



Teacher Professionalism in Christian Religious Education and the Development of Student Perseverance Based on Exodus 6:1 at SMK Negeri 1 Lubuk Pakam

Sri Wahyuni Sitorus

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: sriwahyuni19272@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of teacher professionalism in Christian Religious Education in fostering student perseverance based on the theological reflection of Exodus 6:1 at SMK Negeri 1 Lubuk Pakam. The research aims to explore how professional conduct demonstrated by teachers contributes to shaping students' resilience in facing academic and personal challenges. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis involving Christian Religious Education teachers and students. The findings reveal that teacher professionalism significantly influences the development of student perseverance through consistent role modeling, ethical integrity, supportive communication, and spiritual mentorship. Teachers who demonstrate responsibility, patience, and commitment in their instructional practices indirectly cultivate perseverance among students by providing tangible examples of steadfastness. Furthermore, the integration of Exodus 6:1 into learning activities enables students to interpret perseverance not only as a personal effort but also as an expression of faith in God's promises amidst difficulties. This theological contextualization helps students reframe challenges as opportunities for growth rather than obstacles to success. The study also finds that professional teachers who provide constructive feedback and empathetic guidance strengthen students' self-efficacy, thereby encouraging sustained engagement in learning processes. In the vocational school context, where students face practical and academic pressures, such professional and spiritual support becomes particularly vital. Overall, the research highlights that teacher professionalism grounded in biblical values functions as a transformative force in nurturing perseverance. By embodying the principles they teach, Christian Religious Education teachers create a learning environment that promotes resilience, faith-based endurance, and character formation among students.

Keywords: Teacher Professionalism, Christian Religious Education, Student Perseverance

INTRODUCTION

Teacher professionalism has increasingly been recognized as a crucial determinant in shaping not only students' academic achievement but also their character formation and personal resilience in contemporary education systems. Professional teachers are not merely transmitters of knowledge but also role models who embody values that influence students' perseverance, motivation, and long-term commitment to learning (Day, 2007). In the context of Christian Religious Education, professionalism carries a deeper dimension because teachers are expected to integrate pedagogical competence with theological understanding and spiritual integrity. This integration enables them to guide students toward faith-based character development rooted in biblical principles (Groome, 2011). Perseverance, as a character trait, plays an essential role in helping students confront academic challenges, social pressures, and personal struggles. Research has shown that students who develop perseverance are more likely to sustain effort in the face of adversity and demonstrate higher levels of achievement and personal growth (Duckworth et al., 2007). Therefore, the role of Christian Religious Education teachers becomes strategic in cultivating this virtue through both instruction and example. The concept of perseverance finds strong theological grounding in the biblical narrative, particularly in Exodus 6:1, where God assures Moses that His promises will be fulfilled despite the apparent difficulties faced by the Israelites. This passage reflects a divine encouragement to remain steadfast in the midst of uncertainty and oppression. Biblical perseverance is not merely persistence but a faith-driven endurance rooted in trust in God's sovereignty (Wright, 2006). In educational practice, this theological perspective can be contextualized to inspire students to remain committed to their responsibilities and goals despite obstacles. When teachers demonstrate professionalism, through consistency, responsibility, ethical conduct, and spiritual maturity, they model the very perseverance that they aim to instill in their students (Lickona, 2012). Consequently, professionalism becomes both an instructional approach and a lived testimony that reinforces students' faith and character development. Christian Religious Education plays a vital role in fostering moral and spiritual values alongside academic competencies. Schools such as vocational institutions face unique challenges, as students often encounter practical pressures related to future employment and skill mastery. These pressures can sometimes diminish students' motivation and persistence. Studies indicate that supportive teacher behavior and professional commitment significantly influence students' resilience and engagement in learning environments (Hattie, 2009). When teachers demonstrate dedication, preparedness, and moral integrity, students are more likely to internalize positive attitudes toward perseverance. This is particularly relevant in vocational schools, where students must balance theoretical knowledge with practical application, often encountering setbacks that require sustained effort. Professionalism in Christian Religious Education also involves the ability to contextualize biblical teachings into contemporary student experiences. Teachers who effectively connect scriptural principles with real-life challenges help students see faith as a practical resource for navigating difficulties (Estep et al., 2012). Exodus 6:1 serves as a powerful narrative framework for illustrating that perseverance is grounded not only in human effort but also in trust in divine faithfulness. When students understand perseverance through this dual lens—spiritual reliance and personal responsibility—they develop a

more holistic resilience that integrates faith with action. Such integration aligns with character education theories that emphasize the importance of moral modeling in shaping student behavior (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

