



Christian Religious Education Teachers as Guardians of God's Covenant: A Reflection on Genesis 26:3-5 at SDN 075024 Duria Balaki

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers as guardians of God's covenant through a reflection on Genesis 26:3-5 at SDN 075024 Duria Balaki, Nias. The research is grounded in the theological premise that God's covenant faithfulness requires intentional transmission through educational practices, particularly within formal Christian education contexts. The study aims to analyze how the professional and spiritual competencies of CRE teachers contribute to students' understanding of covenantal values such as obedience, faithfulness, and trust in God. A quantitative descriptive approach was employed involving 78 Christian students and 9 Christian teachers (including the CRE teacher). Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. The findings reveal that the CRE teacher demonstrates a strong role in mediating covenantal theology into pedagogical practice, reflected in high student responses regarding clarity of teaching, relational communication, and value internalization. However, several areas require strengthening, particularly in contextual application and student-centered engagement strategies. The discussion highlights that effective covenantal teaching is not merely cognitive but integrative, involving pedagogical competence, spiritual modeling, and relational sensitivity. The study concludes that CRE teachers function significantly as covenant guardians when professional competence is aligned with biblical-theological understanding and reflective teaching practice. Strengthening continuous professional development and contextual pedagogy is recommended to enhance the transformative impact of covenant-based Christian education in primary school settings.

Keywords: *God's Covenant, Christian Religious Education, Guardians*

INTRODUCTION

Teacher competence remains one of the most decisive factors in determining the quality of learning and the depth of student formation in religious education. Within the framework of Christian Religious Education (CRE), the role of the teacher extends beyond the transmission of biblical knowledge toward the formation of faith, character, and

covenantal awareness among students. CRE teachers (Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen/PAK) are therefore expected not only to master pedagogical skills but also to embody theological understanding and spiritual maturity that enable them to function as faithful mediators of biblical truth. Shulman (1987) emphasizes that effective teaching requires the integration of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, known as pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), which is particularly crucial when teachers communicate complex theological themes to young learners. In the context of covenant theology, this integration becomes even more essential because the concept of divine covenant involves historical narrative, theological meaning, and ethical implication simultaneously. CRE operates within the broader national education system that requires teachers to demonstrate professional competence in planning, implementing, and evaluating learning. National standards highlight that teachers must possess pedagogical, professional, social, and personality competencies in order to facilitate meaningful learning (Mulyasa, 2013). In practice, the effectiveness of CRE often depends on how well teachers translate biblical narratives into developmentally appropriate and spiritually formative experiences for students. Groome (2011) argues that faith education becomes transformative when learners are guided not only to know biblical stories but also to interpret and appropriate their meaning in daily life. This perspective positions the CRE teacher as a “guardian” of covenantal understanding, one who faithfully preserves, interprets, and contextualizes God’s promises for the younger generation. One of the significant biblical passages that reflects God’s covenant continuity is Genesis 26:3-5, where God reaffirms His covenant promises to Isaac based on His prior covenant with Abraham. The passage highlights themes of divine faithfulness, generational blessing, obedience, and covenantal continuity. This text is foundational because it demonstrates that God’s covenant is not momentary but enduring across generations (Goldingay, 2015). For elementary students, however, the abstract nature of covenant continuity may be difficult to grasp without careful pedagogical mediation. Without effective instructional guidance, students may remember the narrative but fail to internalize the covenantal values embedded in the text. Previous studies in teacher effectiveness consistently show that teacher competence significantly influences student cognitive and affective outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2006). In the field of Christian education, research has frequently emphasized character formation, spiritual development, and instructional strategies. Nevertheless, empirical studies specifically examining the role of CRE teachers as mediators of covenant theology in Indonesian elementary schools remain limited. Most existing research focuses on general biblical teaching or moral education without deeply exploring how teachers function as covenant interpreters in classroom practice. This gap is particularly important because covenant theology forms the backbone of biblical redemptive history and Christian identity formation. The present study is situated at SDN 075024 Duria Balaki, Nias, a public elementary school with a strong Christian demographic profile. School data indicate that there are 78 Christian students and 9 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher. This context provides a strategic environment for examining how CRE teachers enact their role as guardians of God’s covenant in everyday instructional practice. Despite the supportive religious composition, preliminary observations suggest variation in students’ depth of understanding regarding covenant themes and differences in instructional emphasis among teachers. Theoretically, when CRE teachers effectively integrate pedagogical competence, theological clarity, and

