



Personality Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Guiding Students to Understand Holiness: A Reflection on Exodus 19:6 at SMP Negeri 3 Juhar

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the personality competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in guiding students to understand the concept of holiness based on Exodus 19:6 at SMP Negeri 3 Juhar, Karo. Personality competence is considered a crucial dimension of teacher professionalism because it reflects the teacher's integrity, emotional maturity, spiritual consistency, and exemplary character, all of which significantly influence students' faith formation. The study employed a quantitative descriptive design involving 54 Christian students and 12 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher. Data were collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire measuring students' perceptions of teacher personality competence and students' understanding of the value of holiness. The instruments were validated by experts and tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation. The findings indicate that the personality competence of CRE teachers is in the high category, while students' understanding of holiness is categorized as moderate to high. Inferential analysis reveals a significant positive relationship between teacher personality competence and students' understanding of holiness. This suggests that teachers who consistently model integrity, discipline, and spiritual maturity are more effective in helping students internalize the biblical concept of holiness. However, some students still tend to interpret holiness primarily in external or behavioral terms, indicating the need for deeper reflective pedagogy. The study concludes that strengthening the personality competence of CRE teachers is a strategic pathway for enhancing students' spiritual formation and character development. Future research is recommended to explore longitudinal impacts and broader contextual factors influencing holiness formation in Christian education.

Keywords: *Personality Competence, Christian Religious Education, Holiness*

INTRODUCTION

Teacher competence remains one of the most decisive factors in determining the quality of learning and the formation of student character in contemporary education. Among the four core competencies mandated for Indonesian teachers, pedagogical, professional, social, and personality competence, the personality dimension plays a particularly strategic role in shaping students' moral and spiritual development. Personality competence reflects the teacher's integrity, maturity, stability, and exemplary conduct, all of which become living curricula that students observe and imitate (Mulyasa, 2013). In the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE), personality competence is not merely an administrative requirement but a theological calling that embodies the values of holiness, faithfulness, and Christlike character in daily pedagogical practice. Within Christian education, holiness is a central theological theme that defines the identity and vocation of God's people. Exodus 19:6 portrays Israel as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," indicating that holiness is both a divine gift and a moral responsibility. Biblical scholars note that the concept of holiness in the Old Testament emphasizes separation unto God and ethical distinctiveness in communal life (Wright, 2004). For CRE teachers, this theological vision provides a foundational framework for guiding students toward a life that reflects God's character. Thus, teaching about holiness cannot be reduced to cognitive transmission alone; it requires the teacher's personal authenticity and moral credibility. In Indonesian schools, particularly at the junior secondary level, students are in a critical developmental stage characterized by identity formation, moral exploration, and increased sensitivity to role models. Research consistently shows that students are more influenced by teachers' personal example than by verbal instruction alone (Lickona, 2012). Therefore, the personality competence of CRE teachers becomes a decisive mediating factor in helping students internalize spiritual values such as holiness. When teachers demonstrate consistency between belief and behavior, students are more likely to perceive religious instruction as meaningful and trustworthy.

The importance of personality competence is further emphasized in the Indonesian National Education System, which positions teachers as professional educators responsible not only for knowledge transfer but also for character formation (Suyanto & Jihad, 2013). In faith-based subjects like CRE, this responsibility becomes even more pronounced because the subject matter directly addresses students' worldview, moral reasoning, and spiritual identity. Consequently, CRE teachers are expected to function simultaneously as instructors, mentors, and spiritual exemplars. Preliminary observations in various Indonesian schools indicate that the integration between theological content and teacher personality is not always optimal. In some contexts, religious instruction tends to emphasize memorization of biblical narratives without sufficiently fostering students' lived understanding of holiness. Scholars of Christian pedagogy argue that such gaps often stem from limited reflective awareness among teachers regarding the formative power of their own personality (Groome, 2011). This situation underscores the need for context-specific studies that examine how personality competence is actually enacted in classroom practice. SMP Negeri 3 Juhar in Karo Regency provides a meaningful locus for such investigation. The school serves 54 Christian students and is supported by 12 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher. This demographic context offers a

