



Christian Religious Education Teachers as Models of Total Surrender on Genesis 22:8 at SMP Negeri 3 Kabanjahe

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers as models of total surrender inspired by Genesis 22:8 within the educational context of SMP Negeri 3 Kabanjahe. Grounded in a qualitative research design, the study investigates how teachers internalize and embody the principle of surrender in their professional identity, pedagogical practices, and relational interactions with students. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and reflective documentation, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of teachers who view their vocation as both an educational responsibility and a spiritual calling. The findings reveal that total surrender functions as a guiding framework shaping teachers' emotional resilience, instructional approach, and disciplinary practices. Teachers who adopt this posture tend to demonstrate patience, empathy, and relational consistency, creating classroom environments characterized by trust and moral encouragement. Rather than relying on authoritarian control, they engage students through dialogical and restorative interactions that emphasize growth and understanding. This approach mirrors the theological essence of Genesis 22:8, where trust in divine provision becomes the foundation for calm and faithful leadership amid uncertainty. The study highlights that students respond positively to teachers who embody faith through lived example rather than verbal instruction alone. The presence of surrender-based leadership fosters emotional security and spiritual reflection, contributing to holistic student development. The research concludes that modeling surrender transforms teaching into a relational ministry that bridges biblical spirituality and contemporary educational practice. This study underscores the relevance of biblical narratives as pedagogical resources and affirms that authentic spiritual modeling by teachers plays a vital role in shaping student character and faith awareness.

Keywords: *Christian Religious Education, total surrender, Genesis 22:8, teacher modeling*

INTRODUCTION

Education is never a value-neutral process. Every act of teaching carries implicit assumptions about truth, purpose, identity, and ultimate meaning. Within the framework of Christian Religious Education (CRE), teaching is understood not merely as the transmission of doctrinal knowledge but as participation in spiritual formation. Teachers are not only conveyors of biblical content but also living witnesses of faith whose lives become interpretive spaces where theology meets daily reality. Contemporary scholarship increasingly affirms that teacher identity significantly shapes students' moral and spiritual development, particularly in faith-based educational contexts (Sianipar & Irawati, 2024; Mawikere & Hura, 2025). In this regard, the effectiveness of CRE does not lie solely in pedagogical competence but also in the authenticity of the teacher's spiritual life. Recent studies in Christian pedagogy emphasize that modeling faith is a primary mechanism through which students internalize spiritual values. Rather than learning faith as abstract doctrine, students learn through observation, imitation, and relational engagement with teachers whose lives reflect theological convictions (Zebua, 2025). Empirical findings demonstrate that students tend to respond more deeply to lived examples than to verbal instruction alone, suggesting that spiritual formation is inherently relational and embodied (Puspita, 2025). This aligns with broader educational perspectives which argue that character formation is shaped through the congruence between belief and action demonstrated by educators in everyday interactions (Marpaung & Dorlan, 2024). The concept of total surrender occupies a central place. Surrender, in Christian spirituality, does not signify passivity or resignation but denotes an active trust in divine providence. It involves the willingness to align one's personal desires, ambitions, and fears with the purposes of God. In educational settings, such surrender manifests in humility, patience, perseverance, and moral consistency qualities that students readily observe in their teachers. Research grounded in biblical narratives suggests that obedience and trust become formative virtues when demonstrated through consistent teacher behavior rather than imposed through authoritarian instruction (Buulolo, 2025). Thus, surrender becomes both a theological virtue and a pedagogical posture. Genesis 22:8 provides a profound biblical foundation for understanding the nature of surrender in relational and educational contexts. Abraham's response to Isaac "God Himself will provide the lamb" represents not merely a statement of hope but an expression of unwavering trust in divine provision. Exegetical analyses of this passage highlight that Abraham's calm assurance reflects a faith grounded in relational trust rather than situational certainty (Capah, 2025). Importantly, this moment occurs within an intergenerational interaction: a father guiding his son amid uncertainty. The narrative reveals that faith is transmitted not through coercion but through relational confidence and modeled trust.

