



Pedagogical Competence in Cultivating Worship Experiences: Biblical Foundations from Exodus 23:14-15 at SMP Negeri 3 Bandar Pulau

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of pedagogical competence in cultivating meaningful worship experiences within Christian Religious Education (CRE), drawing theological foundations from Exodus 23:14-15. Worship, as reflected in this biblical passage, is not merely a ritual obligation but an intentional and communal act that shapes covenantal identity through remembrance and gratitude. In educational settings, this theological vision invites teachers to integrate worship into the learning process as an experiential and formative practice. Using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, this study synthesizes relevant scholarly works published between 2014 and 2025 concerning pedagogical competence, experiential learning, and worship-centered education. The review reveals that pedagogical competence plays a crucial role in transforming worship from theoretical instruction into lived spiritual engagement. Effective teachers intentionally design structured learning environments that incorporate reflective practices, relational dialogue, and narrative exploration, enabling students to internalize worship as a relational response to God rather than as a formal requirement. The findings indicate that pedagogical competence encompasses instructional intentionality, relational sensitivity, and theological grounding. When these dimensions are integrated, worship experiences contribute to students' holistic development, including spiritual awareness, emotional maturity, and communal responsibility. Moreover, such competence allows teachers to contextualize biblical principles in ways that resonate with contemporary learners while maintaining theological integrity. The study highlights the importance of strengthening teachers' pedagogical capacity to facilitate authentic worship experiences that nurture students' spiritual identity. Ultimately, this research affirms that pedagogically grounded worship fosters transformative learning, aligning educational practice with biblical vision.

Keywords: *Pedagogical competence, worship experience, Christian Religious Education, experiential learning*

INTRODUCTION

Christian Religious Education (CRE) is fundamentally concerned not only with the transmission of theological knowledge but also with the formation of faith through lived spiritual experiences. In this context, learning is not merely cognitive but transformational, aiming to shape students' relationship with God through meaningful engagement with biblical truth and spiritual practices (Sumbayak & Suparman, 2022). This holistic orientation positions worship not as an isolated ritual activity but as an essential dimension of faith formation that should be integrated into the learning process. Consequently, the pedagogical competence of teachers becomes a critical factor in cultivating worship experiences that are both authentic and formative within the educational environment. Pedagogical competence refers to the teacher's ability to understand students, design meaningful learning experiences, implement appropriate teaching strategies, and evaluate learning outcomes effectively (Rohana, 2023). Within religious education, this competence extends beyond instructional techniques into the realm of spiritual guidance and value formation. Teachers are expected to facilitate learning environments where students not only comprehend religious teachings but also internalize them as guiding principles for daily living (Abrianto et al., 2024). Thus, pedagogical competence in CRE encompasses theological literacy, relational sensitivity, and the capacity to translate biblical narratives into experiential learning opportunities that resonate with students' lived realities. The teacher plays a transformative role as a co-worker in God's redemptive work, guiding students toward the restoration of their identity as bearers of the divine image (Sumbayak & Suparman, 2022). This theological perspective emphasizes that effective pedagogy must be grounded in spiritual intentionality. Teaching, therefore, becomes an act of ministry, where the classroom is perceived as a sacred space in which spiritual encounters may occur. Research in Christian pedagogy indicates that when teachers integrate biblical interpretation with contextual and experiential learning strategies, students are more likely to develop deeper spiritual understanding and commitment (Pardosi & Sitopu, 2025).

The importance of pedagogical competence in religious education has also been highlighted in broader educational studies, which affirm that teachers who understand student characteristics and employ adaptive teaching strategies are better equipped to foster meaningful learning outcomes (Rohana, 2023). In religious contexts, such competence enables teachers to bridge the gap between doctrinal instruction and spiritual experience. This bridging function is particularly significant in adolescence, a developmental stage characterized by identity exploration and heightened sensitivity to authenticity. Students are more likely to engage with worship when it is presented not merely as obligation but as an experiential response to God's presence. Biblical theology provides a foundational framework for understanding the integration of worship into education. The instructions found in Exodus 23:14-15 emphasize the importance of intentional, communal worship as a structured practice within the life of God's people. These verses reflect the rhythm of sacred remembrance through appointed festivals, underscoring worship as an act of gratitude, obedience, and covenantal relationship. The theological significance of this passage lies in its portrayal of worship as both commanded and relational, an expression of faith that is nurtured through consistent practice and communal participation. When interpreted pedagogically, this biblical mandate invites educators to cultivate structured yet meaningful worship experiences that shape