relational engagement, students are more likely to develop a meaningful understanding of God's covenant faithfulness. Conversely, when instruction is limited to narrative retelling without reflective engagement, students' learning may remain superficial. Therefore, investigating the teacher's role as a covenant guardian is both pedagogically and theologically significant. This study aims to analyze how Christian Religious Education teachers function as guardians of God's covenant in teaching Genesis 26:3-5 at SDN 075024 Duria Balaki, Nias. Specifically, the research seeks to examine the level of teacher competence in mediating covenant themes, describe instructional practices used in teaching the passage, and evaluate the relationship between teacher competence and students' understanding of covenant continuity. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the discourse on pedagogical content knowledge in Christian education and practically to the improvement of CRE teaching quality in Indonesian primary schools.

METHODS

A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was used to examine how Christian Religious Education (CRE/PAK) teachers function as guardians of God's covenant in teaching Genesis 26:3-5 and to analyze the relationship between teacher competence and students' understanding of covenant continuity. The quantitative approach was selected because it allows objective measurement of teacher-related variables and student learning outcomes through numerical data, while the correlational component enables examination of the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables under investigation. The descriptive dimension was used to portray the existing condition of CRE instructional practice at the research site without experimental manipulation. The research was conducted at SDN 075024 Duria Balaki, Nias, a public elementary school with a predominantly Christian school community. This context is pedagogically relevant because the religious demographic supports the formal implementation of Christian Religious Education in accordance with national curriculum provisions. Based on official school data, the institution has 78 Christian students and 9 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher. This relatively cohesive religious environment provides a meaningful setting for examining how covenant theology is taught and received in primary education. The study involved two groups of participants: students and teachers. The population consisted of all 78 Christian students enrolled at the school. Given the manageable population size, the study applied a total sampling technique, meaning the entire population was included as research respondents. This approach increases statistical representativeness and eliminates sampling bias. The school employs 9 Christian teachers, including the Christian Religious Education teacher. Because of the limited number, the research used saturated sampling, in which all nine teachers were included as respondents for the teacher competence instrument. This approach ensures comprehensive coverage of the teacher population within the school context. Independent Variable (X): Teacher Competence as Guardians of God's Covenant, refers to the CRE teacher's ability to mediate covenant theology effectively in classroom practice. It was operationalized through the following indicators adapted from teacher competency standards and Christian education literature (Mulyasa, 2013; Shulman, 1987): understanding students' characteristics, planning covenant-based CRE instruction, implementing meaningful and interactive biblical teaching, utilizing learning media and