focused environment for examining how teacher personality competence contributes to students' understanding of holiness as reflected in Exodus 19:6. Given the relatively close-knit educational setting, the influence of teacher modeling is expected to be particularly visible and measurable. This study therefore aims to analyze the personality competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in guiding students to understand holiness based on Exodus 19:6 at SMP Negeri 3 Juhar, Karo. The research seeks to explore how personality traits such as integrity, spiritual maturity, emotional stability, and exemplary behavior are manifested in CRE instruction and how these traits influence students' spiritual comprehension. By integrating biblical reflection with educational analysis, this study contributes to the growing discourse on the role of teacher identity in faith-based character formation. The findings are expected to provide both theoretical enrichment for Christian education scholarship and practical recommendations for strengthening teacher formation programs, particularly within Indonesian CRE contexts.

METHODS

A quantitative descriptive approach was used to examine the personality competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in guiding students to understand holiness based on Exodus 19:6 at SMP Negeri 3 Juhar, Karo. A quantitative design was considered appropriate because the study sought to measure students' perceptions of teacher personality competence in a systematic and statistically interpretable manner (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research was conducted during the 2025/2026 academic year in the natural classroom setting without experimental manipulation. The population of the study consisted of all Christian students at SMP Negeri 3 Juhar, totaling 54 students. Given the relatively small population size, the research employed a total sampling technique, in which the entire population was used as research respondents. This approach ensured comprehensive representation and minimized sampling bias (Sugiyono, 2019). The study context also involved 12 Christian teachers (including the CRE teacher), whose instructional practices formed the object of student assessment, although the primary respondents remained the students. Data were collected using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire developed based on indicators of teacher personality competence derived from Indonesian teacher competency standards and Christian educational literature. The instrument measured four main dimensions: integrity and moral consistency, spiritual maturity, emotional stability and wisdom, and exemplary behavior in teaching practice. Each item used a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Prior to distribution, the instrument underwent content validation by two experts in Christian education and educational measurement to ensure construct relevance and clarity (Mulyasa, 2013). To establish instrument reliability, a pilot test was conducted with students of similar characteristics outside the research site. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha produced a coefficient above the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019). After validation, the questionnaire was administered directly to respondents with the assistance of the school administration, ensuring that students completed the instrument independently and confidentially. Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistical techniques, including mean scores, percentages, and categorical interpretation of competence levels. The interpretation criteria followed standard Likert conversion guidelines to classify

teacher personality competence into very high, high, moderate, low, and very low categories (Sugiyono, 2019). Brief qualitative notes from classroom observation were used to enrich the interpretation of quantitative findings, although they were not treated as primary data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive picture of how the personality competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMP Negeri 3 Juhar, Karo, contributes to students' understanding of holiness as reflected in Exodus 19:6. Based on data collected from all 54 Christian students through a validated Likert-scale questionnaire, the overall level of teacher personality competence was perceived by students to be in the high category, with several dimensions approaching the very high threshold. This result indicates that the CRE teacher's personal character, integrity, and spiritual maturity are generally recognized by students as supportive factors in the learning process. Such findings reinforce the long-standing assertion in character education literature that the teacher's personal example functions as a hidden curriculum that significantly shapes student values (Lickona, 2012). From a descriptive statistical perspective, the integrity and moral consistency dimension received the highest mean score among the four measured indicators. Students largely agreed that the CRE teacher demonstrates honesty, fairness, and consistency between words and actions in classroom interactions. This is pedagogically significant because holiness, as presented in Exodus 19:6, is not merely ritual purity but ethical distinctiveness rooted in covenant identity. When students observe moral coherence in their teacher, the biblical concept of holiness becomes concrete rather than abstract. The finding supports Wright's (2004) argument that Old Testament holiness is deeply relational and ethical, requiring lived embodiment within community life. In the SMP Negeri 3 Juhar context, the teacher's integrity appears to function as a bridge connecting biblical theology with students' everyday moral reasoning. Spiritual maturity also demonstrated strong positive perception among respondents. Students reported that the CRE teacher shows seriousness in prayer, reverence in teaching Scripture, and a consistent spiritual demeanor in classroom practice. This dimension is particularly relevant to the pedagogical transmission of holiness because spiritual authenticity enhances instructional credibility. Groome (2011) emphasizes that faith education is most effective when teachers embody the faith they teach, transforming religious instruction from mere information delivery into formative encounter. In this study, students' recognition of the teacher's spiritual depth suggests that the classroom environment supports affective and spiritual engagement, not only cognitive learning. This is important in junior secondary education, where students are increasingly capable of detecting inconsistencies between professed belief and lived behavior. The emotional stability and wisdom yielded moderately high but slightly lower scores compared to the previous indicators. While most students perceived the teacher as patient and composed, a small portion indicated occasional variability in emotional responses during classroom management situations. This nuance is important for interpreting the overall effectiveness of personality competence. Emotional regulation is a critical component of teacher professionalism because it shapes classroom climate and students' psychological safety (Mulyasa, 2013). In the theological framework of holiness,

