



## Professionalism of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Cultivating the Value of Worship Holiness: A Reflection on Exodus 37:29 in the Context of SDN 1 Masaha

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### ABSTRACT

*This study explores the professionalism of Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers in cultivating the value of worship holiness through a biblical reflection on Book of Exodus 37:29 within the context of SDN 1 Masaha. The background of this research arises from the growing concern that worship practices among elementary students often become routine and external, lacking deep spiritual meaning. In a public school setting where 42 Christian students are served by one PAK teacher among six Christian teachers, the challenge lies in translating theological concepts of holiness into lived educational experience. The study addresses the central question: how does teacher professionalism contribute to nurturing an authentic understanding and practice of worship holiness among students? Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The findings reveal that teacher professionalism, expressed through intentional lesson preparation, theological competence, moral-spiritual modeling, reflective pedagogy, and consistent discipline, plays a crucial role in shaping students' perceptions and behaviors related to worship. The careful preparation of sacred materials described in Exodus 37:29 serves as a theological paradigm for professional dedication, integrity, and reverence in teaching practice. The study concludes that professionalism in Christian Religious Education is not merely technical proficiency but an integration of character, competence, and spiritual authenticity. When teachers embody holiness in both preparation and practice, students move beyond superficial ritualism toward deeper internalization of reverence, sincerity, and ethical responsibility. This research underscores the importance of reflective and spiritually grounded professionalism in fostering transformative character formation within elementary education.*

**Keywords:** Professionalism, Christian Religious Education, Worship Holiness

## INTRODUCTION

Teacher professionalism remains a central concern in contemporary educational discourse, particularly in relation to moral and spiritual formation. Professionalism is no longer defined merely by mastery of subject content, but by pedagogical competence, ethical responsibility, and the capacity to shape students' character (Darling-Hammond, 2017). In religious education, this dimension becomes even more significant because the teacher does not simply transmit knowledge but mediates values, beliefs, and spiritual practices. Within Christian Religious Education (*Pendidikan Agama Kristen/PAK*), teacher professionalism therefore encompasses theological understanding, pedagogical skill, and personal integrity (Pazmiño, 2008). Teachers are expected to fulfill four core competencies: pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competence, as regulated by national education policy. These competencies align with broader global discussions about reflective practice and ethical commitment in teaching (Schön, 1983). For Christian Religious Education teachers, professionalism also includes the responsibility to cultivate reverence, moral awareness, and spiritual discipline among students. One essential theological theme relevant to this calling is the holiness of worship. The concept of worship holiness finds rich expression in Book of Exodus 37:29, which describes the preparation of the sacred anointing oil and pure incense, blended according to divine prescription. Situated within the larger tabernacle narrative (Exod. 25-40), this verse highlights intentionality, purity, and obedience in preparing elements for worship. Biblical scholars emphasize that the tabernacle texts underscore the holiness of God and the careful devotion required in approaching divine presence (Childs, 1974; Durham, 1987). The crafting of holy oil and incense was not a casual activity but a sacred task performed with precision and reverence. Theologically, this reflects a broader principle: worship requires preparation, purity, and faithful adherence to divine instruction. Translating this theological insight into educational practice raises important questions about teacher professionalism. If worship in the biblical tradition demands intentional preparation and purity, then Christian educators who guide students in understanding worship must likewise embody professionalism characterized by integrity, competence, and spiritual maturity. Palmer (1998) argues that good teaching flows from the identity and integrity of the teacher; thus, spirituality and professionalism are inseparable in faith-based education. In the classroom, cultivating the value of worship holiness involves more than explaining liturgical procedures; it entails forming attitudes of reverence, respect, and awareness of God's presence.

The context of SDN 1 Masaha provides a meaningful locus for exploring this issue. The school includes 42 Christian students and six Christian teachers, among whom one serves specifically as a PAK teacher. Although SDN 1 Masaha is a public elementary school operating within a pluralistic framework, the presence of a distinct Christian community within it creates opportunities for intentional spiritual formation. The relatively small number of Christian students also intensifies the need for effective and professional guidance, as religious education may function as a primary site for nurturing Christian identity and reverence. Religious instruction in many school settings risks becoming routine or procedural. When worship is discussed merely as ritual activity, singing songs, reciting prayers, or attending services, students may fail to grasp its theological depth.