biblical resources, conducting assessment and feedback, and modeling covenant faithfulness through teacher behavior. Dependent Variable (Y): Students' Understanding of Covenant Continuity (Genesis 26:3-5), refers to students' cognitive and interpretive comprehension of God's covenant reaffirmed to Isaac. It was measured through indicators including: knowledge of the biblical narrative, understanding of covenant continuity, recognition of the theme of obedience and promise, and ability to relate covenant values to daily Christian life. Content validity was established through expert judgment involving specialists in Christian Religious Education and educational measurement. Revisions were made based on expert feedback to ensure theological accuracy and developmental appropriateness. Instrument reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, with a minimum acceptable coefficient of 0.70. All instruments met the reliability threshold, indicating acceptable internal consistency for research use.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine how Christian Religious Education (CRE/PAK) teachers function as guardians of God's covenant in teaching Genesis 26:3-5 at SDN 075024 Duria Balaki, Nias, and to analyze the relationship between teacher competence and students' understanding of covenant continuity. The analysis drew upon quantitative data collected from nine Christian teachers and seventy-eight Christian students. Prior to conducting inferential analysis, the dataset was examined for completeness, distribution, and linearity. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test indicated that both the teacher competence variable and the student understanding variable were normally distributed ($p > 0.05$). Linearity testing also confirmed that the relationship between the independent and dependent variables met the assumptions required for Pearson correlation and regression analysis. These preliminary findings provided statistical assurance that the subsequent analyses were methodologically sound and interpretable. Descriptive analysis revealed that the overall competence of CRE teachers as guardians of God's covenant was in the high category, with a mean score of 4.15 on a five-point Likert scale. The relatively small standard deviation indicated consistency across the nine teachers, suggesting that covenant-oriented instructional competence is generally well established within the school context. Among the six measured indicators, the highest mean score appeared in the dimension of teacher modeling of covenant faithfulness, while the comparatively lower, though still high, dimension was the utilization of learning media and biblical resources. This pattern is pedagogically meaningful because it suggests that teachers at SDN 075024 Duria Balaki demonstrate strong personal and relational dimensions of competence but still have room to expand instructional innovation through multimodal learning resources. The high score in the teacher modeling dimension indicates that students and teachers alike perceive CRE educators as demonstrating integrity, consistency, and faith-based commitment in their professional conduct. In the framework of Christian education, this finding is highly significant because covenant theology is not merely cognitive content but relational truth embodied through lived faithfulness. Consistent with Shulman's (1987) concept of pedagogical content knowledge, effective biblical teaching requires teachers not only to understand the material but also to embody the values embedded within it. When teachers model covenant faithfulness through responsible behavior, fairness, and spiritual consistency, students are more likely

to interpret Genesis 26:3-5 not merely as historical narrative but as a living theological reality. The data therefore support the notion that teacher personality and professional conduct function as implicit curriculum within CRE classrooms. Teachers also demonstrated strong competence. Document analysis of lesson plans indicated that most teachers included clear learning objectives, relevant biblical references, structured learning steps, and evaluation components. These findings align with national teacher competency expectations (Mulyasa, 2013) and suggest that administratively, CRE instruction at the school is well organized. However, deeper qualitative inspection of the planning documents revealed variation in theological depth. While the narrative elements of Genesis 26:3-5 were consistently presented, the covenant continuity theme, particularly the intergenerational dimension of God's promise, was not always explicitly emphasized. This suggests that procedural planning competence does not automatically guarantee theological richness. Teachers appear to be structurally prepared but may benefit from further professional development focused on deepening pedagogical content knowledge specific to covenant theology. Classroom implementation of CRE instruction generally reflected a teacher-guided interactive model. The dominant instructional strategy observed was biblical storytelling, followed by guided questioning and brief whole-class discussion. These approaches are developmentally appropriate for elementary learners and likely contributed to the positive student perception scores observed in the dataset. Students reported that teachers explained lessons clearly and created a supportive learning environment, with an overall perception mean of 4.09. From a pedagogical standpoint, these findings indicate that the relational climate of CRE classrooms at SDN 075024 Duria Balaki is conducive to faith learning. Darling-Hammond (2006) emphasizes that effective teachers create emotionally supportive environments that enhance student engagement and motivation, and the present data appear consistent with this principle. The analysis also revealed that more student-centered and inquiry-based strategies were used less frequently. Cooperative learning structures, role-play activities, and problem-based biblical reflection appeared only occasionally in teacher reports and student perceptions. This pattern may help explain the observed gap between students' strong narrative recall and their comparatively weaker theological interpretation. As Groome (2011) argues, faith education becomes transformative when learners actively interpret and appropriate biblical meaning rather than passively receiving information. The predominance of teacher-directed storytelling, while effective for narrative transmission, may limit opportunities for deeper covenant reflection among students. Therefore, the data suggest that the next stage of pedagogical development at the school should involve expanding participatory learning structures that encourage student meaning-making.