This dynamic holds significant pedagogical implications. Teachers, like Abraham, are frequently called to guide students through moments of uncertainty whether moral dilemmas, identity struggles, or existential questions. In such contexts, instructional authority alone is insufficient. Students seek authenticity. They look for adults who embody stability, hope, and trust in circumstances that often appear unpredictable. Studies on teacher spirituality confirm that students' moral development is strongly influenced when educators demonstrate emotional maturity and spiritual consistency (Simanjuntak & Anakampun, 2024). When teachers embody faith in action, the classroom

becomes a space where spiritual values are not merely taught but experienced. The role of CRE teachers as spiritual models is particularly significant in pluralistic public-school environments. In such settings, Christian education must navigate institutional expectations while maintaining theological integrity. Research indicates that the mature personality of CRE teachers characterized by moral integrity, relational compassion, and spiritual wisdom contributes significantly to students' character formation (Hutagalung, 2025). This underscores the need to view teaching not only as a profession but as a vocation rooted in spiritual calling. The integration of biblical reflection and pedagogical practice has emerged as a growing trend in recent Christian educational research. Several studies grounded in Genesis narratives demonstrate that scriptural themes such as obedience, perseverance, and integrity can function as transformative pedagogical frameworks (Sitanggang & Sitorus, 2025). These frameworks enable teachers to translate ancient theological truths into contemporary educational realities. In this sense, Scripture becomes not merely a subject of study but a living guide for professional identity and classroom practice. Despite the growing recognition of teacher modeling in Christian pedagogy, the theme of total surrender remains underexplored within empirical educational contexts. Much of the existing literature focuses on obedience or professionalism, often neglecting the deeper spiritual dimension of surrender as an existential trust in God's provision. Genesis 22:8 offers a unique lens through which this dimension can be examined, particularly in relation to the teacher's role as a moral and spiritual guide. This study therefore seeks to explore how Christian Religious Education teachers function as models of total surrender within the educational context of SMP Negeri 3 Kabanjahe. By reflecting on Genesis 22:8 as both theological narrative and pedagogical paradigm, the study aims to bridge the gap between biblical spirituality and contemporary educational practice. It proceeds from the assumption that when teachers embody surrender in their professional and personal lives, they create learning environments marked by trust, resilience, and spiritual authenticity. This research contributes to the broader discourse on Christian pedagogy by reaffirming that the most powerful lessons are not always spoken but lived. In a world increasingly shaped by uncertainty, the presence of educators who demonstrate calm trust in divine provision may serve as a transformative influence on students' moral and spiritual development.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore how Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers function as models of total surrender as reflected in Genesis 22:8 within the educational context of SMP Negeri 3 Kabanjahe. A qualitative design was considered most appropriate because the research aimed to understand lived experiences, personal meanings, and spiritual expressions that cannot be adequately captured through numerical measurement (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Rather than seeking generalization, the study focused on interpreting how teachers embody surrender in their professional and spiritual roles and how such embodiment influences classroom life. The research adopted a phenomenological orientation, emphasizing the exploration of teachers' internal experiences and their outward expressions of faith-based commitment. Phenomenology allows researchers to examine how individuals interpret and live out deeply held beliefs within specific contexts (Moustakas, 1994). In this case, the study

sought to uncover how surrender to God's will is understood, practiced, and communicated by CRE teachers in daily educational interactions. Participants in this study consisted of CRE teachers and selected students who had direct engagement with classroom instruction and spiritual mentoring processes. Purposive sampling was used to identify participants who were considered capable of providing rich and relevant insights into the phenomenon under investigation (Palinkas et al., 2015). The selection criteria included teaching experience, involvement in spiritual guidance activities, and active participation in school-based religious programs. This ensured that participants possessed meaningful experiences related to the research focus. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and reflective documentation. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to articulate their understanding of surrender and describe how biblical values shape their teaching practices. Classroom observations provided contextual insight into how these beliefs were translated into relational behavior, instructional decisions, and responses to student needs. Reflective documentation, including teaching journals and spiritual reflections, served as supplementary sources to deepen interpretive analysis. Such triangulation enhanced the credibility and richness of the findings (Denzin, 2017). Data analysis followed an interpretative thematic process. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and reflective materials were carefully coded to identify recurring patterns related to surrender, trust, faith modeling, and relational influence. Themes were developed through iterative reading and constant comparison, ensuring that interpretations remained grounded in participant experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The analytical process also involved reflective bracketing to minimize researcher bias and maintain fidelity to participant perspectives. To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria as proposed in qualitative research standards (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking was conducted by inviting participants to review preliminary interpretations, thereby enhancing accuracy. Prolonged engagement in the research setting allowed the researcher to gain contextual familiarity and relational trust. Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, and confidentiality was maintained. These measures ensured that the research respected both the professional integrity and spiritual sensitivity of participants. Through this qualitative framework, the study sought to illuminate how the theological principle of total surrender, inspired by Genesis 22:8, is embodied in the lived practices of CRE teachers within a contemporary educational environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the concept of total surrender, inspired by Genesis 22:8, is not merely understood cognitively by Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMP Negeri 3 Kabanjahe but is lived out as a guiding principle shaping their professional identity, pedagogical interactions, and relational engagement with students. The narrative of Abraham's trust in divine provision resonates deeply with teachers who perceive their vocation not only as an academic responsibility but also as a spiritual calling. This perception influences how they approach uncertainty, respond to student needs, and interpret challenges within the classroom. One of the dominant themes emerging from the data is the understanding of teaching as an act of trust rather than