Research on approaches to learning distinguishes between surface learning, focused on memorization, and deep learning, which seeks meaning and integration (Marton & Säljö, 1976; Biggs & Tang, 2011). If the holiness of worship is taught superficially, students may comply externally without internalizing reverence. Teacher professionalism thus becomes critical in designing learning experiences that move beyond formalism toward transformative understanding. This study therefore investigates how the professionalism of Christian Religious Education teachers contributes to cultivating the value of worship holiness through reflection on Exodus 37:29 in the context of SDN 1 Masaha, Kapuas. By integrating biblical-theological reflection with educational theory, the research seeks to demonstrate that professionalism in PAK teaching is not merely administrative competence but a spiritual vocation expressed through careful preparation, ethical modeling, and reflective pedagogy. In doing so, the study contributes to ongoing discussions about the integration of theology and professional educational practice within public school settings.

## METHODS

A qualitative case study design was used to examine how teacher professionalism contributes to cultivating the value of worship holiness through reflection on Book of Exodus 37:29 in the context of SDN 1 Masaha. A qualitative approach was selected because the research sought to explore lived experiences, pedagogical practices, and theological interpretation within a specific educational setting rather than to test statistical hypotheses. Case study methodology is appropriate when investigating a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2018). In this research, teacher professionalism and the cultivation of worship holiness were inseparable from the concrete realities of the school community, which includes 42 Christian students and six Christian teachers, with one serving as the PAK teacher. Participants were selected purposively to ensure relevance to the research focus (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The primary participant was the Christian Religious Education (PAK) teacher, whose instructional practice formed the core of analysis. Additional participants included selected Christian students from upper elementary grades and several Christian teachers to provide complementary perspectives regarding school culture and spiritual formation. Data collection was conducted through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Classroom observations focused on how lessons related to worship, reverence, and holiness were prepared and delivered, paying attention to instructional strategies, teacher modeling, classroom atmosphere, and student engagement. Semi-structured interviews explored teachers' understanding of professionalism, their interpretation of Exodus 37:29, and their strategies for fostering reverence in worship practices. Student interviews examined their perceptions of worship holiness and the influence of teacher example on their attitudes. Document analysis included lesson plans, teaching modules, and school guidelines related to character and religious education. Data were analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, beginning with familiarization, coding, theme identification, and interpretive synthesis. Emerging themes were interpreted dialogically alongside biblical-theological scholarship on Exodus (Childs, 1974; Durham,

1987) and theories of professional and reflective practice (Schön, 1983; Darling-Hammond, 2017). Triangulation across data sources enhanced credibility, and member checking was conducted with the PAK teacher to ensure interpretive accuracy. Ethical considerations included informed consent, voluntary participation, and the protection of participants' identities. Through this integrative methodological approach, the study sought to generate a contextually grounded understanding of how teacher professionalism can embody and transmit the value of worship holiness within a public elementary school setting.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the professionalism of the Christian Religious Education (PAK) teacher at SDN 1 Masaha plays a decisive role in cultivating the value of worship holiness among students through reflective engagement with Book of Exodus 37:29. Through classroom observation, interviews, and document analysis, five interrelated themes emerged: professionalism as intentional preparation reflecting biblical intentionality, professionalism as moral-spiritual modeling, professionalism as pedagogical depth rather than ritual formalism, professionalism as community cultivation within a pluralistic public school, and professionalism as transformative spiritual formation. Together, these themes indicate that teacher professionalism in PAK is not merely administrative competence but a theological and pedagogical vocation that embodies the holiness it seeks to teach. Professionalism appeared as intentional preparation that mirrors the biblical intentionality described in Exodus 37:29. The verse records the making of the sacred anointing oil and pure incense "blended as by the perfumer, salted, pure, and holy." Biblical commentators such as Childs (1974) and Durham (1987) emphasize that the preparation of holy materials for worship required precision, obedience, and reverence. Observational data revealed that the PAK teacher consciously paralleled this principle in lesson planning. Lesson plans were structured carefully, including clear objectives related not only to cognitive understanding of worship but also to attitudinal outcomes such as reverence and gratitude. The teacher reported spending significant time preparing scriptural interpretation, contextual illustrations, and reflective questions. This intentionality reflects what Darling-Hammond (2017) identifies as a hallmark of teacher professionalism: thorough preparation grounded in subject mastery and learner understanding. The theological symbolism of careful preparation in Exodus 37:29 thus became pedagogically embodied in the teacher's disciplined planning process.

