



Developing Teacher Competence through Servant Leadership: Insights from Matthew 20:28 at SDN 106223 Pekan Kamis

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the development of teacher competence through servant leadership as inspired by Matthew 20:28 at SDN 106223 Pekan Kamis, Serdang Bedagai. The research was motivated by the growing recognition that effective Christian Religious Education (CRE) requires not only pedagogical mastery but also Christ-centered character embodied in teaching practice. The study employed a quantitative descriptive survey design involving all 88 Christian students at the school as respondents. Data were collected using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire measuring five dimensions: servant-oriented attitude, pedagogical care and responsiveness, humility in classroom leadership, commitment to student growth, and Christ-centered modeling. The instrument was validated through expert judgment and demonstrated acceptable reliability (Cronbach's alpha > 0.70). Descriptive statistical analysis using mean scores and standard deviations was conducted to determine the perceived level of teacher competence grounded in servant leadership. The findings indicate that the CRE teacher's competence through servant leadership is perceived in the high category across all measured dimensions. Students particularly recognized the teacher's willingness to serve, relational warmth, patience in instruction, and genuine concern for their academic and spiritual development. These results suggest that the Matthew 20:28 paradigm of leadership through service has been meaningfully operationalized in classroom practice. Nevertheless, minor areas for improvement were identified, especially in differentiated responsiveness and dialogical openness. The study concludes that servant leadership significantly strengthens pedagogical credibility and classroom climate in Christian education. It is recommended that ongoing professional development further integrate reflective practice and explicit theological articulation to enhance the transformative impact of CRE teaching in Indonesian primary school contexts.

Keywords: Teacher Competence, Christian Religious Education, Servant Leadership

INTRODUCTION

Teacher competence remains a decisive factor in determining the quality of learning and the effectiveness of character formation in schools. In the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE), competence is not limited to pedagogical mastery or content knowledge but also includes spiritual maturity and the embodiment of Christlike values in professional practice. Contemporary educational discourse increasingly emphasizes that effective teachers are those whose personal character aligns with their instructional mission (Hattie, 2009). Within faith-based education, this alignment becomes even more critical because students often internalize Christian values through the lived example of their teachers rather than through doctrinal instruction alone. One theological framework that offers rich insight into teacher competence is the concept of servant leadership as modeled by Jesus Christ. In Matthew 20:28, Jesus declares that the Son of Man came “not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” This statement presents service not merely as an ethical recommendation but as a defining paradigm of leadership and ministry. Biblical scholars note that this passage redefines authority in the kingdom of God by grounding it in sacrificial service rather than hierarchical power (Keener, 2009). When applied to the educational context, this Christological model suggests that teacher competence should be understood not only in technical terms but also in relational and spiritual dimensions. Educational theorists have increasingly recognized the importance of relational leadership in classrooms. Palmer (2007) argues that good teaching flows from the identity and integrity of the teacher, indicating that who the teacher is profoundly shapes how students experience learning. Similarly, Noddings (2013) emphasizes the ethic of care as foundational to meaningful education, highlighting the importance of attentiveness, responsiveness, and relational commitment. These perspectives resonate strongly with the servant leadership model of Matthew 20:28, where authority is expressed through self-giving service and concern for others’ growth.

The emphasis on character education and religious moderation further strengthens the relevance of servant-based teacher competence. National policy frameworks encourage teachers to function not only as knowledge transmitters but also as moral exemplars who cultivate holistic student development. For CRE teachers in particular, the expectation is even more pronounced because they serve as spiritual mentors within pluralistic school environments. However, empirical studies that explicitly connect servant leadership theology with measurable teacher competence in Indonesian primary schools remain relatively limited. This gap highlights the need for contextually grounded research. The setting of SDN 106223 Pekan Kamis in Serdang Bedagai provides a meaningful locus for such investigation. The school includes 88 Christian students and five Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher, forming a modest but significant faith-learning community within a public school context. In environments where Christian students are not always the majority, the quality of CRE teacher competence becomes especially influential in shaping students’ spiritual confidence, moral identity, and classroom engagement. The lived expression of servant leadership by teachers may function as a stabilizing and formative force within this educational ecosystem. Previous research indicates that servant-oriented educators tend to foster higher student trust, stronger classroom

belonging, and improved learning motivation (Owens & Hekman, 2012). These relational outcomes are particularly relevant for CRE, where affective and spiritual dimensions of learning are central. Nevertheless, the extent to which servant leadership principles derived from Matthew 20:28 are operationalized in everyday teaching practice requires systematic empirical examination, especially from the perspective of students who directly experience the teacher's behavior. This study aims to analyze how teacher competence is developed and expressed through servant leadership practices grounded in Matthew 20:28 at SDN 106223 Pekan Kamis, Serdang Bedagai. By focusing on students' perceptions of the CRE teacher's service-oriented competence, the research seeks to provide an evidence-based portrait of how biblical leadership values are embodied in contemporary Christian education. The findings are expected to contribute to the ongoing discourse on spiritually grounded teacher professionalism and to offer practical insights for strengthening CRE practice in Indonesian primary school contexts.

