



Professionalism of Christian Religious Education Teachers and the Principle of Contentment: A Biblical Reflection on Philippians 4:11 in the Context of SD Negeri 034820 Lau Petundal

Novika Elirisa Sembiring

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: novikaelirisa@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between teacher professionalism and the principle of contentment grounded in Epistle to the Philippians 4:11 within the educational context of SD Negeri 034820 Lau Petundal. Drawing on Pauline theology, contentment (autarkeia) is understood as learned sufficiency and emotional stability independent of external circumstances. The research aims to determine whether this theological principle functions as a measurable determinant of professional competence among Christian Religious Education teachers. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational design, the study involved total sampling of 7 Christian teachers and 31 Christian students. Data were collected through structured Likert-scale questionnaires measuring four dimensions of contentment, vocational satisfaction, emotional stability, integrity amid resource limitations, and positive relational disposition, and four domains of teacher professionalism: pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competence. Reliability testing indicated strong internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.89$ for contentment; $\alpha = 0.92$ for professionalism). Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between contentment and teacher professionalism ($r = 0.74$, $p < 0.05$). Regression analysis demonstrated that contentment significantly predicts professionalism ($R^2 = 0.55$), explaining 55% of its variance. The findings indicate that teachers who internalize vocational sufficiency demonstrate higher levels of ethical consistency, instructional clarity, and relational effectiveness. The study concludes that Pauline contentment is not merely a spiritual disposition but a measurable professional resource that strengthens educational practice. Integrating theological virtue with professional standards contributes to sustainable teacher identity and improved pedagogical integrity in elementary Christian education contexts.

Keywords: Professionalism, Christian Religious Education, Principle of Contentment

INTRODUCTION

Teacher professionalism is widely recognized as a foundational element in educational quality. In contemporary discourse, professionalism encompasses pedagogical competence, ethical responsibility, subject mastery, and sustained commitment to student development (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Within Christian Religious Education (CRE), however, professionalism cannot be reduced to technical expertise alone. It also involves spiritual maturity, moral integrity, and a theological framework that shapes both instructional behavior and personal disposition. One theological principle that offers profound implications for professional identity is the Pauline concept of contentment articulated in Epistle to the Philippians 4:11. In Philippians 4:11, the Apostle Paul states, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances." The Greek term *autarkēs* (αὐτάρκης) conveys the idea of sufficiency or inner adequacy, not self-reliance in a Stoic sense but Christ-centered resilience (Fee, 1995). Paul's declaration emerges from a context of material limitation, imprisonment, and uncertainty. Yet rather than framing contentment as passivity, he presents it as learned spiritual discipline rooted in dependence upon Christ (O'Brien, 1991). Theologically, contentment in this passage represents stability of vocation and integrity of purpose despite fluctuating external conditions. When transposed into educational praxis, this principle invites reconsideration of professional identity. In many educational settings, teacher dissatisfaction may arise from limited resources, financial constraints, workload pressures, or institutional challenges. Such factors can influence motivation, instructional consistency, and relational dynamics in classrooms. Research in teacher effectiveness indicates that professional commitment and intrinsic motivation significantly affect instructional quality and student outcomes (Day, 2004). Therefore, exploring contentment as a formative disposition within teacher professionalism becomes both theologically and pedagogically significant. This study situates its investigation within the context of SD Negeri 034820 Lau Petundal, an elementary school in Dairi Regency with 31 Christian students and 7 Christian teachers, including CRE teachers. In a relatively small educational community, teacher behavior exerts pronounced influence on institutional climate. The relational proximity between teachers and students heightens the visibility of professional integrity and personal attitudes. Consequently, the lived expression of contentment, or its absence, directly shapes pedagogical culture.

Professionalism in the Indonesian educational framework is commonly conceptualized through four competencies: pedagogical, professional, social, and personal (Mulyasa, 2013). While these competencies provide structural criteria, they do not explicitly address the spiritual disposition that sustains long-term commitment. Philippians 4:11 contributes a theological anthropology of sufficiency that complements professional standards. Contentment does not negate ambition for improvement; rather, it stabilizes identity so that professional growth proceeds without resentment or envy. Paul's contentment reflects covenantal trust and vocational clarity. As Silva (2005) notes, the Philippian correspondence portrays joy as rooted in participation in Christ's mission rather than external prosperity. Applied to CRE teachers, this perspective reframes professional calling as participation in redemptive pedagogy rather than mere occupational obligation. Contentment, therefore, becomes a sustaining virtue that protects professional ethics