control. Teachers consistently expressed the belief that educational outcomes cannot be fully engineered through human effort alone. Instead, they viewed their role as faithfully carrying out their responsibilities while entrusting the ultimate transformation of students to God. This orientation reflects a practical theology of surrender, where faith is exercised not in extraordinary moments but in daily instructional decisions. Teachers reported that this perspective helped them navigate frustrations such as limited resources, diverse student backgrounds, and varying levels of student motivation. In classroom observations, this surrender-oriented mindset manifested in relational patience. Teachers demonstrated a willingness to invest time in struggling students without expressing discouragement or resentment. Rather than interpreting slow progress as failure, they framed it as part of a divine process unfolding beyond immediate visibility. This aligns with the theological implication of Genesis 22:8, where Abraham's assurance did not rest on visible solutions but on confidence in divine provision. Similarly, teachers adopted a posture of hope even in situations where measurable improvement appeared uncertain. Another significant finding relates to emotional resilience. Participants indicated that surrender provided a stabilizing framework when confronting professional stress. Teaching in a public-school setting often requires balancing institutional expectations with personal convictions. In such contexts, surrender became a means of maintaining integrity without succumbing to anxiety. Teachers described moments when they faced ethical dilemmas or relational tensions, particularly when students exhibited behavioral challenges. Instead of reacting defensively, they chose responses characterized by calmness and empathy, attributing their composure to reliance on God's guidance.

This emotional steadiness was noticed by students. Several students described their CRE teachers as "peaceful," "consistent," and "understanding," particularly during moments of conflict or failure. These perceptions highlight the pedagogical power of lived faith. When students encounter authority figures who respond to adversity with stability rather than volatility, they are exposed to an alternative model of coping rooted in trust rather than control. Such modeling contributes to the formation of emotional maturity and moral awareness. The study found that surrender influenced instructional style. Teachers who embraced this posture were less inclined to rely on rigid authoritarian approaches. Instead, they prioritized dialogical engagement, allowing students to express doubts and questions. This openness reflects an educational humility grounded in the recognition that teachers themselves are participants in an ongoing journey of faith. By acknowledging their own dependence on divine guidance, teachers created spaces where students felt safe to explore spiritual uncertainties. This pedagogical humility mirrors the relational dynamic between Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22. Abraham's response to Isaac was neither evasive nor coercive but trust-filled and calm. In a similar way, CRE teachers communicated assurance without imposing certainty prematurely. They encouraged students to wrestle with questions while emphasizing that faith involves trust amid incomplete understanding. This approach fostered deeper engagement with biblical narratives and personal reflection. The influence of surrender also extended to disciplinary practices. Rather than viewing discipline as punishment, teachers framed it as guidance rooted in care. Observations revealed that corrective conversations often included expressions of hope and affirmation. Teachers emphasized restoration rather than retribution, seeking to help students understand the consequences of their actions