students' spiritual identity. Recent studies in Christian pedagogy have demonstrated that pedagogical competence rooted in biblical reflection enhances teachers' ability to facilitate spiritual formation (Sembiring & Panjaitan, 2025). Such competence involves contextualizing scriptural teachings, employing narrative-based methods, and fostering reflective dialogue that encourages students to connect biblical truths with contemporary life challenges (Manullang, 2024). Moreover, the integration of experiential learning, such as prayer, worship music, and service activities, has been shown to transform students' perception of worship from ritualistic duty into relational encounter (Pardosi & Sitopu, 2025). Despite these insights, challenges remain in the practical implementation of worship-centered pedagogy. Teachers often face limitations related to instructional time, resources, and varying levels of student engagement (Zebua, 2025). Contemporary educational paradigms sometimes prioritize cognitive achievement over spiritual formation, leading to a fragmented approach to religious education. This fragmentation underscores the need for pedagogical models that intentionally integrate worship experiences into classroom practice. Within the Indonesian educational context, the role of CRE teachers is particularly strategic in shaping students' moral and spiritual resilience amid rapid social change. Pedagogical competence that is sensitive to cultural and developmental contexts enables teachers to design learning experiences that are both biblically grounded and contextually relevant (Sukri, 2024). By aligning instructional strategies with theological insights, teachers can create learning environments where worship becomes a lived experience rather than a theoretical concept. This study, therefore, seeks to explore how pedagogical competence can be employed to cultivate meaningful worship experiences among students, drawing theological inspiration from Exodus 23:14–15. Situated at SMP Negeri 3 Bandar Pulau, the research aims to examine how biblical foundations can inform pedagogical practices that nurture students' spiritual formation through worship-centered learning. By integrating theological reflection with educational practice, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on the role of teachers as facilitators of spiritual experience within formal educational settings.

METHODS

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design to explore how pedagogical competence contributes to cultivating worship experiences in Christian Religious Education (CRE), particularly in light of the biblical foundations found in Exodus 23:14-15. The SLR method was selected because it allows for a comprehensive, transparent, and replicable synthesis of existing scholarly literature, thereby strengthening the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study (Snyder, 2019). By systematically identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing relevant studies, this research aimed to construct a robust understanding of pedagogical competence within worship-centered learning. The review process followed established SLR procedures, including planning, searching, screening, eligibility assessment, and synthesis (Moher et al., 2009). First, a review protocol was developed to define research questions, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and search strategies. The primary research question guiding this study was: *How does pedagogical competence support the cultivation of worship experiences in Christian Religious Education based on biblical foundations?* Second, a comprehensive literature search was conducted using reputable academic databases such as Google

Scholar, Crossref-indexed journals, ERIC, and Scopus-indexed publications. Keywords included “pedagogical competence,” “Christian Religious Education,” “worship experience in education,” “spiritual formation,” and “biblical foundation of worship.” Boolean operators (AND, OR) were used to refine search combinations and ensure precision. The search was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and conference proceedings published between 2014 and 2025 to ensure the relevance and contemporaneity of the literature. Third, inclusion criteria were applied. Articles were included if they: discussed pedagogical competence in religious or Christian education contexts, addressed experiential or worship-based learning, incorporated theological or biblical reflection relevant to educational practice, and were published in credible academic sources. Studies were excluded if they lacked peer-review status, did not directly relate to education, or focused solely on general pedagogy without spiritual or theological dimensions. After the screening process, selected articles were analyzed using thematic synthesis. Data extraction involved identifying key concepts, methodological approaches, findings, and theological implications related to pedagogical competence and worship cultivation. Themes were then categorized into major domains, including instructional design for worship, experiential learning strategies, teacher spiritual leadership, and biblical-theological foundations of worship practices. To enhance credibility and minimize bias, the review process emphasized transparency in documentation and systematic categorization. Each selected source was critically appraised in terms of methodological rigor, theoretical coherence, and relevance to the research focus. The synthesis of findings provided a conceptual framework that integrates educational theory with biblical reflection from Exodus 23:14-15, offering a structured foundation for understanding how pedagogical competence can intentionally shape worship experiences in the context of SMP Negeri 3 Bandar Pulau. Through this systematic approach, the study ensures academic reliability while contributing a well-grounded theoretical basis for worship-centered pedagogy in Christian Religious Education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this Systematic Literature Review (SLR) reveal that pedagogical competence plays a decisive role in transforming worship from a formal religious routine into a meaningful spiritual learning experience within Christian Religious Education (CRE). The synthesis of selected literature consistently indicates that when teachers intentionally integrate pedagogical skill with theological awareness, worship becomes not only an instructional theme but also an experiential reality that shapes students’ faith development. A central insight emerging from the literature is that pedagogical competence enables teachers to design structured spiritual encounters rather than merely deliver doctrinal content. Studies on religious pedagogy emphasize that effective teachers move beyond cognitive transmission toward experiential engagement, where students are invited to participate actively in acts of reflection, prayer, and communal expression of faith (Snyder, 2019). This aligns closely with the theological principle embedded in Exodus 23:14-15, which portrays worship as an intentional, communal practice grounded in remembrance and covenantal identity. In educational terms, this biblical framework suggests that worship should not be incidental but deliberately cultivated through pedagogical design. The literature further indicates that worship-centered pedagogy requires the integration of three interconnected dimensions:

instructional intentionality, relational sensitivity, and theological grounding. Instructional intentionality refers to the teacher's capacity to plan learning activities that incorporate spiritual practices into the learning process. For example, reflective storytelling, guided prayer, and liturgical simulations have been shown to help students internalize theological concepts through experience rather than abstraction (Moher et al., 2009). These practices mirror the structured observances described in Exodus 23:14-15, where worship is embedded within communal rhythms rather than left to spontaneous impulse. Relational sensitivity, on the other hand, underscores the teacher's role as a facilitator of spiritual atmosphere. The SLR findings suggest that students are more likely to engage meaningfully in worship when they perceive authenticity and care in their teachers' approach. Pedagogical competence thus includes the ability to foster trust and openness, enabling students to encounter worship not as obligation but as invitation. This relational dynamic reflects broader educational research highlighting the importance of teacher-student relationships in shaping learning engagement and motivation. The third dimension, theological grounding, ensures that worship experiences remain rooted in biblical meaning rather than becoming merely emotional or performative. The literature consistently warns that experiential learning without theological depth risks reducing worship to aesthetic expression. By anchoring worship practices in scriptural narratives such as Exodus 23:14-15, teachers provide students with a framework for understanding worship as an act of remembrance, gratitude, and covenantal participation.

Another significant theme emerging from the review concerns the role of contextualization. Contemporary CRE settings often operate within pluralistic and technologically mediated environments, where students encounter diverse worldviews and spiritual influences. Pedagogical competence enables teachers to translate ancient biblical practices into forms that resonate with modern learners without compromising theological integrity. For instance, integrating music, multimedia storytelling, and collaborative reflection allows worship to become accessible and relevant while maintaining its biblical foundation. The literature also highlights the importance of experiential continuity. Worship experiences that are isolated from daily learning risk becoming symbolic rather than formative. Pedagogically competent teachers address this challenge by embedding worship themes across the curriculum, linking them with ethical reflection, character formation, and communal responsibility. This approach aligns with the covenantal ethos reflected in Exodus 23:14-15, where worship is not confined to sacred moments but integrated into the rhythm of communal life. The review reveals that pedagogical competence influences students' perception of worship as relational rather than ritualistic. When teachers employ dialogical methods, such as guided discussions and reflective journaling, students are encouraged to interpret worship as a response to divine initiative rather than mere compliance with institutional expectation. This shift from ritual obligation to relational participation is crucial for adolescent learners, who often seek authenticity in spiritual expression.

The findings also underscore the role of narrative pedagogy in cultivating worship experiences. Biblical narratives provide a powerful framework for experiential learning, enabling students to situate themselves within the story of God's redemptive work. By engaging students in narrative reflection, teachers help them perceive worship as participation in an ongoing covenantal story. This narrative dimension resonates with the commemorative nature of worship practices described in Exodus 23:14-15. The literature