At SMK Negeri 1 Lubuk Pakam, the development of student perseverance is particularly relevant due to the demands of vocational learning environments that require persistence, discipline, and adaptability. Teacher professionalism in this setting is expected to extend beyond classroom instruction to include mentorship and spiritual guidance. By embodying perseverance in their professional conduct, Christian Religious Education teachers can create a learning atmosphere that encourages students to persist despite academic or personal challenges. The influence of teacher professionalism on student character formation has been widely documented, highlighting its role in fostering not only academic success but also moral development (Sockett, 2012). In light of these considerations, this study seeks to explore how teacher professionalism in Christian Religious Education contributes to the development of student perseverance through the theological reflection of Exodus 6:1. By examining this relationship within the context of SMK Negeri 1 Lubuk Pakam, the research aims to provide insights into how faith-based professionalism can serve as a transformative force in character education. Ultimately, understanding this connection may help educators design more effective strategies for nurturing perseverance among students, ensuring that they are equipped to face both academic challenges and life's broader struggles with steadfast faith and determination.

METHODS

The research adopted a case study design, which enabled the researcher to investigate a specific educational context in depth. Case study methodology is particularly useful when examining complex interactions between beliefs, practices, and outcomes within a bounded system such as a school (Yin, 2018). SMK Negeri 1 Lubuk Pakam was selected as the research site due to its vocational learning environment, where perseverance is essential for students facing both academic and practical challenges. The participants consisted of Christian Religious Education teachers and Christian students who were directly involved in the teaching and learning process. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure that those included had relevant experiences related to the research focus (Patton, 2015). Data were collected through multiple qualitative techniques, including in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and students to gain insights into their understanding of professionalism, perseverance, and the integration of biblical values in learning. This interview format allowed flexibility while maintaining focus on key themes (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Classroom observations were carried out to examine how teacher professionalism was demonstrated in real teaching practices, including attitudes, communication, instructional strategies, and role modeling. In addition, document analysis was conducted on lesson plans, teaching materials, and reflective notes to identify how Exodus 6:1 was integrated into instructional practices and character-building activities. To ensure data credibility, triangulation was applied by comparing findings from interviews, observations, and documents. Triangulation enhances the trustworthiness of qualitative research by validating data through multiple sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking was also conducted by allowing

participants to review the interview summaries to confirm accuracy and authenticity of their responses. Prolonged engagement in the field enabled the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the school culture and teacher-student interactions. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. This process involved organizing, coding, and interpreting the data to identify recurring patterns and themes related to teacher professionalism and student perseverance (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis followed several stages, including data familiarization, initial coding, theme development, and interpretation. Through this process, key themes emerged regarding how professionalism was manifested through consistency, moral example, spiritual guidance, and pedagogical commitment, as well as how these elements contributed to fostering perseverance among students. Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided voluntary consent before participating. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing participants' identities, and data were used solely for academic purposes. By applying a qualitative case study approach, this research sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of how teacher professionalism in Christian Religious Education functions as a formative influence in nurturing student perseverance grounded in the theological message of Exodus 6:1.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One of the most prominent findings of this research was the role of teacher consistency in demonstrating perseverance. Teachers who consistently prepared lesson materials, arrived on time, and maintained structured teaching practices were perceived by students as individuals who embodied commitment and reliability. This consistent behavior was not merely viewed as professional responsibility but as a form of lived example that students internalized. Students expressed that when teachers remained steadfast in their duties despite limitations such as time constraints, classroom challenges, or varying student responses, they were indirectly taught the value of persistence. Observations confirmed that teachers who consistently demonstrated patience when explaining difficult concepts created an atmosphere where students felt encouraged to keep trying even after repeated failures. In this way, professionalism became a practical demonstration of perseverance rather than a theoretical concept. This finding aligns with the message of Exodus 6:1, where perseverance is rooted in trust despite uncertain circumstances. Teachers who remained committed to their responsibilities reflected a faith-driven persistence that resonated with students' experiences. As a result, perseverance was not taught solely through verbal instruction but through observable actions that reinforced its importance.

