



## Professional Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Explaining the Value of Jacob's Obedience (Genesis 35:7): A Study at SD N 173561 Haunatas

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the professional competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher in explaining the value of Jacob's obedience in Genesis 35:7 at SD N 173561 Haunatas, Toba, Indonesia. The research was conducted in a school context consisting of 80 Christian students and 9 Christian teachers, providing a supportive institutional environment for faith-based instruction. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The study integrates biblical-theological interpretation with educational theory to evaluate how professional competence shapes the communication of biblical values. The findings indicate that the CRE teacher demonstrates strong professional competence through mastery of biblical content, hermeneutical accuracy, pedagogical clarity, contextual application, and systematic assessment practices. Genesis 35:7 is presented not as a moralistic command but as a covenantal response of gratitude and faithfulness to God's revelation. Interactive teaching strategies, narrative coherence, and culturally sensitive explanations enable students to understand obedience as relational trust rather than mere compliance. The collaborative presence of other Christian teachers further reinforces consistent moral modeling within the school environment. The study concludes that professional competence in Christian education is both an academic requirement and a theological vocation. When teachers integrate doctrinal depth, interpretive responsibility, and effective pedagogy, biblical narratives become transformative tools for shaping informed faith, moral maturity, and Christ-centered character among elementary students.*

**Keywords:** Professional Competence, Christian Religious Education, Obedience

### INTRODUCTION

Professional competence is a fundamental dimension of teacher quality, particularly in Christian Religious Education (CRE), where doctrinal accuracy, biblical interpretation, and

contextual application are central to the learning process. In the Indonesian educational framework, professional competence refers to a teacher's mastery of subject matter, the ability to develop instructional materials, and the capacity to apply knowledge systematically in teaching practice (Mulyasa, 2013). For CRE teachers, this competence extends beyond general academic mastery; it requires theological literacy, hermeneutical responsibility, and the ability to communicate biblical values in ways that are both faithful to Scripture and relevant to students' lived experiences. One significant biblical narrative that offers rich pedagogical potential is Jacob's act of obedience in Genesis 35:7. In this passage, Jacob builds an altar at Bethel in response to God's command and prior revelation. The act signifies remembrance, gratitude, and covenantal obedience after a complex journey marked by struggle and transformation. According to Victor P. Hamilton (1995), Genesis 35 reflects a renewed commitment to God, demonstrating Jacob's maturation from a figure characterized by deception to one marked by reverence and submission. Similarly, Gordon J. Wenham (1994) interprets the Bethel episode as a theological climax in Jacob's narrative, emphasizing obedience as a response to divine encounter. Thus, Genesis 35:7 provides a profound theological foundation for teaching the value of obedience as relational fidelity rather than mere rule compliance. In the context of elementary education, especially in a predominantly Christian environment such as SD N 173561 Haunatas in Toba, Indonesia, where there are 80 Christian students and 9 Christian teachers, the professional competence of the CRE teacher plays a strategic role in shaping students' understanding of biblical obedience. Elementary students are in a formative stage of moral and spiritual development; therefore, explanations of biblical narratives must be both theologically sound and pedagogically appropriate. Thomas H. Groome (2011) argues that Christian education must integrate faith tradition with learners' developmental realities, ensuring that theological truths are communicated in ways that nurture moral discernment and spiritual growth. Consequently, the professional competence of CRE teachers involves translating complex theological themes, such as covenant, revelation, and obedience, into accessible and transformative lessons.

Professional competence also includes the ability to employ sound hermeneutical methods. Misinterpretation of Old Testament narratives can lead to moralistic reductionism or superficial application. Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart (2014) caution that biblical narratives must be understood within their historical and literary contexts before deriving contemporary application. In explaining Genesis 35:7, teachers must avoid portraying obedience as transactional or legalistic. Instead, obedience should be framed as a response to God's faithfulness and covenantal grace. Such interpretive precision reflects high professional standards and safeguards doctrinal integrity. In a communal cultural setting such as Toba, where kinship bonds and collective identity are strong, the value of obedience carries both theological and sociocultural resonance. Robert W. Pazmiño (2008) emphasizes that Christian educators must contextualize biblical teaching responsibly, ensuring that cultural values are illuminated and transformed by Scripture rather than uncritically reinforced. Professional competence therefore involves cultural sensitivity, helping students understand Jacob's obedience not merely as historical narrative but as a living principle applicable to family relationships, community responsibility, and spiritual devotion. The presence of nine Christian teachers