The utilization of learning media emerged as the comparatively weakest dimension of teacher competence, with a mean score of 3.81. Although still within the high category, classroom evidence suggested reliance primarily on printed textbooks, verbal explanation, and whiteboard summaries. Visual aids, digital media, and contextual learning tools were used only intermittently. From a developmental psychology perspective, this limitation is important because elementary learners typically benefit from multimodal instruction that integrates visual, auditory, and experiential elements. The abstract nature of covenant continuity in Genesis 26:3-5 makes media-supported

learning particularly valuable. The moderate performance of students in higher-order covenant understanding may therefore be partially linked to the limited diversity of instructional media. Student learning outcomes regarding Genesis 26:3-5 were categorized as moderate to high, with a mean score of 79.4 on a 0-100 scale. Item analysis revealed an important pattern. Most students demonstrated strong ability to identify Isaac, recall that God reaffirmed His promise, and recognize the connection to Abraham. These results indicate that the narrative transmission function of CRE instruction is operating effectively at the school. However, when test items required students to explain the theological meaning of covenant continuity, interpret the relationship between obedience and blessing, or apply covenant values to daily Christian living, performance declined noticeably. This pattern confirms a widely documented phenomenon in elementary religious education: factual recall develops more readily than theological abstraction and personal application.

The correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between teacher competence as guardians of God's covenant and students' understanding of Genesis 26:3-5 ($r = 0.64$, $p < 0.05$). In educational research, this coefficient represents a strong relationship and provides empirical support for the pedagogical content knowledge framework proposed by Shulman (1987). The finding indicates that classrooms led by teachers with higher covenant-oriented competence tend to produce students with deeper comprehension of the biblical material. This relationship is particularly meaningful in Christian Religious Education because the teacher's role involves mediating theological meaning in developmentally appropriate ways rather than merely transmitting information. Regression analysis further confirmed the predictive role of teacher competence. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.41$) indicates that approximately 41 percent of the variance in students' understanding of covenant continuity can be explained by the competence of CRE teachers functioning as guardians of God's covenant. In the context of educational studies, this represents a substantial and practically meaningful effect size. At the same time, the remaining 59 percent of unexplained variance highlights the influence of additional ecological factors beyond classroom instruction. These likely include family religious practices, church involvement, prior biblical exposure, peer influence, and individual student motivation. This finding reinforces the ecological perspective of faith education, which views spiritual learning as occurring across interconnected environments rather than exclusively within the classroom.

The demographic context of SDN 075024 Duria Balaki provides an important interpretive lens for these findings. With seventy-eight Christian students supported by nine Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher, the school environment is structurally conducive to Christian Religious Education. One might expect such a context to automatically produce high levels of covenant understanding. However, the data clearly demonstrate that favorable religious demographics alone do not guarantee deep theological learning. Instructional quality, particularly the teacher's competence in mediating covenant meaning, remains the decisive factor. This insight carries important implications for policymakers and school leaders who may assume that religious homogeneity naturally ensures effective faith education. The findings of this study contribute to the broader

discourse on teacher competence in Christian education in several significant ways. They empirically confirm that teacher competence as covenant guardians is a meaningful predictor of student learning in CRE, consistent with the wider teacher effectiveness literature (Darling-Hammond, 2006). They highlight a specific pedagogical depth gap between narrative mastery and covenant internalization among elementary students. They identify media integration and participatory pedagogy as strategic areas for professional development among CRE teachers. They demonstrate that even in supportive religious environments, instructional intentionality remains the key lever for improving theological learning outcomes. The teaching of Genesis 26:3-5 requires more than historical explanation; it demands careful mediation of divine faithfulness across generations. When instruction emphasizes storytelling without sufficient guided reflection, students may remember that God spoke to Isaac but fail to grasp the covenantal continuity linking Abraham, Isaac, and future believers. Conversely, when teachers integrate clear explanation, visual representation, dialogical engagement, and life application, the biblical text becomes more formative for students' faith development. The present findings suggest that CRE teachers at SDN 075024 Duria Balaki are already operating from a strong professional foundation but would benefit from targeted enrichment in meaning-centered biblical pedagogy. Several practical implications emerge from the results. Professional development programs for CRE teachers should prioritize strengthening pedagogical content knowledge related specifically to covenant theology. Training in multimodal biblical instruction, including visual storytelling, contextual mapping of covenant lineage, and student-centered reflection, would likely enhance deeper learning. Assessment practices should gradually incorporate higher-order theological reasoning and personal faith application rather than focusing predominantly on recall. Additionally, collaborative partnerships among schools, families, and local churches could help address the substantial portion of learning variance explained by out-of-school influences.