Moral Integrity and Ethical Conduct

Another significant theme that emerged was the influence of teachers' moral integrity on student perseverance. Students frequently described professional teachers as fair, respectful, and emotionally supportive. This ethical conduct contributed to the creation of a psychologically safe learning environment in which students felt valued and motivated to continue striving despite academic difficulties. Interviews revealed that students were more willing to persevere in their learning when they trusted their

teachers. Trust was built through consistent ethical behavior, such as impartial grading, respectful communication, and genuine concern for student well-being. Teachers who demonstrated honesty and humility in acknowledging their own limitations fostered a relational dynamic that encouraged students to remain engaged even when faced with setbacks. This finding reflects the broader understanding that character formation is strongly influenced by relational modeling. Professionalism, in this sense, extended beyond technical competence to include moral authenticity. When teachers embodied ethical values, students perceived perseverance as a moral responsibility rather than merely an academic necessity.

Integration of Biblical Values into Learning

The integration of Exodus 6:1 into classroom instruction emerged as a crucial element in shaping students' understanding of perseverance. Teachers did not present the biblical text as an abstract theological concept but contextualized it within students' real-life challenges, such as academic stress, peer pressure, and vocational demands. For example, teachers often related the Israelites' struggle and God's promise of deliverance to students' experiences of facing difficult subjects or practical training requirements. This contextualization helped students see perseverance as both a spiritual discipline and a practical skill. Document analysis of lesson plans indicated that teachers intentionally incorporated reflective discussions, group sharing, and personal application exercises. These activities encouraged students to connect biblical narratives with their own struggles, thereby internalizing perseverance as a faith-based response to adversity. Students reported that understanding perseverance through a biblical lens gave them a sense of purpose and hope. Rather than perceiving challenges as signs of failure, they began to interpret them as opportunities for growth and reliance on God's guidance. This shift in perspective contributed significantly to their willingness to persist.

Supportive Communication and Encouragement

Teacher communication style was found to be another critical factor influencing student perseverance. Professional teachers who used constructive feedback and motivational language were able to sustain student engagement even when academic performance declined. Classroom observations revealed that teachers frequently employed affirming statements that emphasized effort rather than outcomes. For instance, students were praised for their persistence in completing tasks rather than solely for achieving high scores. This approach reinforced the value of perseverance as a process rather than a result. Students expressed that encouragement from teachers helped them overcome feelings of inadequacy and frustration. When teachers framed challenges as part of the learning journey, students were more likely to remain committed to their goals. This finding underscores the importance of professional communication in fostering resilience.

Spiritual Mentorship

Beyond instructional roles, teachers were also seen as spiritual mentors who guided students in interpreting life challenges through faith. Interviews revealed that many students sought advice from their Christian Religious Education teachers when facing personal difficulties. Teachers who demonstrated professionalism through empathy and

active listening created spaces where students felt comfortable sharing their struggles. In these interactions, perseverance was often framed as an expression of faith rather than mere endurance. This mentorship role was particularly significant in a vocational school setting, where students frequently encounter pressures related to skill mastery and future career prospects. Teachers who integrated spiritual encouragement with practical guidance helped students maintain motivation and confidence.

