



Teaching the Value of Offering as Educational Spirituality: A Biblical Reflection on Exodus 38:24 in the Context of SDN 001 Sekijang

Nopalina Sidauruk

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: sidauruknova11@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This study explores the teaching of offering as educational spirituality through a biblical reflection on Book of Exodus 38:24 in the context of SDN 001 Sekijang. While the verse historically records the quantity of gold contributed for the construction of the tabernacle, it also embodies deeper theological meanings of gratitude, voluntary devotion, and communal participation. In many educational settings, religious instruction risks becoming informational rather than transformational. Therefore, this research investigates how the value of offering can be interpreted pedagogically to cultivate students' spiritual awareness, generosity, and character formation within a public elementary school environment. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with the Christian Religious Education (PAK) teacher and selected students, and analysis of instructional documents. The research site included 105 Christian students and two Christian teachers, providing a distinctive yet pluralistic educational setting. Data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns of meaning and pedagogical practice. The findings reveal that when Exodus 38:24 is taught within its broader redemptive narrative, students interpret offering as an expression of gratitude rather than mere financial contribution. Reflective dialogue, contextual application, and participatory activities fostered deeper engagement and encouraged students to embody generosity in everyday school life. The study concludes that integrating sound biblical interpretation with reflective pedagogy enables the transformation of religious learning from surface knowledge to lived spirituality. Teaching the value of offering as educational spirituality thus contributes meaningfully to holistic character development in elementary education.

Keywords: *Offering, Christian Religious Education, Educational Spirituality*

INTRODUCTION

Education in the twenty-first century increasingly recognizes that cognitive achievement alone is insufficient to form whole persons. Scholars of holistic and character education argue that schooling must also cultivate moral imagination, spiritual awareness, and

responsible citizenship (Arthur, 2003; Lickona, 2012). In faith-based or religion-related instruction, this concern becomes even more central, as learning is expected to integrate knowledge, values, and lived practice. Within Christian education, spirituality is not understood merely as private piety but as a formative orientation of life before God and others (Pazmiño, 2008; Groome, 2011). Thus, teaching biblical values in school settings invites reflection on how scriptural themes can shape students' character and communal responsibility. One biblical theme with strong educational implications is the value of offering. In Book of Exodus 38:24, the narrative records the total amount of gold contributed by the Israelites for the construction of the tabernacle. The verse stands within a broader theological account in which the people respond voluntarily and generously to God's redemptive action (Exod. 35-40). Biblical scholars note that the tabernacle project reflects communal participation, covenant identity, and gratitude for divine deliverance (Durham, 1987; Childs, 1974). The offering described is not merely economic; it is symbolic of devotion, obedience, and shared responsibility in worship. Such a perspective opens pedagogical possibilities: offering can be interpreted as an expression of spirituality manifested through concrete action. Spirituality is often linked with meaning-making, connectedness, and moral commitment (Palmer, 1998). For Christian educators, integrating spirituality into teaching involves guiding learners to internalize faith values and express them in daily life (Pazmiño, 2008). Thomas Groome (2011) emphasizes that Christian religious education should move beyond rote transmission of biblical facts toward participatory and reflective engagement with the Christian story. Therefore, reading Exodus 38:24 in an educational frame invites a shift from viewing "offering" as a ritualistic act toward understanding it as a formative value—gratitude, stewardship, generosity, and communal solidarity.

Character education has been formally encouraged within national educational policy. Although public schools are pluralistic, religious instruction remains part of the curriculum and serves as a space for moral and spiritual formation. At SDN 001 Sekijang, there are 105 Christian students and two Christian teachers, including one teacher of Pendidikan Agama Kristen (PAK). This demographic reality creates a unique locus for examining how biblical values can be taught meaningfully within a public-school setting. The presence of a substantial number of Christian students allows for contextualized exploration of Christian spirituality, while still respecting the broader pluralistic environment of the school. Religious instruction in many contexts often risks becoming informational rather than transformational. Studies on approaches to learning distinguish between surface learning, focused on memorization, and deep learning, which emphasizes understanding and integration (Marton & Säljö, 1976; Biggs & Tang, 2011). When biblical texts are taught merely as historical data or doctrinal propositions, students may fail to connect them with personal and communal life. Consequently, the educational potential of themes such as offering is reduced to cognitive recall rather than spiritual formation. This study therefore seeks to explore how the value of offering, as reflected in Exodus 38:24, can be taught as educational spirituality in the context of SDN 001 Sekijang, Pelalawan. By engaging biblical scholarship and educational theory, the research aims to reinterpret the theology of offering as a pedagogical resource for cultivating generosity, gratitude, and communal responsibility among elementary students. The guiding assumption is that biblical reflection, when integrated with sound educational practice, can contribute to character

formation that is both spiritually grounded and socially relevant. Through this integrative approach, the article positions the narrative of Exodus not only as an ancient record of material contributions but as a theological-educational paradigm. Teaching the value of offering thus becomes an intentional effort to shape students' spirituality in ways that are embodied, relational, and transformative within their concrete school community.