Future research would benefit from employing mixed-method or longitudinal designs to explore how covenant understanding develops over time and across learning environments. Qualitative classroom observations and student interviews could also provide richer insight into how students internalize covenant themes beyond what can be captured through quantitative measures alone. Expanding the sample across multiple schools in Nias or other regions of Indonesia would further strengthen generalizability. The results and discussion of this study demonstrate that Christian Religious Education teachers at SDN 075024 Duria Balaki are generally functioning effectively as guardians of God's covenant, as reflected in their high competence scores and the moderate-to-high student learning outcomes. The depth of students' covenant understanding indicates the need for continued pedagogical enrichment, particularly in media integration and participatory learning strategies. Strengthening these dimensions represents a strategic pathway for enhancing both the academic quality and the spiritual formation impact of Christian Religious Education in Indonesian primary schools.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers as guardians of God's covenant through a reflection on Genesis 26:3-5 within the context of SDN 075024 Duria Balaki, Nias. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the theological narrative of God's faithfulness to Isaac provides a strong biblical foundation for understanding the vocational identity of CRE teachers as covenantal educators. The passage emphasizes divine promise, obedience, and generational continuity, three dimensions that are highly relevant to the educational task of shaping students' faith and character in contemporary Christian schooling contexts. The study revealed that CRE teachers at SDN 075024 Duria Balaki demonstrate a generally positive capacity in embodying covenantal values through their pedagogical practices, spiritual modeling, and relational engagement with students. With a school population consisting of 78 Christian students and nine Christian teachers (including the CRE teacher), the institutional environment provides a supportive ecosystem for the transmission of Christian values. Quantitative analysis indicated that students perceived their teachers as consistent in demonstrating faithfulness, moral integrity, and spiritual responsibility, traits that align closely with the covenant motif in Genesis 26:3-5. This suggests that the teacher's lived example plays a crucial mediating role between biblical teaching and students' internalization of faith commitments. The findings also highlight that the effectiveness of CRE teachers as covenant guardians is not merely determined by cognitive mastery of biblical content but by the integration of spiritual authenticity, pedagogical competence, and relational sensitivity. Teachers who intentionally connect biblical narratives to students' lived experiences tend to foster deeper spiritual resonance among learners. In the Nias context, where communal identity and intergenerational continuity are culturally significant, the covenant framework becomes particularly meaningful. It reinforces the idea that Christian education is not only about knowledge transmission but about faithful stewardship of God's promises across generations. While overall perceptions were positive, some students reported variability in the consistency of teachers' spiritual modeling outside formal instructional settings. This indicates the need for ongoing professional and spiritual formation among CRE teachers so that covenantal values are embodied holistically in both classroom and informal school interactions. Structured collaboration among the nine Christian teachers could further enhance the collective witness of the school as a covenant community, rather than placing the primary responsibility solely on the CRE teacher. This research reaffirms that Genesis 26:3-5 offers a robust paradigm for Christian educators: God's covenant faithfulness calls forth human obedience and faithful transmission to the next generation. Pedagogically, the study contributes to the growing body of scholarship that positions teacher identity and spirituality as central determinants of effective Christian Religious Education. The findings encourage schools, especially in regions such as Nias, to design teacher development programs that integrate biblical reflection, character formation, and contextual pedagogy. CRE teachers at SDN 075024 Duria Balaki largely function as effective guardians of God's covenant, as reflected in students' positive perceptions and the supportive Christian school environment. Sustained efforts in professional development, spiritual mentoring, and collaborative ministry are essential to ensure that covenantal faithfulness is modeled consistently and transmitted meaningfully to future generations. Future research is recommended to expand the sample across multiple schools in Nias and to

employ mixed-method approaches that can capture more deeply the lived spirituality of teachers and students within covenant-centered Christian education.

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