at SD N 173561 Haunatas also creates a collaborative environment where professional standards can influence institutional culture. Educational research indicates that teacher collaboration enhances instructional quality and student achievement (Hattie, 2009). Within this setting, the CRE teacher's professional competence contributes not only to individual classroom effectiveness but also to broader spiritual and moral formation across the school community. This study therefore investigates how the professional competence of the CRE teacher at SD N 173561 Haunatas enables effective explanation of Jacob's obedience in Genesis 35:7. By examining instructional strategies, theological accuracy, contextual application, and collaborative dynamics, the research seeks to demonstrate that professional competence is indispensable for communicating biblical values meaningfully. The central argument is that when CRE teachers combine theological depth, hermeneutical integrity, and pedagogical skill, the value of obedience is presented not as rigid obligation but as faithful response to God's revelation, thereby fostering informed faith and moral maturity among elementary students.

## METHODS

A qualitative descriptive research design was used to examine the professional competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher in explaining the value of Jacob's obedience in Genesis 35:7 at SD N 173561 Haunatas, Toba, Indonesia. A qualitative approach was chosen because the research aimed to explore instructional processes, theological explanation, and contextual application within a natural classroom setting. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research is appropriate for investigating meaning, instructional behavior, and contextual realities in depth rather than measuring variables statistically. The study integrates biblical-theological analysis with empirical classroom investigation, enabling Scripture-based interpretation to be examined alongside observable pedagogical practice. This approach aligns with Pazmiño's (2008) perspective that Christian educational research should connect theological foundations with lived instructional experience. The research was conducted at SD N 173561 Haunatas, Toba, a public elementary school with 80 Christian students and 9 Christian teachers. The primary research subject was the CRE teacher responsible for delivering biblical instruction, while students served as supporting participants in understanding instructional impact. Given the manageable number of students, classroom observation included all 80 Christian students during CRE sessions. For in-depth interviews, purposive sampling was used by selecting representative students from different grade levels to capture varied levels of comprehension and response (Patton, 2015). Additionally, several Christian teachers were informally consulted to explore collaborative academic culture within the school. Non-participant observations were conducted during lessons on Genesis 35:7. The researcher focused on theological accuracy, clarity of explanation, instructional strategy, contextualization, and student engagement. Observation indicators were based on professional competence standards, including subject mastery, systematic presentation, and integration of biblical values (Mulyasa, 2013). Interviews were conducted with the CRE teacher to explore lesson preparation, hermeneutical approach, theological understanding of Genesis 35:7, and strategies for contextual application. Selected students were interviewed to assess comprehension of the concept of obedience and its relevance to daily life. Creswell and

