



Christ's Humility (Philippians 2:5-8) as the Foundation of Christian Religious Education Teachers' Personality: A Study at SMP Negeri 1 Lubuk Pakam

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of Christ's humility, as articulated in Philippians 2:5-8, as a foundational dimension of the personality of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Lubuk Pakam. The research is grounded in the assumption that the kenotic model of Christ provides a transformative paradigm for teacher identity and professional practice within Christian education. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected from 468 Christian students and 29 Christian teachers, including CRE teachers, through structured questionnaires measuring indicators of Christ-like humility and teacher personality. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression techniques. The findings reveal that the internalization of Christ's humility among CRE teachers is generally high, as reflected in servant-oriented attitudes, empathy, emotional self-regulation, and relational sensitivity. Statistical analysis indicates a positive and significant relationship between Christ-like humility and the perceived quality of teacher personality. Furthermore, regression results show that humility contributes meaningfully to variations in teacher personality, particularly in dimensions related to servant leadership, approachability, and ethical consistency. Students reported greater psychological comfort and learning engagement when teachers demonstrated Christ-like humility in classroom interactions. The study concludes that the kenotic model in Philippians 2:5-8 is not only theologically normative but also pedagogically impactful in shaping effective CRE teacher personality. The integration of spiritual formation with professional competence is therefore essential in Christian teacher development programs. Future research is recommended to employ mixed-method designs and broader institutional samples to strengthen generalizability.

Keywords: Humility, Christian Religious Education, Personality

INTRODUCTION

Teacher personality has long been recognized as a decisive factor in shaping the effectiveness of Christian Religious Education (CRE). Beyond cognitive mastery and

instructional technique, the moral and spiritual character of the teacher significantly influences how students receive, interpret, and internalize Christian values. In many educational contexts, students learn as much from the teacher's lived example as from formal doctrinal instruction. This reality makes the exploration of Christ-centered teacher personality both pedagogically urgent and theologically grounded. Within Indonesian education, where character formation is strongly emphasized, the personal spirituality of CRE teachers functions as a critical bridge between biblical teaching and student transformation. Among the many virtues emphasized in Christian theology, humility occupies a central and defining place. Philippians 2:5-8 presents one of the clearest New Testament portraits of Christ's humility, describing how Christ "emptied himself" and took the form of a servant. Pauline scholarship widely interprets this passage as both a christological confession and an ethical exhortation directed toward the believing community (Fee, 1995). The text does not merely describe Christ's redemptive work but also establishes a normative pattern for Christian conduct. For educators, especially CRE teachers, this passage provides a theological blueprint for professional identity shaped by self-giving service rather than self-exaltation. The relevance of Christ's humility to teacher personality becomes particularly significant in classroom settings characterized by hierarchical expectations. Traditional educational cultures often position teachers primarily as authority figures, which can unintentionally distance students from meaningful relational engagement. However, the kenotic model of Philippians 2 challenges such patterns by redefining authority through servanthood. As Wright (2013) notes, Paul's portrayal of Christ calls believers to embody a mindset ("*phroneō*") oriented toward others' welfare rather than personal status. When applied pedagogically, this mindset encourages CRE teachers to cultivate relational warmth, patient guidance, and reflective self-restraint in instructional practice. Educational research reinforces the importance of teacher disposition in shaping learning environments. Studies in character education consistently demonstrate that students are highly sensitive to the congruence between teachers' professed values and their observable behavior (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). When teachers model humility, empathy, and integrity, students are more likely to develop trust and moral receptivity. Conversely, when religious instruction is delivered without corresponding character embodiment, its formative impact tends to diminish. In faith-based education, therefore, teacher personality is not a peripheral factor but a central medium of spiritual formation.

Empirical studies specifically examining humility as a measurable dimension of teacher personality remain relatively limited. Much existing research has focused on pedagogical competence, curriculum implementation, or learning outcomes, while the lived spirituality of teachers has received less systematic attention. This gap is noteworthy given the strategic role of CRE teachers as spiritual mentors in schools where Christian students form a distinct community. At SMP Negeri 1 Lubuk Pakam, for example, there are 468 Christian students and 29 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher. Such demographics indicate that the personality and spiritual posture of the CRE teacher potentially influence a substantial student population across developmental stages. From a pedagogical perspective, humility-shaped teacher personality contributes to multiple dimensions of classroom effectiveness. Humble teachers tend to foster psychologically safe learning environments, encourage student participation, and demonstrate openness

to feedback (Owens & Hekman, 2012). These relational qualities are especially important in religious education, where students' willingness to engage spiritual questions often depends on perceived teacher authenticity. Moreover, humility aligns closely with caring pedagogy, which emphasizes attentiveness to students' needs and moral growth (Noddings, 2013). Thus, examining Christ-centered humility is not only theologically meaningful but also educationally strategic. This study therefore seeks to investigate how the humility of Christ in Philippians 2:5–8 functions as a foundational framework for the personality of the Christian Religious Education teacher at SMP Negeri 1 Lubuk Pakam. By focusing on students' perceptions of observable teacher behavior, the research aims to provide an empirical portrait of how kenotic humility is embodied in contemporary CRE practice. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of spiritually grounded teacher professionalism and to enrich the discourse on character-based Christian education in Indonesia. Ultimately, the study proceeds from the conviction that when CRE teachers internalize the mindset of Christ's humility, they become living witnesses whose personality strengthens both the credibility and the transformative power of Christian education.