within a moral framework. This restorative orientation reflects the belief that transformation ultimately depends on divine grace rather than human coercion. Students responded positively to this approach. Interviews indicated that students perceived disciplinary interactions as fair and compassionate rather than intimidating. They expressed greater willingness to accept correction when it was delivered with empathy. This suggests that surrender-based leadership fosters relational trust, which in turn enhances the effectiveness of moral instruction. Another key theme concerns vocational meaning. Teachers articulated that surrender provided clarity regarding their purpose. Rather than measuring success solely through academic performance indicators, they evaluated their effectiveness through relational impact and spiritual influence. This reframing reduced pressure associated with external evaluation and allowed teachers to remain motivated even when outcomes were not immediately visible. This vocational perspective also shaped how teachers interpreted setbacks. Instead of viewing difficulties as threats to professional competence, they understood them as opportunities for spiritual growth. Challenges such as student disengagement or parental misunderstanding were approached as contexts requiring prayerful discernment. Teachers described relying on spiritual practices such as prayer and reflection to maintain perspective and avoid burnout. The communal dimension of surrender also emerged as significant. Teachers often supported one another through informal conversations centered on faith and encouragement. These interactions created a shared culture where reliance on God was normalized rather than privatized. Such communal reinforcement strengthened individual resilience and contributed to a cohesive professional ethos. From a broader educational standpoint, the findings illustrate that surrender functions as both an internal disposition and an external influence. Internally, it shapes teachers' emotional responses, ethical decisions, and vocational outlook. Externally, it manifests in relational behaviors that students interpret as authenticity and care. This dual impact underscores the integrative nature of spiritual virtues in educational practice. The study affirms that Genesis 22:8 offers more than a historical account; it provides a paradigm for relational leadership grounded in trust. Abraham's assurance was not derived from circumstantial certainty but from confidence in God's character. Similarly, CRE teachers who internalize this narrative demonstrate leadership rooted in trust rather than control. Their authority emerges not from dominance but from consistency and hope. The implications are significant. When teachers embody surrender, classrooms become environments where faith is experienced as relational stability rather than doctrinal abstraction. Students encounter lived examples of trust that challenge prevailing cultural narratives emphasizing self-sufficiency and control. In this way, surrender becomes a countercultural virtue with transformative potential. The findings suggest that spiritual modeling is particularly impactful in adolescence, a developmental stage characterized by identity exploration. Students navigating uncertainty benefit from observing adults who engage uncertainty with trust rather than fear. This observation provides a framework for interpreting their own struggles through a lens of hope. The research demonstrates that total surrender, as reflected in Genesis 22:8, operates as a foundational principle shaping the professional identity and pedagogical practice of CRE teachers at SMP Negeri 3 Kabanjahe. Through relational patience, emotional resilience, dialogical humility, restorative discipline, and vocational clarity, teachers embody a theology of trust that influences both classroom atmosphere and student formation. These findings highlight

the enduring relevance of biblical narratives as resources for contemporary educational leadership and underscore the transformative power of faith lived in practice.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore how Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMP Negeri 3 Kabanjahe embody the principle of total surrender as reflected in Genesis 22:8 and how this spiritual posture influences their pedagogical practice and relational engagement with students. The findings affirm that surrender is not merely a theological concept confined to biblical interpretation but a lived reality that shapes teacher identity, instructional behavior, and classroom dynamics. The research demonstrates that teachers who internalize the spirit of Abraham's trust in divine provision tend to approach their vocation with humility, patience, and resilience. Rather than attempting to control every outcome of the educational process, they recognize the limits of human effort and consciously entrust student growth to God's guidance. This perspective allows them to navigate challenges such as academic diversity, behavioral issues, and institutional pressures with emotional stability and relational sensitivity. In doing so, they cultivate a classroom environment marked by trust, empathy, and hope. The study highlights that surrender fosters pedagogical authenticity. Students are highly perceptive of the consistency between belief and action demonstrated by their teachers. When educators respond to uncertainty with calmness and integrity, students encounter a living testimony of faith in action. This experiential exposure proves more formative than abstract instruction alone. Through daily interactions characterized by compassion and restorative guidance, teachers become visible representations of spiritual values, enabling students to internalize moral and emotional maturity. The influence of surrender also extends to disciplinary practices and vocational motivation. Teachers who embrace this posture tend to frame correction within a restorative framework rather than a punitive one. They seek transformation rather than compliance, recognizing that lasting change emerges from grace-informed relationships rather than imposed authority. Additionally, surrender provides a renewed sense of vocational meaning, allowing teachers to measure success not solely through academic indicators but through relational and spiritual impact. The study affirms that Genesis 22:8 serves as a powerful paradigm for contemporary educational leadership. Abraham's declaration of trust illustrates that faith is sustained not by visible certainty but by confidence in divine faithfulness. When translated into educational practice, this trust enables teachers to guide students through uncertainty with assurance rather than fear. CRE teachers who model total surrender contribute significantly to holistic student formation. Their lived faith shapes classroom culture, strengthens relational bonds, and nurtures spiritual awareness. By embodying trust in God's provision, they transform teaching from a technical task into a relational ministry that fosters resilience, integrity, and hope among students.

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