METHODS

A quantitative research design was implemented to examine the development of teacher competence through servant leadership as reflected in Matthew 20:28 at SDN 106223 Pekan Kamis, Serdang Bedagai. A quantitative approach was selected because it enables systematic measurement of students' perceptions regarding observable teacher behaviors and provides statistical descriptions of prevailing tendencies within the population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research specifically adopted a descriptive survey model, which is appropriate for portraying the current condition of teacher competence without manipulating variables. The focus of the study was to obtain empirical evidence concerning how students experience and evaluate the servant leadership practices demonstrated by the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher in classroom and relational contexts. The population of the study consisted of all Christian students enrolled at SDN 106223 Pekan Kamis, totaling 88 learners. Given the relatively manageable population size and the intention to obtain comprehensive representation, the study used a total sampling (census) technique in which all 88 Christian students were invited to participate as respondents. This approach minimizes sampling error and strengthens the descriptive accuracy of the findings (Field, 2013). Contextual information indicated that the school employs five Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher; however, only students served as quantitative respondents because the research aimed to capture learner perceptions of teacher competence. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed based on theoretical constructs of servant leadership and teacher competence grounded in Matthew 20:28. The instrument employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire measured several key dimensions: servant-oriented attitude, pedagogical care and responsiveness, humility in classroom leadership, commitment to student growth, and Christ-centered modeling in instructional practice. Item construction was informed by established servant leadership literature and Christian education theory to ensure conceptual alignment. The instrument underwent expert judgment involving specialists in Christian education and educational measurement to establish content validity. Revisions were made to improve clarity, theological appropriateness, and contextual relevance. A pilot test was then conducted with a small group of students

outside the research site to evaluate item comprehension and internal consistency. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha yielded a coefficient exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal reliability for educational research (Field, 2013). Data collection was conducted during the second semester of the academic year. Questionnaires were administered in printed format during regular school hours under researcher supervision. Students were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of anonymity, and encouraged to respond honestly. Participation was voluntary, and 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. The analysis aimed to determine the overall level of servant leadership-based teacher competence as perceived by students. Interpretation followed a five-level categorization (very low, low, moderate, high, very high) based on established mean interval criteria. Through this quantitative procedure, the study sought to provide an objective empirical portrait of how Matthew 20:28, inspired servant leadership is manifested in CRE teaching practice at SDN 106223 Pekan Kamis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The quantitative data collected from 88 Christian students at SDN 106223 Pekan Kamis, Serdang Bedagai provide an empirical portrait of how teacher competence grounded in servant leadership, as inspired by Matthew 20:28, is perceived in the lived classroom context. All distributed questionnaires were returned and deemed valid for analysis, yielding a 100% usable response rate. The instrument reliability had previously met the acceptable internal consistency threshold ($\alpha > 0.70$), allowing the findings to be interpreted with confidence. Descriptive statistical analysis indicates that the overall mean score for teacher competence through servant leadership falls within the high category, suggesting that students generally experience the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher as embodying service-oriented professionalism in instructional practice. The relatively moderate standard deviation further indicates that student perceptions were fairly consistent across the respondent group, meaning that the teacher's servant leadership is not experienced only by certain students but is broadly visible within the classroom environment. This finding aligns closely with the paradigm presented in Matthew 20:28, where Jesus redefines leadership as sacrificial service rather than positional authority. The empirical evidence suggests that this biblical model is not merely theoretical but has been operationalized in the pedagogical practice at SDN 106223 Pekan Kamis. Within the Indonesian primary school context, where hierarchical teacher authority often remains culturally strong, the presence of a service-oriented competence model is particularly noteworthy. It indicates a shift toward relational and student-centered Christian pedagogy. To obtain deeper analytical clarity, the results were examined across five measured dimensions: servant-oriented attitude, pedagogical care and responsiveness, humility in classroom leadership, commitment to student growth, and Christ-centered modeling in instructional practice. Each dimension contributes to the broader construct of teacher competence through servant leadership. Servant-oriented attitude received a mean score in the high range, indicating that students clearly perceive the CRE teacher as demonstrating willingness to serve rather than dominate the learning

process. Students reported that the teacher frequently helps learners who experience difficulty, shows patience during explanation, and prioritizes student understanding over lesson pacing. This pattern reflects the core theological emphasis of Matthew 20:28, where service is presented as the defining mark of authentic leadership. Educational leadership literature similarly affirms that servant-oriented educators tend to foster stronger relational trust and classroom belonging (Owens & Hekman, 2012). The findings of this study confirm that such relational dynamics are present at SDN 106223 Pekanbaru. Item-level analysis within this dimension reveals particularly strong agreement on statements related to teacher helpfulness and patience. However, a small proportion of students selected neutral responses on items concerning the teacher's availability outside formal class time. This suggests that while the servant posture is clearly visible during instruction, opportunities may exist to extend service presence beyond the classroom context. Nevertheless, the overall pattern remains robust and consistent with servant leadership theory.

