



## Teacher Competence of Christian Religious Education Educators in Teaching the Value of Obedience to God's Commands: An Exegetical Study of Exodus 39:32 at SMP Negeri 4 Bonai Darussalam

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in teaching the value of obedience to God's commands through an exegetical reflection on Exodus 39:32 at SMP Negeri 4 Bonai Darussalam, Rokan Hulu. The research was motivated by the strategic role of CRE teachers in shaping students' spiritual character within public school contexts. The study involved 183 Christian students and 10 Christian teachers (including the CRE teacher). Employing a quantitative descriptive design, data were collected through structured questionnaires, classroom observations, and documentation, then analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation techniques. The findings indicate that the overall competence of CRE teachers is in the high category, particularly in pedagogical planning, biblical mastery, and classroom interaction. Students' understanding and practice of obedience to God's commands were also found to be high, with a positive relationship between teacher competence and students' internalization of obedience values. The exegetical analysis of Exodus 39:32 reinforces the theological foundation that obedience in the biblical tradition is expressed through careful, faithful, and complete execution of God's instructions, which aligns with the educational task of CRE teachers. However, the study also notes the need for more contextual learning strategies and authentic assessment to strengthen behavioral consistency among students. The study concludes that the competence of CRE teachers significantly contributes to the cultivation of obedience values and recommends continuous professional development, integrative spiritual mentoring, and collaborative support from schools and churches to optimize student character formation.*

**Keywords:** *Teacher Competence, Christian Religious Education, Obedience*

### INTRODUCTION

Teacher competence remains one of the most decisive determinants of educational quality and student learning outcomes across disciplines. In the context of Christian

Religious Education (CRE), the role of the teacher becomes even more strategic because instruction is expected not only to transmit cognitive knowledge but also to shape students' spiritual attitudes and moral character. Competent CRE teachers must therefore demonstrate the ability to integrate pedagogical skill, theological understanding, and contextual application in ways that are developmentally appropriate for learners. Shulman (1987) emphasizes that effective teaching requires pedagogical content knowledge, a synthesis of subject mastery and instructional strategy that enables teachers to transform complex material into accessible learning experiences. This framework is highly relevant for CRE teachers who communicate biblical teachings to adolescent students. Teacher competence is formally defined through national standards that include pedagogical, professional, social, and personal domains (Mulyasa, 2013). Among these, pedagogical and professional competence are particularly critical in religious education because teachers must interpret Scripture accurately while designing meaningful learning processes. Previous studies consistently demonstrate that teacher competence significantly influences students' academic achievement and character formation (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Hattie, 2009). In many classroom contexts, especially in public schools, CRE teachers still face challenges in translating biblical texts into learning experiences that foster deep moral internalization rather than mere memorization. One essential biblical value taught in Christian education is obedience to God's commands. The theme of obedience occupies a central place in Old Testament theology, reflecting the covenantal relationship between God and His people. Exodus 39:32 provides a significant narrative moment in which the Israelites complete the tabernacle work "just as the Lord commanded Moses," highlighting obedience expressed through faithful execution of divine instruction. According to Wright (2004), obedience in the Old Testament is not merely legal compliance but a relational response of trust and covenant loyalty. For students at the junior secondary level, however, the concept of obedience to divine authority can be abstract unless mediated through effective pedagogy and contextual application.

Teaching obedience through biblical narrative requires careful instructional design. Adolescents typically demonstrate increasing cognitive capacity for moral reasoning but also heightened sensitivity to relevance and authenticity in learning. When CRE instruction relies heavily on rote explanation, students may understand the story cognitively but fail to internalize its ethical implications. Groome (2011) argues that faith education becomes transformative when learners actively engage in reflection, dialogue, and appropriation of meaning within their lived context. Therefore, teacher competence plays a crucial mediating role in helping students connect the historical narrative of Exodus 39:32 with contemporary Christian obedience. Empirical research specifically examining CRE teacher competence in relation to particular biblical themes remains limited. Most existing studies focus broadly on character education or general instructional effectiveness rather than on how teachers mediate specific theological values. This gap is significant because different biblical themes require different pedagogical approaches. Obedience, for instance, involves cognitive understanding, affective disposition, and behavioral commitment. Without competent instructional mediation, the teaching of obedience risks becoming moralistic, authoritarian, or disconnected from students' real-life experiences. This study is situated at SMP Negeri 4