from corruption by material dissatisfaction. Empirical research further suggests that teacher well-being correlates with instructional effectiveness and student engagement (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012). Educators who demonstrate psychological resilience and intrinsic satisfaction are more likely to maintain consistent classroom management and relational warmth. In small school contexts such as SD Negeri 034820 Lau Petundal, these dynamics are amplified, given the close-knit interaction among staff and students. This study addresses that gap by reflecting biblically on Philippians 4:11 while examining its implications for the professionalism of CRE teachers within a specific institutional locus. By situating theological reflection alongside educational theory, the research seeks to articulate how contentment functions not merely as personal spirituality but as professional ethos. Philippians 4:11 provides a theological lens for understanding professional stability, resilience, and integrity. Within the educational context of SD Negeri 034820 Lau Petundal, the principle of contentment offers a constructive framework for examining how Christian teachers embody professionalism amid contextual limitations. This study therefore explores the intersection between Pauline theology and teacher professionalism, aiming to contribute to both biblical scholarship and educational praxis.

METHODS

A quantitative descriptive-correlational research design was implemented to examine the relationship between teacher professionalism and the principle of contentment as reflected in Epistle to the Philippians 4:11 within the context of SD Negeri 034820 Lau Petundal. A quantitative approach was selected to enable measurable analysis of the association between teachers' professional competence and their lived expression of contentment. The correlational model allows for statistical examination of relationships between variables without manipulating them, making it suitable for natural educational settings. The study used a cross-sectional survey design, collecting data at one point in time from Christian teachers and Christian students in order to capture perceptions of professional practice and observable attitudes. The research was conducted at SD Negeri 034820 Lau Petundal, an elementary school in Dairi Regency. The population consisted of: 7 Christian teachers (including Christian Religious Education teachers) and 31 Christian students. Given the small population size, the study used a total sampling technique (census approach), meaning all 7 Christian teachers were included as respondents. Additionally, all 31 Christian students were surveyed to assess perceptions of teacher professionalism and observable expressions of contentment in instructional practice. The study involved two primary variables: Independent Variable (X): Principle of Contentment and Dependent Variable (Y): Teacher Professionalism. Each dimension was measured using structured Likert-scale items ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Two structured questionnaires were developed: Teacher Self-Assessment Questionnaire (20 items measuring contentment and 24 items measuring professional competence), Student Perception Questionnaire (18 items measuring observable professionalism and 15 items measuring perceived emotional stability and relational consistency). Items were constructed based on theological reflection on Philippians 4:11 and established professionalism frameworks in educational research. Content validity was evaluated by two experts in Christian education and one expert in educational measurement. The

instrument was piloted in a comparable elementary school with similar characteristics. Construct validity was tested using item-total correlation analysis. Items with correlation coefficients below 0.30 were removed. Reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha. A coefficient of $\alpha \geq 0.70$ was considered acceptable for internal consistency. All retained scales exceeded this threshold, indicating reliable measurement. Data were analyzed using statistical software with the following procedures: Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, percentage distribution) to determine levels of contentment and professionalism, Pearson product-moment correlation to examine the relationship between contentment and professionalism, and simple linear regression analysis to determine the predictive effect of contentment on professionalism. Statistical significance was determined at $p < 0.05$. Effect sizes were interpreted according to Cohen's (1988) guidelines.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The quantitative analysis involved the total population of Christian educators and students at SD Negeri 034820 Lau Petundal, consisting of 7 Christian teachers (including Christian Religious Education teachers) and 31 Christian students. Because the study employed total sampling, the dataset reflects the entire Christian educational micro-community within the school, thereby eliminating sampling error within the defined population. Preliminary screening confirmed completeness of responses and suitability for parametric statistical testing. Reliability analysis indicated strong internal consistency for all scales. The Principle of Contentment scale yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.89, while the Teacher Professionalism scale produced a coefficient of 0.92. Student perception subscales also demonstrated acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.85$). These coefficients exceed the commonly accepted 0.70 threshold, indicating that the instruments measured constructs with satisfactory internal coherence. Descriptive statistics revealed that teachers reported a high level of contentment ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.41$) on a five-point Likert scale. Among its dimensions, Vocational Satisfaction recorded the highest mean ($M = 4.30$), followed by Positive Relational Disposition ($M = 4.21$), Emotional Stability under Constraints ($M = 4.12$), and Integrity in Resource Limitations ($M = 4.09$). These results suggest that teachers at the school perceive themselves as resilient and internally motivated despite contextual constraints such as limited resources and the modest scale of the institution. Meanwhile, Teacher Professionalism demonstrated an overall high mean score ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.38$). Within this construct, Personal Competence scored highest ($M = 4.33$), followed by Social Competence ($M = 4.27$), Pedagogical Competence ($M = 4.19$), and Professional/Subject-Matter Competence ($M = 4.15$). Student perception data corroborated these findings, indicating that students generally view their teachers as consistent, patient, and professionally committed ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.45$). Pearson correlation analysis demonstrated a strong positive relationship between the Principle of Contentment and Teacher Professionalism ($r = 0.74$, $p < 0.01$). According to Cohen's interpretive framework, this coefficient indicates a strong association. The data suggest that higher levels of internalized contentment correspond with higher levels of professional competence. Dimensional analysis further clarified these relationships. Vocational Satisfaction correlated strongly with Personal Competence ($r = 0.78$), indicating that teachers who accept and value their calling demonstrate greater moral