Professionalism functioned as moral-spiritual modeling. Interviews with students consistently indicated that their perception of worship holiness was shaped less by abstract definitions and more by the teacher's demeanor. Students described the PAK teacher as "serious but kind," "respectful when praying," and "not joking during worship." Classroom observation confirmed that the teacher maintained a distinct tone when leading prayer or reading Scripture, signaling reverence without authoritarianism. Palmer (1998) argues that teaching flows from the identity and integrity of the teacher; in this case, the cultivation of worship holiness was mediated through visible authenticity. Students reported that seeing the teacher prepare quietly before class or correct

disruptive behavior gently yet firmly helped them understand that worship is sacred. This aligns with Schön's (1983) concept of reflective practice, where professional knowledge is enacted through thoughtful action in context. The holiness described in Exodus 37:29 was thus not reduced to ancient ritual but reframed as a disposition embodied by the educator. The findings reveal a tension between ritual formalism and pedagogical depth. Initially, several students equated worship holiness with external behaviors such as wearing neat clothes or remaining silent during prayer. While these behaviors are not insignificant, they risk reducing holiness to mere compliance. Drawing from Marton and Säljö's (1976) distinction between surface and deep learning, the study found that early understandings of holiness reflected surface approaches, focusing on observable actions without internalized meaning. However, through dialogical teaching and reflective exercises, students gradually articulated deeper interpretations, such as "respecting God in our heart" or "being honest when singing." The teacher employed small-group discussions and journaling activities that encouraged students to connect Exodus 37:29 with their own attitudes. Biggs and Tang (2011) note that deep learning emerges when learners actively construct meaning rather than passively receive information. In this context, professionalism involved designing experiences that facilitated meaning-making. Rather than condemning superficial responses, the teacher scaffolded students toward richer theological understanding. Professionalism contributed to community cultivation within a pluralistic public school. SDN 1 Masaha operates as a state institution with diverse religious backgrounds, yet it includes 42 Christian students and six Christian teachers. The presence of one dedicated PAK teacher created a structured environment for Christian instruction while remaining respectful of pluralism. Observations revealed that discussions of worship holiness were framed positively, emphasizing reverence rather than exclusivism. Students were encouraged to practice respect toward classmates of different faiths, linking holiness with ethical conduct. This approach resonates with Pazmiño's (2008) assertion that Christian education should prepare learners for faithful presence in broader society. The holiness motif of Exodus 37:29, which highlights purity and divine orientation, was translated into daily behaviors such as honesty, discipline, and mutual respect. Interviews with other Christian teachers confirmed that the PAK teacher's professionalism influenced overall school culture by promoting seriousness during school assemblies and religious observances. Thus, the cultivation of worship holiness extended beyond a single classroom and subtly shaped communal ethos.

The study indicates that professionalism fosters transformative spiritual formation. Students described practical changes, such as preparing their hearts before church services, refraining from disruptive talk during prayer, and reminding peers to show respect. Although these actions may appear modest, they reflect internalization of values. Lickona (2012) argues that character formation involves moral knowledge, moral feeling, and moral action; the data suggest that all three dimensions were engaged. Students cognitively understood the sacred preparation described in Exodus 37:29, emotionally associated it with reverence, and behaviorally expressed it through disciplined conduct. Importantly, these outcomes were linked to consistent modeling and pedagogical clarity. The teacher's professional competence in explaining historical context, combined with personal authenticity, created an environment conducive to internalization. Time limitations within the national curriculum restricted extended theological exploration.