Bonai Darussalam, Rokan Hulu, a public junior secondary school with a substantial Christian population. School data indicate that there are 183 Christian students and 10 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher. This demographic context provides a meaningful setting to examine how teacher competence operates in a real instructional environment. Although the numerical support for CRE is relatively strong, preliminary observations suggest variations in instructional depth, student engagement, and contextual application of biblical teaching. The purpose of this study is to analyze the competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in teaching the value of obedience to God's commands based on Exodus 39:32 at SMP Negeri 4 Bonai Darussalam, Rokan Hulu. Specifically, the study seeks to examine the level of teacher competence in CRE instruction, analyze how the obedience theme is pedagogically mediated in the classroom, and evaluate the relationship between teacher competence and students' understanding of biblical obedience. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of pedagogical content knowledge in Christian education and practically to the improvement of CRE teaching quality in Indonesian junior secondary schools.

## METHODS

A quantitative descriptive research design was implemented to examine the competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE/PAK) teachers in teaching the value of obedience to God's commands based on Exodus 39:32 at SMP Negeri 4 Bonai Darussalam, Rokan Hulu. A quantitative approach was selected because it enables objective measurement of teacher competence and students' learning outcomes through numerical data and statistical analysis, while the descriptive orientation allows the researcher to portray the actual condition of classroom practice without manipulating variables (Creswell, 2014). The research was conducted during the 2025/2026 academic year in a public junior secondary school context that supports CRE implementation. The study involved two participant groups. First, the student population consisted of 183 Christian students enrolled at the school; because the population size was manageable, the research used total sampling so that all 183 students were included as respondents. Second, the teacher participants included 10 Christian teachers (including the CRE teacher). Due to the limited number, saturated sampling was applied, meaning all teachers were involved to obtain comprehensive data on instructional competence. The primary independent variable was teacher competence in Christian Religious Education, operationalized through indicators adapted from national teacher competency standards (Mulyasa, 2013) and the pedagogical content knowledge framework (Shulman, 1987). These indicators included: understanding student characteristics, lesson planning and instructional design, implementation of interactive learning, use of learning media and resources, assessment and evaluation practices, and provision of feedback and follow-up learning. The dependent variable was students' understanding of the value of obedience to God's commands in Exodus 39:32, measured through cognitive and reflective indicators, namely: knowledge of the biblical narrative, comprehension of the obedience concept, ability to explain theological meaning, and ability to relate the lesson to daily Christian life. Data were collected using three structured instruments: a Likert-scale teacher competence questionnaire, a student perception questionnaire regarding classroom

instruction, and a student learning test consisting of multiple-choice and short-answer items focused on Exodus 39:32. Prior to administration, the instruments underwent content validation by experts in Christian Religious Education and educational measurement. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha produced coefficients above the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Data analysis was conducted in several stages. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and percentage) were used to determine the level of teacher competence and student understanding. Assumption testing included normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov) and linearity tests to ensure suitability for parametric analysis. Pearson product-moment correlation was then applied to examine the relationship between teacher competence and student understanding, followed by simple regression analysis to determine the predictive contribution of teacher competence. All statistical analyses were performed at a significance level of 0.05. Ethical considerations were observed by obtaining school permission, ensuring voluntary participation, and maintaining the confidentiality of respondents' identities.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal that the competence of Christian Religious Education teachers at SMP Negeri 4 Bonai Darussalam plays a significant role in shaping students' understanding and internalization of obedience to God's commands as reflected in Exodus 39:32. Based on quantitative data collected from 183 Christian students and supported by contextual observations of the 10 Christian teachers (including the PAK teacher), the overall level of teacher competence was categorized as high, with a mean score indicating strong pedagogical, professional, social, and spiritual performance. This finding confirms the theoretical assertion that teacher competence is a determining factor in effective value transmission in religious education (Shulman, 1987). Students reported that the PAK teacher demonstrated clarity in explaining biblical texts, consistency in modeling obedient behavior, and the ability to connect scriptural principles with daily life situations. These indicators suggest that competence in Christian education is not merely cognitive but integrative, involving knowledge, attitude, and spiritual authenticity. The data show that structured lesson planning and contextual teaching strategies significantly influenced students' comprehension of the theological meaning of obedience in Exodus 39:32. The teacher's use of narrative exposition, reflective questioning, and application-based assignments helped students move beyond rote memorization toward meaningful understanding. This supports the view that effective religious pedagogy requires transformative learning approaches rather than purely doctrinal transmission (Groome, 2011). Students indicated that when the teacher explained the Israelites' obedience in completing the tabernacle "just as the Lord commanded Moses," they were able to relate the concept to personal disciplines such as honesty, responsibility, and faithfulness in school tasks. The statistical correlation between pedagogical competence and students' obedience values fell within the strong category, indicating that instructional design remains a critical mediator in spiritual formation.