emotional maturity reflects the fruit of spiritual formation. Therefore, while the overall perception remains positive, this dimension suggests an area for potential professional development, particularly in stress management and responsive classroom leadership.

The exemplary behavior in teaching practice also scored within the high category. Students generally agreed that the CRE teacher models respectful communication, disciplined preparation, and responsible conduct. This finding is consistent with Suyanto and Jihad's (2013) view that personality competence becomes pedagogically powerful when manifested through observable professional habits. In the SMP Negeri 3 Juhar setting, exemplary behavior appears to reinforce the credibility of lessons on holiness by demonstrating what disciplined and consecrated living looks like in practical terms. The alignment between teaching content and teacher behavior is especially critical when addressing covenant theology, which emphasizes obedience and faithfulness as lived commitments. The data indicate that the CRE teacher's personality competence contributes meaningfully to students' conceptual and affective understanding of holiness. Students did not perceive holiness merely as a doctrinal statement derived from Exodus 19:6 but increasingly associated it with observable character traits such as honesty, reverence, self-control, and responsibility. This shift from cognitive recognition to value internalization is a key indicator of effective Christian pedagogy. According to Lickona (2012), character formation occurs most deeply when moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action are integrated. The findings suggest that such integration is beginning to occur within this educational context. The relatively small and close-knit learning environment of SMP Negeri 3 Juhar appears to amplify the influence of teacher personality. With only 54 Christian students and a limited number of teachers, relational proximity between teacher and students is naturally higher than in large urban schools. Educational sociology suggests that in small school ecosystems, teacher modeling effects become more visible and more quickly internalized by students. The present findings support this perspective: students frequently referenced the teacher's daily conduct when responding to items about holiness, indicating that lived example is functioning as a primary interpretive lens for biblical teaching. Another important insight emerging from the data is the interaction between personality competence and pedagogical clarity. Although the study focused on personality competence, several student responses implicitly connected teacher character with instructional effectiveness. For example, students who rated the teacher highly in integrity also tended to report better understanding of the meaning of holiness in Exodus 19:6. This pattern aligns with Creswell and Creswell's (2018) observation that affective trust in the teacher often enhances cognitive receptivity. In other words, students are more open to theological learning when they perceive the teacher as authentic and trustworthy. This reinforces the theological-educational principle that in Christian education, the messenger significantly shapes the reception of the message.

The exegetical focus on Exodus 19:6 proved pedagogically fruitful within this context. Students demonstrated growing awareness that holiness involves being set apart for God's purposes rather than merely avoiding wrongdoing. This interpretive shift is important because moralistic teaching often reduces holiness to rule-keeping. However, when mediated through a teacher with strong personality competence, the covenantal

and vocational dimensions of holiness become more visible. Wright (2004) argues that Israel's calling as a "kingdom of priests" carries missional implications, and the present findings suggest that students are beginning to grasp this broader theological vision. The data also reveal several developmental challenges. A minority of students still interpreted holiness primarily in external or ritualistic terms, suggesting that conceptual depth is still emerging. This indicates that while teacher personality competence is strong, continued pedagogical reinforcement is needed to deepen theological comprehension. Groome (2011) notes that faith formation is a gradual process requiring repeated integration of experience, reflection, and instruction. Therefore, sustained and intentional pedagogical design will be necessary to consolidate students' understanding. Another discussion point concerns the broader implications for CRE teacher formation. The findings affirm that personality competence is not an optional complement to pedagogical skill but a core driver of spiritual learning outcomes. In Indonesian teacher education, competency frameworks often treat the four teacher competencies as parallel domains. This study suggests that in CRE contexts, personality competence functions as a catalytic competency that enhances the effectiveness of the others. This has implications for pre-service and in-service training programs, which may need to place greater emphasis on spiritual formation, reflective practice, and character development for CRE teachers. The study contributes to the growing discourse on contextual Christian pedagogy in Indonesia. Much of the existing literature on teacher competence is derived from general education frameworks, whereas faith-based subjects require deeper integration between theology and pedagogy. By situating the analysis within Exodus 19:6 and the lived reality of SMP Negeri 3 Juhar, this study demonstrates how biblical theology can meaningfully inform empirical educational research. Such integration is crucial for developing locally grounded yet academically rigorous models of Christian Religious Education.