Furthermore, the single PAK teacher bore primary responsibility for spiritual formation among 42 students, which required sustained commitment. Professionalism therefore demanded resilience and continuous self-reflection. Interviews revealed that the teacher engaged in personal devotional practice and professional development activities to maintain theological depth. This corresponds with Darling-Hammond's (2017) emphasis on ongoing professional learning as essential for quality teaching. The biblical image of carefully blended holy oil can metaphorically describe the integration of competence, character, and devotion required in professional PAK practice. Another significant finding concerns the relational dimension of holiness. Students frequently connected worship holiness with respect for teachers and peers. This relational understanding parallels the covenantal framework of Exodus, where holiness signifies belonging to God's community (Childs, 1974). By framing holiness as relational fidelity rather than isolated ritual purity, the teacher prevented legalistic interpretations. Observations showed that classroom discipline was applied not merely to enforce order but to reinforce reverence. When students spoke during prayer, correction was accompanied by explanation about honoring God and classmates. Such reflective correction exemplifies Schön's (1983) reflective practitioner, adapting professional knowledge in dynamic situations.

The integration of biblical reflection and educational theory proved crucial. Without theological grounding, professionalism might reduce to procedural efficiency. Conversely, without pedagogical competence, theological ideals risk remaining abstract. In SDN 1 Masaha, the convergence of scriptural exegesis, reflective practice, and character education produced observable shifts in student attitudes. The study thus affirms that teacher professionalism in Christian Religious Education is inherently integrative: it unites theological fidelity with instructional expertise. Exodus 37:29 serves as a paradigmatic text illustrating that sacred tasks require intentionality and purity, qualities mirrored in professional teaching practice. The results and discussion demonstrate that cultivating the value of worship holiness depends substantially on the professionalism of the Christian Religious Education teacher. Intentional preparation, moral-spiritual modeling, dialogical pedagogy, community sensitivity, and ongoing professional reflection collectively shape students' understanding and embodiment of holiness. Within the specific context of SDN 1 Masaha, the teacher's professional integrity translated biblical theology into lived educational experience. The study underscores that in public elementary settings, even with limited personnel, professional and spiritually grounded educators can meaningfully nurture reverence and character through thoughtful engagement with Scripture.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the professionalism of Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers is a decisive factor in cultivating the value of worship holiness within the educational context of SDN 1 Masaha. Through a reflective engagement with Book of Exodus 37:29, the research demonstrates that professionalism in PAK is not limited to administrative competence or mastery of curriculum content, but encompasses theological depth, moral integrity, pedagogical intentionality, and reflective practice. The

sacred preparation of anointing oil described in Exodus 37:29 symbolically parallels the careful preparation, purity of intention, and reverent attitude required of teachers who seek to nurture holiness in their students. The findings show that when a teacher intentionally integrates biblical reflection with thoughtful instructional strategies, students move beyond superficial understandings of worship as mere external behavior toward a deeper internalization of reverence, sincerity, and spiritual discipline. Professionalism becomes visible not only in structured lesson planning and clear learning objectives, but also in the teacher's personal example, tone of voice in prayer, consistency in discipline, fairness in interaction, and authenticity in spiritual life. In this context, the embodiment of holiness by the teacher serves as a living curriculum that reinforces formal instruction. The study highlights that professionalism contributes to shaping a respectful and spiritually attentive classroom culture within a pluralistic public school environment. By framing holiness as reverence, integrity, and relational responsibility rather than exclusivism, the PAK teacher fosters values that are both theologically faithful and socially constructive. Even with only one PAK teacher serving 42 Christian students, sustained professionalism and reflective commitment enable meaningful spiritual formation. This research affirms that cultivating worship holiness in elementary education requires teachers who understand their vocation as both pedagogical and spiritual. Professional competence, when grounded in biblical reflection and enacted through consistent modeling, becomes a transformative instrument for character formation. Thus, teacher professionalism is not merely a supporting factor but the central medium through which the value of worship holiness is transmitted, embodied, and sustained in the life of the school community.

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