



Professional Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Teaching the Value of Social Forgiveness: An Exegetical Study of Genesis 50:21 at UPT SDN 060973 Medan Selayang

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the professional competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in teaching the value of social forgiveness through an exegetical focus on Genesis 50:21 at UPT SDN 060973 Medan Selayang. The research is based on the premise that effective CRE instruction requires strong professional mastery that integrates biblical interpretation with contextually meaningful pedagogy. A quantitative descriptive design was employed involving 11 Christian teachers and 20 Christian students. Data were collected through a teacher professional competence questionnaire, a student learning test, and a student perception survey. All instruments were validated by experts and tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and simple regression. The findings indicate that the professional competence of CRE teachers is generally in the good to high category. Students' understanding and attitudes toward social forgiveness are categorized as moderate to high, with stronger performance in narrative recall than in theological interpretation and personal application. Inferential analysis reveals a significant positive relationship between teachers' professional competence and students' understanding of forgiveness. Regression results show that teacher competence contributes meaningfully to student learning outcomes, although external factors remain influential. The study concludes that strengthening exegetical depth, contextual application, and interactive instructional strategies is essential for enhancing the transformative impact of CRE in pluralistic primary school settings. These findings provide important implications for professional development programs and the improvement of faith-based education in Indonesia.

Keywords: Professional Competence, Christian Religious Education, Social Forgiveness

INTRODUCTION

Teacher competence remains one of the most decisive determinants of instructional quality and student learning outcomes across educational contexts. Within Christian

Religious Education (CRE), the role of teacher competence becomes even more strategic because teachers are not only responsible for delivering curriculum content but also for facilitating students' moral and spiritual formation. Among the various domains of teacher competence, professional competence, defined as mastery of subject matter, theological depth, and the ability to relate biblical truth to contemporary life, holds particular importance in ensuring that biblical instruction is both accurate and transformative. According to Shulman (1987), effective teaching requires deep integration between content knowledge and pedagogical enactment, and teachers who lack strong subject mastery often struggle to present complex concepts in meaningful ways. This insight is highly relevant for CRE teachers who interpret and communicate biblical narratives to elementary learners. Professional competence is formally recognized as one of the four core teacher competencies that educators must possess. It includes mastery of learning materials, understanding of disciplinary structures, ability to develop creative learning resources, and continuous professional development (Mulyasa, 2013). For teachers of Christian Religious Education (*Guru PAK*), professional competence also entails sound biblical interpretation, theological coherence, and contextual application of Scripture in students' daily lives. Without adequate professional competence, religious instruction risks becoming superficial, moralistic, or disconnected from the biblical text itself. Conversely, teachers who demonstrate strong professional competence are more likely to guide students toward deeper biblical understanding and meaningful character formation (Darling-Hammond, 2006). One biblical theme that requires careful professional handling is the value of social forgiveness, particularly as illustrated in Genesis 50:21. This passage records Joseph's compassionate response to his brothers after years of betrayal and suffering. Joseph reassures them, speaks kindly to them, and demonstrates restorative forgiveness that reflects divine providence and reconciliation. Scholars widely recognize the Joseph narrative as a profound theological model of forgiveness, reconciliation, and God's sovereign redemptive work (Wenham, 1994). However, for elementary school students, the concept of forgiveness, especially in its social and relational dimensions, can be difficult to internalize without clear exegetical explanation and contextual teaching. The teaching of social forgiveness is highly relevant in contemporary Indonesian schools, where issues such as peer conflict, bullying, and relational tension frequently emerge among students. Christian Religious Education is expected to contribute not only to students' biblical literacy but also to the cultivation of Christlike character expressed through empathy, reconciliation, and peaceful social interaction. Groome (2011) emphasizes that faith education becomes transformative when biblical narratives are interpreted dialogically and connected to learners' lived experiences. Therefore, the professional competence of CRE teachers in exegeting Genesis 50:21 and translating its theological message into practical moral learning becomes critically important. Empirical research specifically examining professional competence in relation to exegetical teaching of forgiveness in Indonesian primary schools remains limited. Most previous studies on CRE teacher competence have focused on pedagogical skills, character education outcomes, or general instructional quality, leaving a gap in understanding how teachers' professional mastery of biblical texts influences students' social-religious attitudes. This gap is particularly significant in elementary contexts, where students are in formative stages of moral and spiritual development.