Poth (2018) note that semi-structured interviews allow flexibility while maintaining thematic focus. In qualitative research, the researcher functions as the primary instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Supporting instruments included: an observation checklist based on professional competence indicators (content mastery, pedagogical clarity, contextual integration), an interview guide structured around theological and instructional themes, and reflective field notes to record interpretive insights during data collection. Biblical interpretation of Genesis 35:7 was guided by established hermeneutical principles (Fee & Stuart, 2014), ensuring contextual fidelity before deriving pedagogical implications.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the professional competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher at SD N 173561 Haunatas, Toba, plays a decisive role in explaining the theological and moral value of Jacob's obedience in Genesis 35:7 in a manner that is biblically faithful, pedagogically effective, and contextually relevant. With 80 Christian students and the support of 9 Christian teachers within the school environment, the instructional ecosystem provides a fertile context for integrating theological depth with educational professionalism. The results indicate that professional competence in this setting is reflected through four interrelated dimensions: mastery of biblical content, hermeneutical accuracy, pedagogical clarity, and contextual application within the Toba cultural framework. Regarding mastery of biblical content, classroom observations revealed that the CRE teacher demonstrated strong familiarity with the broader Jacob narrative (Genesis 28-35), rather than isolating Genesis 35:7 as a disconnected moral anecdote. The teacher explained Jacob's journey from Bethel (Genesis 28) through periods of struggle, deception, reconciliation, and eventual spiritual renewal, culminating in the altar-building event at Bethel in Genesis 35:7. This narrative coherence reflects professional subject mastery. As Hamilton (1995) emphasizes, Genesis 35 represents a theological turning point in Jacob's life, marking spiritual maturation and covenant reaffirmation. By presenting obedience as a response to divine faithfulness rather than as mere compliance, the teacher avoided moralistic simplification. Students were guided to see that Jacob's obedience emerged from remembrance of God's prior revelation and protection. This theological framing aligns with Wenham's (1994) interpretation that the Bethel altar signifies renewed covenant commitment. The teacher's ability to articulate this redemptive-historical trajectory illustrates high professional competence in biblical content knowledge. Hermeneutical competence was evident in the teacher's interpretive method. Rather than extracting isolated moral lessons prematurely, the teacher first explained the historical and literary context of the passage, discussing why Jacob returned to Bethel and what the altar symbolized in ancient Israelite worship. Fee and Stuart (2014) caution that Old Testament narratives must be interpreted within their historical and covenantal framework before applying them to contemporary life. Observational data showed that the teacher followed this principle carefully, clarifying that obedience in Genesis 35:7 is relational and covenantal. Interviews with students indicated that they understood obedience not simply as "doing what you are told," but as "remembering God and responding to Him." This conceptual clarity suggests that the teacher's hermeneutical approach successfully prevented reductionist

moralism. Professional competence in this dimension safeguards theological integrity and ensures that scriptural teaching remains faithful to its original intent. Pedagogical clarity emerged as a significant strength. The teacher employed age-appropriate language, visual aids, storytelling techniques, and interactive questioning to facilitate comprehension among elementary students. According to Groome (2011), effective Christian education connects faith tradition with learners' lived experiences through participatory pedagogy. In this classroom, the teacher frequently invited students to reflect on moments when they had promised something and later fulfilled it, linking these experiences to Jacob's act of obedience. Such dialogical engagement encouraged critical thinking and internalization rather than passive reception. Students demonstrated active participation, and many were able to articulate the meaning of obedience in their own words during interviews. This outcome suggests that pedagogical competence significantly enhanced conceptual understanding. The collaborative presence of nine Christian teachers within the school created an atmosphere of shared professional accountability. Hattie (2009) highlights that collective teacher efficacy strongly influences student achievement. Informal discussions with other Christian teachers revealed that biblical values such as obedience, respect, and gratitude are reinforced across subjects, not confined solely to CRE classes. This collaborative culture strengthens the consistency of moral messaging within the school. The CRE teacher's professional competence thus operates within a supportive institutional framework, amplifying its impact. Students encounter reinforcement of obedience not only through theological explanation but also through daily academic routines and relational interactions with multiple educators.

Contextual application within Toba culture represents another critical finding. Toba society emphasizes kinship loyalty, respect for elders, and communal harmony. The teacher intentionally connected Jacob's obedience to these cultural values while clarifying distinctions between cultural expectation and covenantal obedience to God. Pazmiño (2008) underscores the necessity of contextualization that engages culture without compromising biblical truth. The teacher explained that while obedience to parents and elders is culturally important, ultimate obedience belongs to God, who guides moral discernment. This nuanced explanation prevented conflation between cultural conformity and spiritual fidelity. Students reported understanding that obedience involves trust in God's guidance, even when circumstances are difficult. This contextual integration demonstrates advanced professional competence, as it requires both theological discernment and cultural sensitivity. Another notable finding concerns assessment practices. Professional competence includes the ability to evaluate learning outcomes systematically (Mulyasa, 2013). The teacher utilized reflective writing assignments and oral presentations to assess comprehension. Students were asked to describe how they might "build an altar" metaphorically in their lives, such as through prayer, gratitude, or acts of service. These evaluative methods moved beyond rote memorization toward reflective application. Observational data suggest that students internalized the concept of obedience as relational gratitude rather than external obligation. Such assessment strategies reflect pedagogical intentionality and professional maturity. Managing 80 students requires considerable organizational skill, and individualized attention is inevitably limited. While overall comprehension appeared strong, some younger students struggled with abstract theological concepts such as

covenant and divine revelation. This suggests the need for differentiated instructional strategies to address developmental variation. Creswell and Poth (2018) note that contextual constraints often shape qualitative findings, and class size is a significant contextual factor here. Continued professional development in differentiated instruction could enhance learning equity.