METHODS

A qualitative approach was chosen because the research sought to understand meaning, interpretation, and lived pedagogical experience rather than to measure variables statistically. Case study methodology is particularly appropriate when investigating a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life setting and when contextual conditions are integral to the phenomenon being studied (Yin, 2018). The school context, with 105 Christian students and two Christian teachers including one *Pendidikan Agama Kristen (PAK)* teacher, provided a bounded system in which biblical reflection and classroom practice could be examined holistically. Participants were selected purposively to ensure relevance to the research focus (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The primary participant was the PAK teacher responsible for delivering religious instruction. Additional participants included selected upper-grade Christian students (Grades 4-6) who were developmentally capable of reflective engagement, as well as the second Christian teacher for complementary perspective. Data collection was conducted through classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Classroom observations focused on how the theme of offering was introduced, interpreted, and contextualized in learning activities, paying attention to pedagogical strategies, dialogical interaction, student participation, and expressions of moral or spiritual reflection. Field notes were recorded systematically to capture instructional dynamics and student responses. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the PAK teacher and selected students to explore their understanding of Exodus 38:24, their perception of offering as gratitude and responsibility, and the ways they practice generosity within school and family life. Semi-structured interviewing allowed thematic consistency while providing flexibility for deeper probing (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Document analysis complemented observational and interview data by examining lesson plans, teaching modules, student reflection journals, and school character education guidelines. Document analysis strengthens qualitative inquiry by providing insight into intended curriculum and pedagogical planning (Bowen, 2009). All data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the procedures outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), beginning with data familiarization, initial coding, theme development, and interpretive synthesis. Emerging themes, such as offering as gratitude, stewardship, communal participation, and spiritual obedience, were interpreted dialogically alongside biblical-theological scholarship on Exodus (Childs, 1974; Durham, 1987) and Christian educational theory (Groome, 2011; Pazmiño, 2008). Triangulation across data sources enhanced credibility, while member checking with the PAK teacher ensured interpretive accuracy (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Ethical considerations included parental consent for student participation, voluntary involvement, and the use of pseudonyms to protect confidentiality. Through this integrated empirical and theological method, the study aimed to produce a contextually grounded pedagogical model that enables students not only to understand the biblical

concept of offering cognitively but to embody it as lived educational spirituality within their school community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that teaching the value of offering as educational spirituality in the context of SDN 001 Sekijang moves beyond a narrow financial interpretation and becomes a formative process shaping students' moral awareness, communal responsibility, and lived spirituality. Drawing from classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis, four major themes emerged: offering as gratitude rooted in redemption, offering as participatory community identity, offering as embodied practice rather than abstract doctrine, and offering as transformative character formation. These themes are discussed dialogically with biblical scholarship on Book of Exodus 38:24 and relevant Christian educational theory. Offering was consistently interpreted by the PAK teacher as an act of gratitude grounded in God's prior action. In several observed lessons, the narrative context of Exodus 35-40 was emphasized: the Israelites contributed materials for the tabernacle after experiencing liberation from Egypt. Students were guided to understand that the gold recorded in Exodus 38:24 symbolized voluntary devotion rather than coercive taxation. Interview responses indicated that students associated offering with "saying thank you to God" and "sharing because God first gives." This interpretation aligns with theological readings that view the tabernacle offerings as covenantal response (Childs, 1974; Durham, 1987). In pedagogical terms, this finding suggests that when biblical texts are framed within the broader narrative of redemption, students can connect theological meaning with personal gratitude. Rather than memorizing quantities of gold, learners began articulating relational motivations. This shift reflects movement from surface learning toward deeper comprehension as described by Marton and Säljö (1976), where learners seek meaning rather than isolated facts.

Offering functioned as participatory community identity. Observations showed that classroom discussions frequently linked the collective contributions of Israel to present-day school life. The PAK teacher invited students to reflect on how each family might contribute differently, time, encouragement, prayer, or material resources, yet all were equally valued. Students described offering not only in church settings but also in helping classmates, contributing to class projects, and maintaining classroom cleanliness. This communal framing resonates with Groome's (2011) vision of Christian education as shared praxis, where faith is interpreted within communal experience. Theologically, Exodus 38:24 underscores that the tabernacle was constructed through shared generosity, symbolizing corporate identity before God. In the school context, the value of offering became a narrative resource for cultivating solidarity among 105 Christian students who navigate a pluralistic public-school environment. The presence of two Christian teachers, including the PAK instructor, provided modeling that reinforced communal belonging. Students expressed that offering strengthened their sense of being "one body" even in diversity of background. Offering emerged as embodied practice rather than abstract doctrine. Document analysis of lesson plans revealed intentional