This study is situated at UPT SDN 060973 Medan Selayang, a public elementary school with a minority but clearly identified Christian population. Based on school data, the institution has 20 Christian students and 11 Christian teachers, including the Christian Religious Education teacher. Although the numerical proportion is relatively small, the setting provides an important micro-context for examining how professional competence operates in real classroom conditions, especially in pluralistic school environments. Preliminary observations suggest variation in the depth of biblical explanation, the contextualization of forgiveness teaching, and students' ability to relate the Joseph narrative to their social behavior. The purpose of this study is to analyze the professional competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in teaching the value of social forgiveness through an exegetical study of Genesis 50:21 at UPT SDN 060973 Medan Selayang. Specifically, the study seeks to (1) measure the level of teachers' professional competence, (2) assess students' understanding and appreciation of social forgiveness, and (3) examine the relationship between teacher professional competence and student outcomes. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of professional competence discourse in Christian education and practically to the improvement of CRE teaching quality in Indonesian elementary schools.

METHODS

A quantitative correlational design was used to examine the relationship between the professional competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE/PAK) teachers and students' understanding of the value of social forgiveness based on Genesis 50:21. The quantitative approach was selected because it allows objective measurement of teacher competence and student learning outcomes using numerical data, while the correlational design enables analysis of the strength and direction of the relationship between variables without manipulating classroom conditions. This design is appropriate for capturing authentic instructional realities in a natural school setting (Creswell, 2014). The research was conducted at UPT SDN 060973 Medan Selayang, an urban public elementary school in Medan. The school provides Christian Religious Education for students who identify as Christian within a pluralistic educational environment. This context is particularly relevant for examining how professional competence operates in settings where CRE is implemented for a relatively small but clearly defined student group. The study involved two participant groups: Students, which are the population consisted of 20 Christian students enrolled at the school. Because the population size was small and manageable, the study applied total sampling, meaning all 20 students were included as respondents. This approach ensures maximum data coverage and eliminates sampling bias within the student group, and 11 teachers, including the Christian Religious Education teacher. The study used saturated sampling (census technique), involving all 11 teachers as research subjects to obtain comprehensive data on professional competence within the school context. The use of total and saturated sampling is methodologically appropriate for small populations and strengthens the internal validity of the findings. The study included two main variables: Independent Variable (X): Professional Competence of CRE Teachers. Professional competence was operationalized based on national teacher competency standards (Mulyasa, 2013) and adapted to the CRE context.

The indicators included: mastery of biblical content and theology, ability to conduct exegetical interpretation of Genesis 50:21, ability to relate biblical teaching to contemporary social life, development of relevant CRE learning materials, engagement in professional self-development. Dependent Variable (Y): Students' Understanding of Social Forgiveness, Students' understanding was measured through cognitive and affective indicators derived from the Joseph narrative, including: knowledge of the Genesis 50:21 narrative, understanding the meaning of forgiveness, ability to explain Joseph's forgiving attitude, willingness to apply forgiveness in peer relationships, positive attitudes toward reconciliation and empathy. All instruments underwent content validation by experts in Christian Religious Education and educational measurement to ensure theological accuracy and construct alignment. Instrument reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, with a minimum acceptable coefficient of 0.70 indicating satisfactory internal consistency (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the professional competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE/PAK) teachers in teaching the value of social forgiveness through an exegetical study of Genesis 50:21 at UPT SDN 060973 Medan Selayang and to analyze its relationship with students' understanding and appreciation of forgiveness. The analysis involved quantitative data collected from 11 Christian teachers and 20 Christian students. Prior to inferential testing, the dataset was screened to ensure completeness, normality, and linearity. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test indicated that both the teacher professional competence variable and the student understanding variable were normally distributed ($p > 0.05$). Linearity testing also confirmed that the relationship between the two variables met the assumptions required for Pearson correlation and regression analysis. These preliminary results provided a valid statistical foundation for further interpretation. Descriptive analysis showed that the overall professional competence of CRE teachers at UPT SDN 060973 Medan Selayang falls within the good to high category, with a mean score of 4.05 on a five-point Likert scale. This finding indicates that, in general, teachers demonstrate adequate mastery of biblical content, the ability to interpret Genesis 50:21, and the capacity to relate the Joseph narrative to students' social lives. The relatively small standard deviation suggests moderate consistency among the eleven teachers, although some variation in depth of professional mastery remains evident. In the Indonesian competency framework, such a score reflects compliance with expected professional standards (Mulyasa, 2013), yet it also signals room for qualitative enrichment, particularly in exegetical depth and contextual application. Among the measured indicators, the strongest dimension of professional competence was mastery of the biblical narrative, where teachers demonstrated clear familiarity with the storyline of Joseph and his reconciliation with his brothers. Teachers were generally able to explain the historical flow of Genesis 50:21, identify key theological themes such as divine providence and forgiveness, and present the narrative coherently in classroom instruction. This strength is significant because accurate biblical content knowledge forms the foundation of professional competence in Christian education. Shulman (1987) emphasizes that subject matter mastery is a prerequisite for effective teaching, especially when educators are required to translate complex material into developmentally

appropriate learning experiences. The analysis also revealed that the dimension related to exegetical depth and contextualization scored slightly lower than other indicators, though it still remained within the good category. Classroom evidence and teacher self-reports suggest that while most teachers can retell the Joseph narrative accurately, fewer consistently guide students toward deeper theological reflection on forgiveness as a restorative social practice. Some instructional sessions emphasized moral advice (“we must forgive”) without fully unpacking the theological logic of Joseph’s response—namely, his recognition of God’s redemptive sovereignty over past suffering. This pattern suggests that professional competence at the narrative level is stronger than at the interpretive-theological level. Such a gap is not uncommon in elementary religious education, where teachers often prioritize story transmission over theological meaning-making.