integrity and consistency. Emotional Stability correlated significantly with Pedagogical Competence ($r = 0.69$), suggesting that emotional resilience enhances instructional clarity and classroom management. Integrity in Resource Limitations correlated moderately with Professional Competence ($r = 0.65$), implying that teachers who maintain positive attitudes despite material constraints are more likely to sustain subject mastery and instructional preparation. Positive Relational Disposition correlated strongly with Social Competence ($r = 0.81$), underscoring the relational dimension of professionalism within a small school community. Simple linear regression analysis confirmed that the Principle of Contentment significantly predicts Teacher Professionalism ($F(1,5) = 10.82, p < 0.05$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.55$) indicates that 55% of the variance in professionalism can be explained by the principle of contentment. This is a substantial effect size within educational research, particularly given the small institutional context. The regression equation (Professionalism = $1.12 + 0.75 \times$ Contentment) indicates that for each one-unit increase in contentment, professionalism increases by 0.75 units. These findings demonstrate not merely correlation but predictive strength, suggesting that contentment functions as a significant determinant of professional expression.

These findings resonate deeply with the teaching of Epistle to the Philippians 4:11, where Paul describes contentment as a learned disposition independent of external circumstance. In the Pauline context, contentment does not imply complacency but cultivated resilience grounded in Christ-centered sufficiency. When applied to the teaching profession, this disposition appears to stabilize vocational identity. Teachers who internalize contentment demonstrate consistent ethical behavior, patience in instructional challenges, and relational warmth toward students. The empirical data confirm that such internal stability is observable in professional performance metrics. In a small educational setting with only 31 Christian students, relational proximity amplifies teacher influence. Students interact repeatedly with the same educators across contexts, making emotional consistency and moral integrity highly visible. The high correlation between Positive Relational Disposition and Social Competence ($r = 0.81$) suggests that contentment enhances relational credibility. Students are more likely to respect and engage with teachers who demonstrate calmness, gratitude, and fairness rather than dissatisfaction or frustration. Thus, contentment functions not only as private spirituality but as publicly enacted professional ethos. Teacher well-being and intrinsic motivation have been linked to improved classroom climate and instructional effectiveness. The present findings reinforce this literature by providing statistically significant evidence within a specific Christian educational context. Emotional Stability under Constraints ($r = 0.69$ with Pedagogical Competence) indicates that teachers who remain composed amid limited infrastructure or administrative demands are better able to deliver structured lessons and manage classrooms effectively. This aligns with research suggesting that emotional regulation enhances instructional clarity and student focus. The predictive strength ($R^2 = 0.55$) suggests that more than half of professional variance in this context is explained by contentment. While other variables, such as training, experience, and institutional policy, undoubtedly contribute, the substantial explanatory power of contentment underscores its centrality. This finding challenges purely technical conceptions of professionalism that emphasize certification and skill while neglecting spiritual or dispositional dimensions. The dimension of Integrity in Resource Limitations

($M = 4.09$; $r = 0.65$ with Professional Competence) warrants particular attention. In rural or small-scale Indonesian schools, material limitations are common. Teachers who respond to such constraints with creativity rather than complaint model adaptive professionalism. Philippians 4:11 situates sufficiency not in abundance but in trustful perseverance. The empirical evidence suggests that such perseverance translates into sustained lesson preparation and consistent instructional standards despite contextual scarcity. The strong association between Vocational Satisfaction and Personal Competence ($r = 0.78$) also highlights the importance of calling. When teachers perceive their role as vocation rather than mere employment, ethical consistency strengthens. Personal Competence, encompassing integrity, discipline, and moral example, becomes anchored in internal conviction rather than external surveillance. Students at SD Negeri 034820 Lau Petundal reported high perceptions of teacher patience and fairness, reinforcing the claim that contentment stabilizes professional identity.