Professional competence also emerged as a dominant factor. The teacher demonstrated strong mastery of biblical content, particularly in exegetically interpreting Exodus 39:32 within its historical and theological context. Students responded positively to explanations that highlighted obedience as covenant faithfulness rather than mere rule-following. This aligns with theological scholarship emphasizing that Old Testament obedience is relational and covenantal in nature (Wright, 2004). The quantitative results showed that students who perceived higher teacher mastery also reported higher motivation to practice obedience in their daily lives. This suggests that credibility in content knowledge enhances moral persuasion in Christian education. Moreover, the teacher's ability to integrate biblical theology with contemporary student experiences, such as school discipline, respect for teachers, and responsibility in assignments, strengthened the practical relevance of the lesson. The social competence of the teacher further reinforced students' reception of obedience values. Data analysis indicated that students felt respected, heard, and pastorally guided during PAK classes. This relational climate significantly contributed to the internalization of spiritual values. Educational psychology consistently shows that students are more likely to adopt values from teachers with whom they experience positive relational trust (Hattie, 2009). In this study, the teacher's approachable communication style, fairness in classroom management, and sensitivity to students' spiritual struggles created an environment conducive to moral formation. Interestingly, the correlation between social competence and obedience values, while strong, was slightly lower than pedagogical and professional competence, suggesting that relational warmth alone is insufficient without strong instructional and theological grounding.

Spiritual competence, expressed through teacher modeling of obedience, proved to be a critical integrative factor. Students reported that the teacher consistently demonstrated behaviors aligned with biblical obedience, such as punctuality, integrity, and commitment to prayer. This finding reinforces the long-standing principle in Christian education that formation occurs as much through example as through instruction (Palmer, 1998). Quantitative indicators showed that students who perceived high levels of teacher spiritual authenticity scored significantly higher in self-reported obedience behaviors. This supports Bandura's social learning theory, which posits that modeling strongly influences behavioral adoption (Bandura, 1986). In the context of SMP Negeri 4 Bonai Darussalam, where Christian students are a minority within the broader school population, the teacher's visible spiritual consistency appears to function as a stabilizing moral reference point. A noteworthy contextual finding concerns the minority status of Christian students within the school. With 183 Christian students among the broader student body and only 10 Christian teachers, the PAK teacher's competence carries amplified influence. Students indicated that PAK class serves not only as an academic subject but also as a space for identity reinforcement and spiritual encouragement. This aligns with minority religious education research, which shows that faith-based instruction in plural environments often functions as both pedagogical and pastoral ministry (Banks, 2015). The data suggest that the teacher's competence helps students interpret obedience not as passive conformity but as faithful witness within a diverse school setting. This nuance is important because it reframes obedience as active discipleship rather than mere compliance. The exegetical focus on Exodus 39:32 also

yielded important pedagogical implications. The teacher's emphasis on the phrase "according to all that the Lord commanded Moses" helped students grasp obedience as total, careful, and faithful execution of God's will. Quantitative responses showed that students most strongly agreed with items related to "doing tasks carefully," "following instructions faithfully," and "completing responsibilities fully." This indicates that the biblical narrative successfully shaped students' behavioral framework when taught through competent exegetical methods. The finding supports the argument that Scripture-based character education is most effective when teachers bridge the historical text with contemporary moral practice (Dockery, 2012). The data also revealed several areas requiring improvement. While overall competence was high, a subset of students reported moderate rather than high internalization of obedience values. Further analysis suggests that this gap may be linked to limited instructional time and the broader digital distractions faced by students. Some respondents indicated that obedience is understood cognitively but not always practiced consistently, especially in independent study habits. This reflects the broader challenge in religious education of moving from knowledge acquisition to behavioral transformation. Scholars have long noted that value internalization requires sustained reinforcement across home, school, and church environments (Knight, 2006). Therefore, teacher competence, while crucial, operates within a wider ecosystem of spiritual formation.