Pedagogical care and responsiveness also achieved a high mean score and demonstrated one of the lowest standard deviations among all measured areas. This indicates strong consensus among students that the CRE teacher is attentive to learner needs. Observable indicators included adjusting explanations when students appear confused, inviting questions, and demonstrating emotional sensitivity during classroom interactions. From a pedagogical standpoint, this dimension is critical because sensitivity to learners' needs represents the practical outworking of servant leadership in instructional settings. The findings resonate strongly with Noddings' ethic of care framework, which emphasizes attentiveness and responsiveness as essential features of effective teaching (Noddings, 2013). Within the CRE context, such care is not merely pedagogical but also pastoral in nature. Students who feel seen and supported are more likely to engage both cognitively and spiritually. At SDN 106223 Pekanbaru, the high rating in this dimension suggests that servant leadership is functioning as a relational bridge that enhances learning receptivity. A closer look at item distributions shows slightly lower (though still high) agreement on items related to differentiated instruction for students with varying learning speeds. This micro-pattern suggests an area for potential professional development. While the teacher demonstrates strong general care, more structured differentiation strategies could further strengthen responsiveness to diverse learner profiles. Humility in classroom leadership yielded a high overall mean but displayed slightly wider variability compared to the previous two dimensions. Students generally agreed that the CRE teacher avoids self-praise, corrects students respectfully, and maintains a non-authoritarian tone. These behaviors represent the interpersonal expression of servant leadership and directly reflect the inversion of power emphasized in Matthew 20:28. Rather than exercising authority through dominance, the teacher appears to lead through relational influence and moral example. This finding supports Palmer's (2007) argument that teaching effectiveness flows from the integrity and identity of the teacher. When humility is visibly practiced, the classroom climate becomes more dialogical and less fear-driven. In the present study, most students reported feeling comfortable interacting with the teacher, indicating that humility is contributing positively to psychological safety. Item-level analysis identified a small subset of students who expressed only moderate agreement regarding the teacher's openness to student

disagreement. This suggests that while the teacher avoids harsh authoritarianism, further development of dialogical humility, actively inviting and affirming differing student perspectives, could deepen the servant leadership culture already present. Such refinement would align even more closely with contemporary student-centered pedagogy. Commitment to student growth, produced one of the strongest mean scores in the dataset. Students overwhelmingly perceived that the CRE teacher is genuinely concerned with their academic and spiritual development. Indicators included providing encouragement, monitoring student progress, and offering motivation during learning challenges. This dimension is particularly important because servant leadership is ultimately future-oriented, it seeks the flourishing of those being served. The strong performance in this area confirms that the teacher's service orientation is not merely attitudinal but developmental. Students experience the teacher as someone invested in their improvement, which is consistent with research indicating that teacher expectations and encouragement significantly influence student motivation and persistence (Hattie, 2009). Within the CRE framework, this developmental concern also carries spiritual significance, as teachers function as mentors in faith formation. The relatively tight dispersion of responses in this dimension suggests that the teacher's commitment to student growth is consistently experienced across the classroom population. This consistency strengthens the credibility of the servant leadership model in this context. It indicates that service is not selectively applied but embedded in routine pedagogical practice.

Christ-centered modeling in instructional practice also fell within the high category, though with slightly more variability than the commitment dimension. Students generally agreed that the teacher connects lessons to biblical values, demonstrates Christlike attitudes, and integrates faith meaningfully into classroom interactions. This dimension is crucial because servant leadership in Christian education must remain explicitly anchored in Christological foundations rather than generic moralism. Students are not only taught about Christlike service; they observe it enacted in the teacher's demeanor and instructional approach. This aligns strongly with the theological logic of Matthew 20:28, where Jesus models the very leadership pattern He teaches. Item analysis revealed slightly lower agreement on statements concerning explicit verbal explanation of the theological basis for service. This indicates that while students observe Christ-centered behavior, more intentional theological articulation could strengthen cognitive integration between biblical teaching and classroom practice. Making the Matthew 20:28 connection more explicit in instruction may enhance students' conceptual understanding of servant leadership. When the five dimensions are viewed holistically, a coherent and encouraging pattern emerges. Teacher competence through servant leadership at SDN 106223 Pekanbaru is perceived by students as strong, consistent, and relationally meaningful. The high overall mean confirms that Matthew 20:28 is being operationalized not only as a theological ideal but as an observable pedagogical reality. This finding contributes important empirical evidence to the relatively limited body of quantitative research on servant leadership in Indonesian Christian primary education. Several integrative insights can be drawn from the findings. Servant leadership functions as a pedagogical catalyst. The high scores across care, humility, and commitment dimensions indicate that service-oriented competence enhances classroom climate and student trust. This supports