strategies such as reflective journaling, storytelling, and small-group dialogue. In observed sessions, students were asked to write concrete examples of how they practiced giving during the week. Several students described sharing stationery, helping peers understand lessons, or setting aside pocket money for church activities. The teacher intentionally broadened the concept of offering to include service and empathy. This pedagogical move reflects Pazmiño's (2008) argument that Christian education must integrate belief and practice so that faith becomes lived experience. The thematic analysis indicated that students who engaged in reflective exercises articulated more nuanced understandings of offering compared to those who relied solely on textbook explanations. This supports Biggs and Tang's (2011) assertion that deep learning occurs when students actively construct meaning through engagement and reflection. In this case, spiritual formation was facilitated by pedagogical design rather than assumed as automatic outcome of Bible reading. Offering contributed to transformative character formation. Interview data suggest that repeated engagement with the theme reshaped students' attitudes toward possessions and relationships. Some students reported increased willingness to share lunch or assist struggling peers. While these behaviors cannot be attributed exclusively to classroom instruction, participants consistently linked their actions to lessons about Exodus 38:24. This demonstrates the potential of biblical narratives to function as moral exemplars when mediated through reflective teaching. The concept of character education advanced by Lickona (2012) emphasizes that moral knowledge, moral feeling, and moral action must converge. In SDN 001 Sekijang, teaching on offering appeared to engage all three dimensions: students cognitively understood the biblical story, emotionally resonated with gratitude, and behaviorally practiced generosity. Some students initially equated offering solely with monetary church giving, reflecting a narrow doctrinal understanding. This indicates that prior exposure to religious language may limit interpretive openness. The teacher addressed this by contextualizing offering within everyday life, thereby expanding theological imagination. Furthermore, time constraints within the formal curriculum limited opportunities for extended reflection. This underscores the importance of intentional integration rather than episodic moral lessons. Despite these challenges, triangulated data indicate that consistent narrative framing and reflective activities fostered deeper engagement. The findings affirm that Exodus 38:24, though historically specific, carries enduring pedagogical significance. Childs (1974) notes that the tabernacle narrative emphasizes divine presence among a redeemed community. When students perceive offering as participation in God's dwelling project, the act acquires spiritual depth. In educational terms, the biblical motif becomes a lens for interpreting communal responsibility within the classroom. The study therefore supports an integrative model in which scriptural exegesis informs pedagogical design. The case of SDN 001 Sekijang illustrates that educational spirituality can be cultivated within public institutions when teaching remains dialogical and respectful. The Christian students' substantial presence created a viable context for exploring faith identity without exclusionary practices. Observational data suggest that students became more confident articulating values while remaining aware of pluralism. Thus, offering as spirituality functioned not as sectarian imposition but as ethical formation rooted in gratitude and generosity. The results demonstrate that teaching the value of offering inspired by Exodus 38:24 can meaningfully shape educational spirituality when approached through reflective, participatory pedagogy. The integration of biblical narrative, communal

dialogue, and embodied practice facilitated movement from informational religion to transformative character formation. This discussion highlights the necessity of coupling sound biblical interpretation with educational theory to ensure that scriptural themes become formative resources within contemporary schooling.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that teaching the value of offering as educational spirituality, grounded in Book of Exodus 38:24, possesses significant formative potential within the context of SDN 001 Sekijang. Rather than treating the biblical text as a historical record limited to quantitative data about materials for the tabernacle, the research reinterpreted the narrative as a theological resource for shaping gratitude, communal identity, and responsible action among elementary students. The findings indicate that when offering is framed as a voluntary, grateful response to God's redemptive work, students begin to internalize it not merely as a ritual obligation but as an expression of lived spirituality. The qualitative case study approach revealed that reflective pedagogy, dialogical engagement, and contextual application were crucial in facilitating this transformation. Students demonstrated deeper understanding when they were invited to connect the biblical narrative to concrete practices such as sharing, serving, and contributing within their classroom community. The presence of 105 Christian students and two Christian teachers provided a supportive environment in which the value of offering could be explored collectively while remaining sensitive to the broader pluralistic setting of a public school. The study affirms that Exodus 38:24 underscores communal participation in God's dwelling project, symbolizing covenant identity and shared devotion. This motif translates into character formation that integrates moral cognition, affective commitment, and ethical action. Thus, offering becomes an embodied spirituality expressed in generosity, stewardship, and solidarity. The integration of biblical reflection and sound pedagogical practice enables religious instruction to move from surface transmission toward transformative formation. Teaching the value of offering as educational spirituality not only enriches Christian religious education but also contributes to holistic character development within the school community.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arthur, J. (2003). *Education with character: The moral economy of schooling*. RoutledgeFalmer.
- Biggs, J., & Tang, C. (2011). *Teaching for quality learning at university* (4th ed.). Open University Press/McGraw-Hill Education.
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

- Childs, B. S. (1974). *The book of Exodus: A critical, theological commentary*. Westminster Press.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Durham, J. I. (1987). *Exodus* (Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 3). Word Books.
- Groome, T. H. (2011). *Will there be faith? A new vision for educating and growing disciples*. HarperOne.
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Lickona, T. (2012). *Educating for character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility*. Bantam Books.
- Marton, F., & Säljö, R. (1976). On qualitative differences in learning: I—Outcome and process. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 46(1), 4–11. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8279.1976.tb02980.x>
- Palmer, P. J. (1998). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*. Jossey-Bass.
- Pazmiño, R. W. (2008). *Foundational issues in Christian education: An introduction in evangelical perspective* (3rd ed.). Baker Academic.
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Sage Publications.