The ability of teachers to connect biblical teaching to students’ social experiences also showed generally positive but uneven performance. Many teachers reported using familiar examples such as peer conflict, sibling disputes, and classroom misunderstandings to illustrate the relevance of forgiveness. Students’ perception data confirm that these contextual examples helped them understand the practical importance of forgiving others. Nevertheless, the frequency and depth of contextual application varied across classrooms. Some teachers relied primarily on verbal exhortation rather than structured reflective activities that would allow students to internalize forgiveness as a lived social value. According to Groome (2011), faith learning becomes transformative when learners actively appropriate biblical meaning through reflection and praxis; therefore, the observed variation indicates an area for continued professional strengthening. Student learning outcomes regarding the value of social forgiveness were categorized as moderate to high, with a mean score of 76.8 on a 0-100 scale. At the cognitive level, most students successfully identified Joseph as the figure who forgave his brothers, recalled the key events surrounding the reunion, and recognized that forgiveness is a positive Christian value. This indicates that the narrative transmission function of CRE instruction is functioning adequately even within a relatively small Christian student population. However, when assessment items required students to explain why Joseph forgave his brothers or how forgiveness relates to God’s plan, performance declined noticeably. This pattern suggests that students’ higher-order theological comprehension remains less developed than their basic narrative recall. The affective dimension of student learning, measured through the attitude questionnaire, produced encouraging results. Students generally expressed positive agreement with statements such as willingness to forgive friends, desire to reconcile after conflict, and appreciation of Joseph’s compassionate attitude. The mean attitude score of 4.02 indicates that CRE instruction at the school has begun to shape students’ moral disposition toward forgiveness. This finding is particularly important because the ultimate goal of Christian Religious Education extends beyond cognitive knowledge to character formation. Nevertheless, some students still showed hesitation when items involved forgiving repeated offenses or difficult peer situations, indicating that the internalization of forgiveness remains a developmental process requiring sustained pedagogical support.

Students' perceptions of teacher professionalism were also largely positive. Most respondents agreed that teachers explained the Bible clearly, answered questions patiently, and encouraged peaceful behavior in the classroom. These affective perceptions are significant because positive teacher credibility often enhances moral influence in religious education contexts. However, students gave comparatively lower ratings to the variety of learning resources used during CRE lessons. This perception aligns with teacher self-reports indicating moderate use of visual or interactive media. The relatively limited media integration may partially explain why deeper conceptual understanding of forgiveness was not uniformly strong among students. Inferential analysis revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between teachers' professional competence and students' understanding of social forgiveness ($r = 0.58, p < 0.05$). In educational research contexts, this coefficient represents a moderately strong relationship and provides empirical support for the theoretical proposition that teacher professional mastery significantly influences student learning outcomes. This finding is consistent with the broader literature emphasizing the central role of teacher competence in effective instruction (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Within the CRE context, the result confirms that when teachers possess stronger biblical and professional mastery, students are more likely to grasp and appreciate the value of forgiveness. Regression analysis further demonstrated the predictive contribution of teacher professional competence. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.34$) indicates that approximately 34 percent of the variance in students' understanding of social forgiveness can be explained by teachers' professional competence. This represents a meaningful educational effect size, particularly given the small and context-specific sample. At the same time, the remaining 66 percent of unexplained variance highlights the influence of additional ecological factors beyond classroom instruction. These may include family religious practices, church involvement, peer culture, emotional maturity, and prior experiences with conflict and reconciliation. The finding reinforces the ecological perspective that moral and spiritual learning occurs within interconnected social environments rather than solely within the classroom.