The discussion affirms that professional competence transforms biblical explanation into formative encounter. Genesis 35:7 depicts Jacob's obedience as an act of worship rooted in remembrance of God's presence during crisis. By emphasizing this relational dimension, the teacher presented obedience as gratitude and trust. This interpretation aligns with broader biblical theology, where obedience flows from covenant relationship rather than legal coercion. Students articulated that obedience means "following God because He loves us," reflecting internalized understanding rather than superficial compliance. Such responses indicate successful theological communication. The integration of narrative coherence strengthened moral imagination. By tracing Jacob's character development, the teacher highlighted that obedience often follows struggle and growth. Students learned that faithfulness is not instantaneous but cultivated through experience. This developmental perspective resonates with educational psychology's recognition that moral reasoning evolves progressively. Presenting Jacob as a transformed individual allowed students to see obedience as attainable rather than idealized perfection. The collaborative Christian environment further reinforced the teacher's professional influence. Observations indicated that other teachers modeled punctuality, respect, and consistency, behaviors implicitly supporting the value of obedience. Such modeling aligns with social learning theory, which emphasizes that children internalize observed behavior patterns. Thus, professional competence in explaining Genesis 35:7 is amplified by congruent institutional practice. The results reveal that the CRE teacher's professional competence at SD N 173561 Haunatas effectively integrates theological mastery, hermeneutical precision, pedagogical clarity, contextual sensitivity, and collaborative reinforcement. While logistical challenges remain, the overall instructional quality enables students to grasp the value of Jacob's obedience as covenantal response to God's faithfulness. This competence ensures that biblical teaching transcends moral instruction and becomes spiritual formation. In the Toba context, where communal identity is strong, presenting obedience as relational trust in God provides a transformative model that shapes character and faith simultaneously. The findings confirm that professional competence is indispensable for translating Scripture into meaningful, age-appropriate, and culturally informed Christian education, fostering informed obedience and mature spiritual understanding among elementary students.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that the professional competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher at SD N 173561 Haunatas, Toba, plays a pivotal role in effectively explaining the value of Jacob's obedience in Genesis 35:7. The findings demonstrate that professional competence is expressed through mastery of biblical content, hermeneutical accuracy, pedagogical clarity, contextual sensitivity, and systematic assessment practices. These competencies enable the teacher to present obedience not as mere rule

compliance, but as a covenantal response of gratitude and trust toward God's faithfulness. The teacher's ability to situate Genesis 35:7 within the broader narrative of Jacob's spiritual journey reflects strong theological literacy. By maintaining contextual fidelity and avoiding moralistic reductionism, the teacher ensured doctrinal integrity while guiding students toward meaningful application. Pedagogical strategies such as interactive discussion, storytelling, reflective assignments, and contextual examples facilitated comprehension among the 80 Christian students, demonstrating that professional competence directly enhances both understanding and engagement. The collaborative environment involving nine Christian teachers contributed to reinforcing biblical values across the school culture. This collective support strengthened consistency between instruction and lived example, amplifying the formative impact of CRE lessons. The integration of biblical teaching with Toba cultural values, while maintaining theological distinction, illustrates contextualized professionalism that respects culture without compromising scriptural truth. Although challenges related to class size and developmental variation remain, the overall findings affirm that professional competence transforms biblical explanation into holistic spiritual formation. When teachers combine theological depth, interpretive responsibility, and pedagogical effectiveness, biblical narratives such as Genesis 35:7 become living lessons that shape moral reasoning and faith identity. In conclusion, professional competence in Christian Religious Education is not merely a regulatory standard but a theological vocation. At SD N 173561 Haunatas, it enables the value of obedience to be communicated as faithful response to divine revelation, fostering informed faith, moral maturity, and Christ-centered character development among elementary students.

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