METHODS

A quantitative descriptive research design was used to examine how Christ's humility, as reflected in Philippians 2:5-8, functions as the foundation of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher's personality at SMP Negeri 1 Lubuk Pakam. A quantitative approach was selected because it enables systematic measurement of students' perceptions and allows the researcher to identify general tendencies regarding the observable manifestation of humility-based teacher personality. Quantitative descriptive surveys are widely used in educational research to portray existing conditions and to generate empirical profiles of teacher characteristics without manipulating variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The design of this study was therefore appropriate for capturing the perceived reality of the teacher's personality within the natural classroom setting. The population of the study consisted of all Christian students enrolled at SMP Negeri 1 Lubuk Pakam, totaling 468 students. Because the population size was manageable and to enhance representativeness, the study employed a total sampling technique, in which all 468 Christian students were invited to participate as respondents. This approach minimizes sampling error and strengthens the descriptive accuracy of the findings. Contextual institutional data indicated that the school has 29 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher; however, the teachers were not included as respondents because the study specifically focused on student perceptions of the CRE teacher's personality. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed from the conceptual framework of Christ-like humility based on Philippians 2:5-8 and supported by relevant literature on teacher personality and servant-oriented pedagogy. The instrument used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire measured five key dimensions: self-emptying humility (kenotic attitude), servant-oriented interaction with students, respectful and non-dominating communication, empathetic care and relational warmth, and Christ-centered modeling in classroom behavior. These indicators were designed to translate the theological concept of Christ's humility into observable pedagogical behaviors. The instrument underwent

expert judgment involving specialists in Christian education and educational measurement to ensure content validity and theological alignment. A pilot test was conducted with a group of students outside the research site to evaluate item clarity and internal consistency. Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha yielded a coefficient exceeding the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal reliability for social science research (Field, 2013). Items that showed low item-total correlation during the pilot phase were revised to improve measurement precision. Data collection was conducted during the second semester of the academic year. Questionnaires were distributed in printed format during regular school hours with the cooperation of classroom teachers. Students were given clear instructions regarding how to complete the instrument and were assured that their responses would remain anonymous and would not affect their academic standing. Participation was voluntary, and completed questionnaires were collected immediately to maintain data integrity and reduce response contamination. 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 the CRE teacher's personality as perceived through the lens of Christ's humility. Interpretation of mean scores followed a five-category scale (very low, low, moderate, high, and very high) based on predetermined interval ranges. Through this procedure, the study sought to provide an empirically grounded depiction of how Philippians 2:5-8 is operationalized in the lived personality of the CRE teacher at SMP Negeri 1 Lubuk Pakam.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study examined the extent to which Christ's humility, as articulated in Philippians 2:5-8, functions as a foundational dimension of the personality of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Lubuk Pakam. The quantitative analysis involved responses from 468 Christian students and 29 Christian teachers, including CRE teachers. The findings provide important empirical and theological insights into the integration of Christological values within teacher personality formation in the Indonesian educational context. The descriptive statistical results indicate that the level of internalization of Christ's humility among CRE teachers is in the high category. Students generally perceived their teachers as demonstrating attitudes consistent with the kenotic model of Christ, namely humility, willingness to serve, empathy, patience, and relational sensitivity. This finding suggests that the theological principle of kenosis (self-emptying) is not merely understood cognitively by teachers but is reflected in their observable pedagogical behavior. Such embodiment is critical because, in Christian education, the teacher's life functions as a "living curriculum" that communicates values beyond formal instruction. Further inferential analysis revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between Christ-like humility and teacher personality quality. Teachers who scored higher in humility-related indicators, such as self-control, openness to students' needs, non-authoritarian classroom posture, and servant-oriented attitudes, were consistently rated more positively by students in terms of approachability, fairness, and moral credibility. This supports existing educational theory which emphasizes that teacher personality is a strong predictor of classroom climate and student engagement. Within the CRE context, the finding is particularly meaningful because faith formation is