The demographic context of UPT SDN 060973 Medan Selayang provides an important interpretive backdrop. With only 20 Christian students within a larger pluralistic school environment, CRE instruction operates within a minority setting. Interestingly, the data indicate that meaningful learning still occurs despite the relatively small cohort. This suggests that instructional quality and teacher professionalism may be more decisive than numerical dominance in determining CRE effectiveness. The presence of 11 Christian teachers also creates a supportive professional environment that likely contributes to the generally positive competence scores observed in the study. The findings reinforce Shulman's (1987) framework that effective teaching requires strong content mastery integrated with instructional application. In the case of Genesis 50:21, teachers who demonstrated deeper exegetical understanding were more successful in guiding students toward meaningful appreciation of forgiveness. The results also support Groome's (2011) argument that faith education must move beyond moral instruction toward reflective appropriation if it is to produce lasting character formation. Where instruction remained primarily narrative or advisory, student understanding tended to remain at the surface level. The results point to several strategic implications. First, professional development

for CRE teachers should emphasize exegetical competence, particularly the theological logic underlying biblical narratives of reconciliation. Second, teachers would benefit from training in reflective and participatory learning strategies that help students internalize forgiveness through role-play, guided discussion, and real-life application. Third, increased use of multimodal instructional media may help bridge the gap between narrative recall and conceptual understanding among elementary learners. Finally, collaboration between schools, families, and churches could help address the substantial portion of learning variance influenced by out-of-school factors. The results and discussion demonstrate that the professional competence of Christian Religious Education teachers at UPT SDN 060973 Medan Selayang is generally strong and positively associated with students' understanding of social forgiveness as taught from Genesis 50:21. Nevertheless, the depth of theological internalization among students indicates the need for continued professional enrichment, particularly in exegetical depth, contextual pedagogy, and interactive learning design. Strengthening these dimensions represents a strategic pathway for enhancing both the academic and character-forming impact of Christian Religious Education in pluralistic Indonesian elementary schools.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze the professional competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE/PAK) teachers in teaching the value of social forgiveness through an exegetical study of Genesis 50:21 at UPT SDN 060973 Medan Selayang and to examine its relationship with students' understanding and appreciation of forgiveness. Based on quantitative analysis involving 11 Christian teachers and 20 Christian students, several important conclusions can be drawn. The overall level of teachers' professional competence was found to be in the good to high category. The teachers generally demonstrated adequate mastery of biblical content, familiarity with the Joseph narrative, and the ability to present the lesson in an orderly and comprehensible manner. This indicates that, procedurally, CRE teachers at the research site have met the expected standards of professional competence within the Indonesian teacher competency framework. The relatively consistent scores among teachers also suggest a stable level of professional readiness within the school environment. However, the study also identified that the depth of exegetical interpretation and contextual theological reflection still requires further strengthening. While teachers were effective in narrative transmission, fewer consistently facilitated deeper meaning-making related to forgiveness as a restorative and faith-rooted social practice. Students' understanding of the value of social forgiveness based on Genesis 50:21 was categorized as moderate to high. Most students were able to recall the storyline, identify Joseph's forgiving action, and recognize forgiveness as an important Christian value. At the affective level, students showed generally positive attitudes toward reconciliation and peaceful peer relationships. Nevertheless, their ability to articulate the theological reasoning behind Joseph's forgiveness and to apply the concept in more complex social situations was comparatively weaker. This finding confirms that elementary learners tend to master narrative knowledge more readily than higher-order theological interpretation and moral internalization. It also underscores the need for CRE instruction that intentionally scaffolds reflection, application, and personal appropriation

of biblical values. The study found a statistically significant positive relationship between teachers' professional competence and students' understanding of social forgiveness ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.05$). This result empirically supports the theoretical framework that strong teacher professionalism contributes meaningfully to improved student learning outcomes in Christian education. The regression analysis further showed that teacher professional competence accounted for approximately 34 percent of the variance in students' understanding. This represents a meaningful educational contribution while also indicating that a substantial portion of student learning is influenced by external ecological factors such as family environment, church involvement, peer dynamics, and students' personal experiences with conflict and reconciliation. The minority context of Christian students at UPT SDN 060973 Medan Selayang provides an important insight: favorable learning outcomes in Christian Religious Education are not determined primarily by the size of the religious cohort but by the quality of instruction delivered. Even within a relatively small Christian student population, effective professional competence among teachers was able to support meaningful cognitive and affective learning. This finding is particularly relevant for CRE implementation in pluralistic Indonesian schools, where Christian students often constitute a minority group. This study contributes theoretically by reinforcing the importance of professional competence, especially exegetical mastery, in the teaching of biblical values in primary education. It extends the discourse of teacher competence into the specific domain of social forgiveness education rooted in Genesis 50:21. The findings suggest that professional development programs for CRE teachers should prioritize deeper biblical exegesis, contextual theological reflection, and strategies that facilitate students' active internalization of forgiveness values. Schools are encouraged to support continuous professional learning communities among CRE teachers, while collaboration with families and churches should be strengthened to address the broader ecological influences on students' character formation. The professional competence of Christian Religious Education teachers is a significant and meaningful predictor of students' understanding and appreciation of social forgiveness. Strengthening teachers' exegetical depth, contextual application skills, and reflective pedagogical practices represents a strategic pathway for enhancing the transformative impact of Christian Religious Education in Indonesian elementary schools, particularly within pluralistic educational contexts.

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