Development of Student Self-Efficacy

The research findings also highlighted the relationship between teacher professionalism and student self-efficacy. Students who perceived their teachers as competent and supportive were more likely to believe in their own ability to overcome challenges. Through consistent guidance and constructive feedback, teachers fostered a sense of capability among students. This enhanced self-efficacy contributed to increased perseverance, as students felt empowered to continue striving despite obstacles. The theological dimension of Exodus 6:1 reinforced this sense of empowerment by emphasizing that perseverance is sustained not only by personal effort but also by divine assurance. Students who internalized this message demonstrated greater resilience in both academic and personal contexts. The findings of this study suggest that teacher professionalism in Christian Religious Education serves as a foundational element in developing student perseverance. Professional conduct, when integrated with spiritual guidance, creates a holistic learning environment that supports both character formation and academic persistence. The study demonstrates that perseverance is most effectively cultivated when teachers embody the values they seek to impart. Professional consistency, ethical integrity, supportive communication, and spiritual mentorship collectively contribute to shaping students' attitudes toward challenges. The integration of biblical narratives such as Exodus 6:1 provides a meaningful framework for understanding perseverance as a faith-driven response to adversity. This theological grounding enhances students' resilience by offering a sense of hope and purpose. In vocational education contexts, where students must navigate both theoretical and practical demands, the role of professional teachers becomes even more critical. By modeling perseverance and providing spiritual encouragement, teachers help students develop the resilience needed to succeed in their educational and future professional endeavors. This study highlights the transformative potential of teacher professionalism in fostering perseverance among students. When professionalism is grounded in faith and expressed through consistent action, it becomes a powerful catalyst for character development and personal growth.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that teacher professionalism in Christian Religious Education plays a significant role in fostering student perseverance at SMK Negeri 1 Lubuk Pakam. Professionalism, as demonstrated through consistent commitment, ethical integrity, effective communication, and spiritual mentorship, extends beyond instructional competence and becomes a powerful formative influence on students' character development. Teachers who embody responsibility, patience, and dedication in their daily practices serve as living examples of perseverance, enabling students to internalize these

values through observation and relational interaction. The findings show that perseverance is most effectively developed when it is modeled rather than merely taught. Professional teachers who maintain consistency in their roles help students understand that perseverance involves sustained effort despite difficulties. Ethical conduct and supportive relationships further strengthen students' motivation to remain engaged in their learning processes. When students feel respected, encouraged, and guided, they are more likely to demonstrate resilience in overcoming academic and personal challenges. The integration of Exodus 6:1 into the learning process provides a meaningful theological foundation for perseverance. By contextualizing this biblical message within students' real-life experiences, teachers enable them to interpret perseverance as both a spiritual and practical response to adversity. Students begin to view challenges not as signs of failure but as opportunities for growth and reliance on God's promises. This perspective nurtures faith-based endurance that complements personal responsibility. In the vocational education context, where students must navigate both theoretical and practical demands, the presence of professional and spiritually grounded teachers becomes increasingly important. Teacher professionalism fosters self-efficacy, strengthens students' confidence, and encourages sustained effort toward achieving their goals. This study affirms that teacher professionalism rooted in Christian values serves as a transformative force in shaping student perseverance. By integrating faith with professional practice, Christian Religious Education teachers contribute not only to academic development but also to the formation of resilient individuals capable of facing life's challenges with steadfast faith and determination.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Berkowitz, M. W., & Bier, M. C. (2005). What works in character education: A research-driven guide for educators. In L. Nucci & D. Narvaez (Eds.), *Handbook of Moral and Character Education* (pp. 29–48). Routledge.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Day, C. (2007). *A Passion for Teaching*. Routledge.
- Duckworth, A. L., Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., & Kelly, D. R. (2007). Grit: Perseverance and passion for long-term goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92(6), 1087–1101.
- Estep, J. R., Anthony, M. J., & Allison, G. (2012). *A Theology for Christian Education*. B&H Academic.
- Groome, T. H. (2011). *Will There Be Faith*. HarperOne.
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible Learning*. Routledge.

- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Lickona, T. (2012). *Educating for Character*. Bantam Books.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Sockett, H. (2012). *Knowledge and Virtue in Teaching and Learning*. Routledge.
- Wright, C. J. H. (2006). *The Mission of God*. InterVarsity Press.
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.