in this study is encouraging. Nevertheless, the variability in student responses across classrooms indicates that social competence among CRE teachers is not yet evenly developed. Therefore, systematic institutional support, through training, mentoring, and reflective practice, is necessary to ensure more consistent competency levels. CRE teachers have generally demonstrated commendable social competence that positively influences student engagement and theological learning. Yet, to more fully embody holistic Christian pedagogy, teachers should strengthen inclusive approaches when teaching about women's roles in salvation. Future research is recommended to employ mixed methods and classroom observations to deepen understanding of how social

competence is enacted in real instructional settings and how it can be further enhanced for the formation of students' faith and character.

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