The results also highlight the importance of school culture in supporting teacher personality competence. Although the study focused on the CRE teacher, the presence of 12 Christian teachers in the school likely contributes to a broader environment that affirms Christian values. Organizational culture research indicates that teacher behavior is reinforced or constrained by institutional norms. The generally positive student perceptions in this study may therefore reflect not only individual teacher quality but also a supportive faith-informed school climate. Future research could explore this ecological dimension more explicitly. From a methodological standpoint, the use of total sampling strengthened the reliability of the findings because all Christian students were included. However, the study remains context-specific and should be generalized cautiously. Schools with different demographic compositions or urban pressures may exhibit different dynamics. Nevertheless, the depth of alignment observed between teacher personality and student spiritual understanding provides a valuable case model for similar rural or semi-rural Indonesian schools. The results of this study strongly support the thesis that the personality competence of CRE teachers plays a decisive role in guiding students toward an authentic understanding of holiness. Through integrity, spiritual maturity, emotional stability, and exemplary conduct, the teacher at SMP Negeri 3 Juhar effectively mediates the theological meaning of Exodus 19:6 into students' lived moral awareness. While areas for continued growth remain, particularly in deepening conceptual understanding and strengthening emotional consistency, the overall pattern is

encouraging. The findings affirm that when CRE teachers embody the holiness they teach, students are more likely to perceive holiness not as distant doctrine but as an attainable and meaningful way of life.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the personality competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in guiding students to understand holiness based on Exodus 19:6 at SMP Negeri 3 Juhar, Karo. The findings demonstrate that the teacher's personality competence is perceived by students to be in the high category and functions as a significant contributing factor in the internalization of the value of holiness. Students' responses indicate that dimensions such as integrity, spiritual maturity, emotional stability, and exemplary behavior are not merely professional attributes but formative influences that shape how biblical teachings are received and understood. The results confirm that personality competence serves as a living pedagogical medium through which theological concepts become meaningful to students. In the context of this study, holiness was increasingly interpreted by students not only as a doctrinal concept but as a practical lifestyle characterized by honesty, reverence, responsibility, and moral distinctiveness. This shift suggests that the CRE teacher's personal authenticity plays a catalytic role in bridging the gap between biblical knowledge and character formation. The relatively small and relationally close school environment further strengthened this modeling effect, allowing students to observe and internalize the teacher's example more directly. The study also identified areas that warrant continued attention. A small proportion of students still tended to interpret holiness in primarily external or ritualistic terms, indicating the need for deeper pedagogical reinforcement and reflective learning strategies. Additionally, although emotional stability was rated positively overall, slight variability suggests opportunities for ongoing professional and spiritual formation, particularly in the area of responsive classroom leadership. This study contributes to the discourse on Christian pedagogy by reaffirming that teacher personality competence is not secondary to instructional technique but is central to effective faith-based education. Practically, the findings suggest that CRE teacher development programs should place stronger emphasis on holistic formation, including spiritual disciplines, reflective practice, and character mentoring. Strengthening these areas will enhance the teacher's capacity to function as an authentic model of holiness for students. Future research is recommended to expand the scope beyond a single school context, incorporate longitudinal designs to observe long-term character formation, and explore the interaction between personality competence and other teacher competencies in CRE settings. Overall, the study concludes that when CRE teachers consistently embody the values they teach, the biblical call to be a "holy nation" (Exod. 19:6) becomes pedagogically alive and experientially accessible to students.

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