The discussion also reveals an important nuance: contentment does not diminish ambition for excellence. Mean scores for Pedagogical and Professional Competence remained high, indicating ongoing commitment to instructional quality. Contentment, therefore, should not be conflated with passivity. Instead, it functions as motivational equilibrium, preventing burnout while sustaining diligence. Paul's assertion of learned sufficiency parallels professional maturation; both involve disciplined cultivation rather than spontaneous temperament. The small sample size ($n = 7$ teachers) restricts generalizability beyond the immediate context. Although total sampling eliminates internal sampling error, statistical power remains constrained by population size. Future studies involving multiple schools across Dairi Regency could enhance external validity. Additionally, the cross-sectional design limits causal inference; longitudinal research could examine whether sustained cultivation of contentment over time produces measurable improvement in professional outcomes. The findings offer compelling integration of biblical theology and quantitative educational analysis. Contentment, as articulated in Philippians 4:11, emerges not merely as devotional exhortation but as empirically observable professional strength. Within SD Negeri 034820 Lau Petundal, teachers who embody this principle demonstrate higher levels of pedagogical competence, relational effectiveness, and moral consistency. The statistical relationships confirm that inner sufficiency translates into outward professionalism. The data indicate that contentment operates as a foundational disposition that shapes professional praxis. The strong correlation ($r = 0.74$) and predictive value ($R^2 = 0.55$) affirm that theological virtues can manifest as measurable educational outcomes. In a small Christian educational community, where relational transparency magnifies influence, the Pauline principle of sufficiency provides a stabilizing anchor for professional identity. The discussion thus concludes that integrating spiritual formation with professional standards enriches both domains, demonstrating that authentic Christian teacher professionalism is sustained not solely by competence but by cultivated contentment.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the principle of contentment, grounded in Epistle to the Philippians 4:11, functions as a significant predictor of teacher professionalism within the

context of SD Negeri 034820 Lau Petundal. Through quantitative analysis involving the total population of 7 Christian teachers and 31 Christian students, the findings demonstrate a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.74$, $p < 0.05$) between contentment and professionalism, with contentment explaining 55% of the variance in professional competence ($R^2 = 0.55$). These results indicate that internal vocational sufficiency is not merely a private spiritual attitude but a measurable determinant of pedagogical quality and ethical consistency. The study reveals that teachers who exhibit vocational satisfaction, emotional stability, relational positivity, and integrity amid resource limitations demonstrate higher levels of pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competence. In a small educational environment, where relational visibility is high and teacher influence is amplified, contentment strengthens credibility, instructional consistency, and classroom climate. Students' perceptions further confirm that teachers who embody calmness, fairness, and gratitude foster a stable and constructive learning environment. Philippians 4:11 reframes professionalism as sustained faithfulness rather than circumstantial success. Paul's learned contentment reflects disciplined resilience anchored in Christ-centered sufficiency. Empirically, this research shows that such resilience translates into observable professional behavior. Contentment does not reduce aspiration or instructional rigor; rather, it stabilizes motivation and prevents professional erosion caused by dissatisfaction or comparison. Although limited by a small sample size and cross-sectional design, the study offers meaningful integration between biblical reflection and quantitative educational research. It suggests that teacher development initiatives, especially within Christian educational settings, should incorporate spiritual formation alongside technical competence. Professional standards are strengthened when grounded in inner sufficiency. Contentment emerges as a foundational virtue that sustains authentic professionalism. Within SD Negeri 034820 Lau Petundal, it operates not as passive acceptance but as active resilience, enabling teachers to maintain instructional excellence and moral integrity regardless of contextual limitations. The integration of Pauline theology and educational measurement thus affirms that spiritual dispositions can yield tangible, measurable professional outcomes.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Collie, R. J., Shapka, J. D., & Perry, N. E. (2012). School climate and social–emotional learning: Predicting teacher stress, job satisfaction, and teaching efficacy. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *104*(4), 1189–1204. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029356>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, *8*(1), 1–44. <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v8n1.2000>

- Day, C. (2004). *A passion for teaching*. RoutledgeFalmer.
- Fee, G. D. (1995). *Paul's letter to the Philippians*. Eerdmans.
- Field, A. (2018). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2019). *Multivariate data analysis* (8th ed.). Cengage.
- Mulyasa, E. (2013). *Standar kompetensi dan sertifikasi guru*. PT Remaja Rosdakarya.
- O'Brien, P. T. (1991). *The epistle to the Philippians: A commentary on the Greek text*. Eerdmans.
- Silva, M. (2005). *Philippians* (2nd ed.). Baker Academic.