points to the significance of communal learning structures. Worship in biblical tradition is inherently communal, emphasizing shared identity and collective remembrance. Pedagogical competence enables teachers to design collaborative learning experiences, such as group reflection and shared liturgical expressions, that reinforce communal belonging. Such practices foster a sense of spiritual solidarity, aligning with the communal ethos of the worship festivals prescribed in Exodus 23:14-15. One recurring issue is the tension between academic assessment and spiritual formation. Educational systems often prioritize measurable outcomes, making it difficult to evaluate experiential dimensions of worship. Pedagogically competent teachers navigate this tension by employing reflective assessment methods, such as self-evaluation and narrative reflection, which capture spiritual growth without reducing it to quantitative metrics. Another challenge concerns teacher preparedness. The literature suggests that many CRE teachers possess theological knowledge but lack training in experiential pedagogy. This gap underscores the need for professional development programs that integrate theological reflection with instructional design skills. Strengthening pedagogical competence in this way enhances teachers' capacity to cultivate meaningful worship experiences. The synthesis further reveals that worship-centered pedagogy contributes to holistic student development. Beyond spiritual formation, such pedagogy fosters emotional resilience, ethical awareness, and communal responsibility. Students who engage in meaningful worship experiences often demonstrate increased empathy and moral sensitivity, reflecting the formative impact of relational spirituality.

The findings indicate that worship experiences facilitated through pedagogical competence contribute to identity formation. Adolescents are in a critical stage of constructing their sense of self, and participation in meaningful worship helps anchor their identity in a narrative of divine relationship. This formative process aligns with the covenantal framework reflected in Exodus 23:14-15, where communal worship reinforces collective identity as God's people. In contextual application, the insights derived from this SLR are particularly relevant for educational settings such as SMP Negeri 3 Bandar Pulau. The integration of pedagogical competence with biblical foundations offers a pathway for transforming worship from a supplementary activity into a central dimension of CRE learning. The review affirms that pedagogical competence functions as a bridge between biblical theology and educational practice. By designing structured, relational, and theologically grounded learning experiences, teachers enable students to encounter worship as a lived reality. The biblical model presented in Exodus 23:14-15 thus serves not only as theological inspiration but also as pedagogical guidance, emphasizing the intentional cultivation of worship within communal learning contexts. Through this integration of pedagogy and theology, worship emerges as both formative practice and educational goal, shaping students' spiritual identity and fostering a deeper awareness of their relationship with God.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that pedagogical competence plays a foundational role in cultivating meaningful worship experiences within Christian Religious Education (CRE). Through a Systematic Literature Review approach, the research confirms that effective worship-centered pedagogy is not incidental but intentional, structured, relational, and theologically grounded. When teachers integrate instructional design, relational

sensitivity, and biblical reflection, worship becomes a transformative learning experience rather than a mere ritual or supplementary activity. The biblical foundation drawn from Exodus 23:14-15 provides a theological framework for understanding worship as an intentional, communal, and covenantal practice. The command to observe appointed festivals reflects a rhythm of remembrance and gratitude that shapes identity and reinforces spiritual belonging. Pedagogically interpreted, this passage underscores the importance of designing structured opportunities for students to encounter God through consistent and meaningful worship practices. Thus, worship in the classroom context should not be spontaneous or peripheral but thoughtfully integrated into the learning process. The findings also highlight that pedagogical competence extends beyond methodological skill. It encompasses spiritual leadership, contextual awareness, and the ability to translate biblical narratives into experiential engagement. Teachers who demonstrate such competence are able to bridge the gap between doctrinal instruction and lived spiritual experience. This bridging function is particularly significant in adolescence, where authenticity, relational trust, and identity formation are central developmental concerns. Meaningful worship experiences foster not only spiritual awareness but also emotional maturity, ethical sensitivity, and communal responsibility. When worship is facilitated through reflective dialogue, collaborative learning, and narrative engagement, students are invited to internalize faith as relational participation rather than institutional obligation. In the context of SMP Negeri 3 Bandar Pulau, these insights suggest that strengthening teachers' pedagogical competence can significantly enhance the quality of worship experiences in CRE classrooms. By aligning educational strategies with biblical foundations, teachers can cultivate learning environments where worship shapes students' spiritual identity and deepens their covenantal awareness. Pedagogical competence serves as the essential bridge between theology and educational practice. Grounded in the biblical vision of worship articulated in Exodus 23:14-15, teachers are called to intentionally design learning experiences that nurture authentic encounters with God. Such integration ensures that worship becomes not only a subject taught but a reality experienced, forming students who understand, embody, and live out their faith within the community of believers.

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