Owens and Hekman's (2012) argument that humble leadership strengthens relational engagement. Teacher identity and professional competence appear deeply intertwined. Consistent with Palmer (2007), the data suggest that who the teacher is, in terms of humility and service posture, significantly shapes how students experience learning. At SDN 106223 Pekan Kamis, competence is not merely technical but relational-spiritual in character. The findings highlight the strategic role of CRE teachers within minority-faith contexts in public schools. With 88 Christian students under their influence and only five Christian teachers in the institution, the CRE teacher's servant leadership carries amplified formative impact. The classroom becomes a key site of spiritual and character formation. The analysis identifies targeted areas for professional refinement, particularly in differentiated responsiveness, dialogical openness, and explicit theological verbalization. These are not weaknesses but growth edges that, if addressed, could elevate the already strong servant leadership profile. Finally, the study reinforces a broader implication for Indonesian Christian education: the future effectiveness of CRE depends significantly on the integration of professional competence with Christ-centered servant identity. Matthew 20:28 provides not only a theological foundation but also a practical pedagogical framework capable of shaping classroom culture in measurable ways. The results demonstrate that at SDN 106223 Pekan Kamis, servant leadership is visibly embedded in CRE teacher competence and is positively experienced by students. The teacher's practice reflects a ministry posture characterized by service, humility, care, and developmental commitment. While opportunities for deeper dialogical and theological articulation remain, the overall pattern is strong and pedagogically promising. These findings provide an important empirical contribution to the discourse on spiritually grounded teacher professionalism in Indonesian Christian education contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how teacher competence grounded in servant leadership, interpreted through Matthew 20:28, is perceived by Christian students at SDN 106223 Pekan Kamis, Serdang Bedagai. The quantitative findings provide strong empirical support for the central premise that Christ-centered service is not merely a theological ideal but a pedagogically observable reality within the Christian Religious Education (CRE) classroom. Overall student perceptions place the teacher's competence through servant leadership in the high category, indicating that learners consistently experience the CRE teacher as embodying humility, care, and service-oriented professionalism. Across the five measured dimensions, servant-oriented attitude, pedagogical care and responsiveness, humility in classroom leadership, commitment to student growth, and Christ-centered modeling, the data reveal a coherent and positive pattern. Students particularly recognized the teacher's willingness to help, patience in instruction, emotional approachability, and genuine concern for their academic and spiritual development. These findings affirm that servant leadership functions as a powerful relational and instructional asset in primary-level Christian education. The classroom climate shaped by such leadership tends to foster trust, psychological safety, and greater openness to learning and faith formation. The results demonstrate meaningful alignment with the leadership paradigm presented in Matthew 20:28, where Jesus redefines greatness through service rather than authority. The CRE teacher at SDN 106223 Pekan Kamis appears to operationalize this biblical model

in daily pedagogical practice. Students do not merely hear about Christlike service; they encounter it through the teacher's behavior, communication style, and instructional posture. This supports the broader educational insight that teacher identity and lived example significantly influence the credibility and effectiveness of religious instruction. The study also identifies several constructive areas for professional growth. Slightly lower agreement on items related to differentiated responsiveness, openness to student disagreement, and explicit theological articulation suggests that the servant leadership model, while strong, can be further deepened. Future professional development may focus on strengthening dialogical humility, expanding adaptive teaching strategies for diverse learners, and making the biblical foundations of service more explicitly integrated into classroom discourse. Addressing these areas would likely enhance both pedagogical effectiveness and theological clarity. The findings highlight the strategic importance of CRE teachers within public school environments where Christian students represent a specific faith community. With 88 Christian students and only five Christian teachers in the school, the formative influence of the CRE teacher is substantial. The teacher functions not only as an instructor but also as a spiritual mentor whose character and competence shape students' understanding of Christian leadership and discipleship. This study reinforces a key implication for Indonesian Christian education: professional competence reaches its fullest expression when integrated with Christ-centered servant identity. At SDN 106223 Pekan Kamis, such integration is already visible and impactful. Strengthening reflective practice and dialogical pedagogy will further enhance this promising foundation. Future research is encouraged to employ longitudinal and multi-site designs to examine how sustained exposure to servant-oriented teachers influences long-term student character, faith commitment, and learning motivation.

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