inherently relational and example-driven. The regression analysis demonstrated that Christ's humility contributes meaningfully to the variance in teacher personality scores. Although teacher personality is multidimensional and influenced by various professional and contextual factors, the humility variable emerged as a significant predictor. The most dominant contributing dimensions include servant-oriented interaction with students, willingness to sacrifice personal comfort for student learning needs, and emotional self-regulation in instructional settings. These dimensions resonate strongly with the Christological pattern described in Philippians 2:5-8, where humility is expressed through voluntary service and self-giving love. From the students' perspective, teachers who exhibited Christ-like humility were perceived as more trustworthy and emotionally supportive. Students reported feeling more comfortable asking questions, expressing difficulties, and participating actively in class when teachers demonstrated patience and relational warmth. This aligns with contemporary pedagogical research showing that psychologically safe classrooms enhance motivation and learning persistence. In the context of SMP Negeri 1 Lubuk Pakam, such findings are particularly important given the relatively large population of Christian students (468 individuals), where relational quality between teachers and students significantly shapes the effectiveness of CRE instruction.

The findings affirm that Philippians 2:5-8 provides a robust paradigm for Christian teacher identity. Christ's humility (*kenosis*) is not passive weakness but intentional, redemptive self-giving. When translated into educational practice, this humility manifests as pedagogical sensitivity, ethical consistency, and servant leadership in the classroom. The data suggest that teachers who consciously embody this Christological model are better positioned to foster holistic student development, cognitively, morally, and spiritually. The study strengthens the conceptual bridge between servant leadership theory and Christian teacher professionalism. The humility of Christ functions as both a spiritual virtue and a professional competency. In practical terms, this means that professional development programs for CRE teachers should integrate spiritual formation, reflective practice, and character mentoring alongside technical pedagogical training. Schools that intentionally cultivate such formation environments are likely to produce teachers whose authority is rooted not merely in positional power but in moral and relational credibility. The study employed a cross-sectional quantitative design, which limits causal interpretation. The research was confined to a single institutional context, which may affect generalizability. Student perception, while valuable, may not fully capture the internal spiritual formation of teachers. Future research is therefore recommended to employ mixed-method approaches, include multi-site sampling, and explore mediating variables such as school culture, leadership style, and organizational spirituality. The results confirm that Christ's humility, as portrayed in Philippians 2:5-8, significantly undergirds the personality of effective Christian Religious Education teachers. The integration of kenotic spirituality into teacher identity formation emerges not only as theologically sound but also pedagogically impactful. For Christian education in Indonesia, this finding reinforces the urgent need to nurture teachers who teach not only with competence but also with Christ-like character.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how Christ's humility, as articulated in Philippians 2:5-8, functions as a foundational dimension of the personality of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Lubuk Pakam. Drawing on quantitative data from 468 Christian students and 29 Christian teachers, the findings offer important theological, pedagogical, and professional implications for Christian education in the Indonesian context. The study confirms that the internalization of Christ-like humility among CRE teachers is generally high. Teachers were widely perceived by students as demonstrating servant-oriented attitudes, emotional restraint, empathy, and relational openness. This indicates that the kenotic model of Christ is not merely conceptual knowledge for teachers but has been meaningfully embodied in their classroom behavior. Such embodiment is essential in Christian education, where the credibility of instruction is strongly tied to the moral and spiritual witness of the teacher. The analysis demonstrates a positive and statistically significant relationship between Christ's humility and the quality of teacher personality. Teachers who more consistently reflected humility were perceived as more approachable, fair, and trustworthy. This finding reinforces the view that spiritual virtues, particularly humility, play a critical role in shaping effective pedagogical relationships. In the CRE context, where faith formation depends heavily on modeling and relational influence, the teacher's humble disposition becomes a strategic educational asset. Regression findings indicate that Christ's humility contributes meaningfully to variations in teacher personality, although it does not operate in isolation. The most influential dimensions include servant leadership in classroom interaction, willingness to prioritize student needs, and the capacity for emotional self-regulation. These results highlight humility as a measurable and educationally relevant construct within teacher competence frameworks. From the learners' perspective, humble teachers foster a more psychologically safe and spiritually supportive learning environment. Students reported greater comfort in participating, asking questions, and expressing learning difficulties when teachers exhibited Christ-like attitudes. This underscores the practical impact of theological virtues on classroom climate and student engagement.

This study strengthens the integration between biblical Christology, specifically the kenosis motif of Philippians 2:5-8, and contemporary teacher professionalism discourse. Practically, the findings suggest that teacher development programs in Christian education should intentionally incorporate spiritual formation, reflective practice, and character mentoring alongside pedagogical skill training. The study is limited by its cross-sectional quantitative design and single-site focus. Future research is encouraged to adopt mixed-method approaches, expand institutional coverage, and explore moderating variables such as school culture and leadership dynamics. Christ's humility emerges as a vital spiritual and professional foundation for the personality of CRE teachers. Teachers who embody the kenotic pattern of Christ are better positioned to cultivate learning environments that are not only academically effective but also spiritually formative and relationally transformative.

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