Another important discussion point concerns the integration of assessment practices. The teacher primarily used reflective journals and verbal questioning to evaluate students' understanding of obedience. While effective for formative assessment, the data suggest that more varied authentic assessments, such as project-based spiritual action tasks, could further strengthen internalization. Students who engaged in applied obedience activities (e.g., service projects, responsibility logs) demonstrated higher behavioral scores than those assessed only cognitively. This supports contemporary Christian pedagogy advocating experiential learning as a pathway to spiritual growth (Estep, Anthony, & Allison, 2008). The findings also highlight the importance of contextual theology in Indonesian public schools. The teacher's ability to present obedience in culturally sensitive ways helped students avoid perceiving biblical commands as rigid legalism. Instead, obedience was framed as loving faithfulness to God. This theological framing appears to have significantly influenced student reception. Regression analysis indicated that theological clarity contributed uniquely to students' obedience scores even when controlling for pedagogical variables. This reinforces the need for PAK teachers to possess not only teaching skills but also strong exegetical and theological literacy. The presence of 10 Christian teachers in the school provides supportive potential for collaborative spiritual reinforcement. However, the data indicate that cross-subject integration of obedience values is still limited. Most students reported encountering explicit obedience teaching primarily in PAK classes rather than across subjects. This suggests an opportunity for whole-school character integration. Educational leadership literature emphasizes that value formation is strongest when reinforced across the curriculum (Fullan, 2014). Therefore, while the PAK teacher's competence is strong, broader institutional collaboration could amplify impact. The results demonstrate that the competence of the Christian Religious Education teacher at SMP Negeri 4 Bonai Darussalam significantly contributes to students' understanding and practice of

obedience to God's commands. Pedagogical clarity, professional mastery, relational warmth, and spiritual authenticity function synergistically to shape student character. The exegetical grounding in Exodus 39:32 provides a robust theological framework that translates effectively into student behavior when delivered by a competent educator. Nevertheless, sustained behavioral transformation requires expanded assessment strategies, cross-curricular reinforcement, and continued attention to the challenges of digital-age student formation. These findings affirm that teacher competence remains a decisive factor in Christian character education, particularly within minority-faith educational contexts.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the competence of Christian Religious Education teachers at SMP Negeri 4 Bonai Darussalam plays a decisive and multidimensional role in cultivating students' understanding and practice of obedience to God's commands as reflected in Exodus 39:32. The findings demonstrate that teacher competence, encompassing pedagogical, professional, social, and spiritual dimensions, functions synergistically to support meaningful spiritual formation among the 183 Christian students in the school. Quantitative evidence shows that when teachers exhibit strong instructional design, sound biblical mastery, relational sensitivity, and authentic spiritual modeling, students are more likely to internalize obedience not merely as doctrinal knowledge but as lived Christian character. The study confirms that structured and contextualized teaching strategies significantly enhance students' comprehension of the theological meaning of obedience. The teacher's ability to translate the historical narrative of Exodus 39:32 into practical applications, such as responsibility, faithfulness, and integrity in school life, proved effective in bridging biblical text and contemporary student experience. Professionally, the teacher's exegetical competence strengthened instructional credibility and fostered deeper student engagement with Scripture. Socially, the creation of a respectful and supportive classroom climate enabled students to receive and reflect on spiritual values more openly. Spiritually, the teacher's consistent modeling of obedient Christian living emerged as a powerful factor influencing students' behavioral formation.

The minority context of Christian students within the broader school environment further amplifies the importance of PAK teacher competence. For many students, PAK classes function not only as academic instruction but also as spaces of identity reinforcement and spiritual encouragement. In such contexts, competent teachers serve simultaneously as educators, mentors, and spiritual role models. The study therefore affirms that teacher professionalism in Christian education must be understood holistically, integrating cognitive expertise with moral and spiritual authenticity. The study also identifies areas for improvement. The internalization of obedience values among students, while generally high, has not yet reached optimal behavioral consistency. This suggests the need for more varied authentic assessment strategies, increased experiential learning opportunities, and stronger collaboration between PAK teachers, other subject teachers, families, and churches. Additionally, the challenges of digital distraction and limited instructional time indicate that future interventions should adopt more integrative and contextually adaptive approaches to student spiritual formation. The competence of

Christian Religious Education teachers is a critical determinant in the successful transmission and embodiment of biblical obedience values in public school settings. The exegetical grounding in Exodus 39:32 provides a theologically robust framework that, when delivered through competent and spiritually authentic teaching, effectively shapes student character. Future research is recommended to explore longitudinal impacts of teacher competence, cross-curricular integration of Christian values, and innovative pedagogical models that respond to the realities of contemporary learners.

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