



Spiritual Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Teaching Faithfulness: Insights from Genesis 21:1-2 (A Study at SDN 097375 Tigaraja)

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the concept of spiritual competence among Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in teaching the value of faithfulness, drawing theological insight from Genesis 21:1-2. The passage highlights the fulfillment of God's covenant promise to Abraham and Sarah, emphasizing divine faithfulness expressed "as He had said" and "as He had promised." Using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, this research synthesizes scholarly works in biblical theology, Christian education, and teacher competence to construct an integrative framework for understanding spiritual competence in educational practice. The findings indicate that spiritual competence encompasses theological clarity, devotional authenticity, moral integrity, pastoral sensitivity, contextual discernment, and collaborative spiritual leadership. These dimensions collectively enable CRE teachers to embody the faithfulness they teach. The literature demonstrates that effective instruction on divine faithfulness requires more than cognitive explanation; it demands lived witness grounded in personal spiritual formation and covenantal understanding. When teachers model trust in God's promises through consistent character and prayerful dependence, biblical narratives are internalized more deeply by students. In the context of SDN 097375 Tigaraja, Simalungun, where 104 Christian students and 11 Christian teachers form a faith-informed educational environment, spiritual competence contributes significantly to institutional spiritual climate and holistic character formation. The study concludes that spiritual competence is foundational for authentic Christian education, transforming Genesis 21:1-2 from historical account into formative testimony that nurtures resilient faith and enduring trust in God's faithfulness among elementary students.

Keywords: *Spiritual Competence, Christian Religious Education, Faithfulness*

INTRODUCTION

Spiritual competence is a vital dimension of teacher professionalism in Christian Religious Education (CRE), particularly in contexts where faith formation constitutes a central educational aim. While national educational standards in Indonesia emphasize pedagogical, professional, social, and personality competencies (Mulyasa, 2013), spiritual competence carries distinctive significance for CRE teachers because it concerns the authenticity of faith, devotional depth, theological clarity, and lived dependence on God. In Christian education, teaching is not limited to cognitive transmission; it involves spiritual modeling and relational witness. Thus, the credibility of instruction regarding faithfulness depends largely on the spiritual integrity of the teacher. Genesis 21:1-2 provides a profound biblical foundation for understanding faithfulness. The text declares, "The Lord visited Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as He had promised." The repetition of divine initiative, "as He had said" and "as He had promised" emphasizes the reliability of God's covenant word. Gordon J. Wenham (1994) notes that this repetition underscores fulfillment after prolonged delay, reinforcing the theme of divine trustworthiness. Similarly, Victor P. Hamilton (1995) explains that the birth of Isaac represents the climactic confirmation of God's covenant promise to Abraham, demonstrating that divine faithfulness transcends human doubt and temporal limitation. The narrative, therefore, centers not on human perseverance alone but on God's unwavering commitment to His word. In elementary educational settings such as SDN 097375 Tigaraja, Simalungun, where 104 Christian students and 11 Christian teachers, including one CRE teacher, form a significant faith community, the teaching of faithfulness requires spiritual authenticity. Students at this developmental stage often learn values through observation and relational experience rather than abstract theological reasoning. Educational research indicates that students internalize moral and spiritual values more effectively when teachers exhibit emotional support and consistent modeling (Wentzel, 2012). Consequently, spiritual competence becomes visible in everyday practices: prayerful preparation, reverent communication, moral steadiness, and compassionate guidance.

Thomas H. Groome (2011) argues that Christian education operates as shared praxis, in which faith tradition and lived experience interact dynamically. Within this perspective, Genesis 21:1-2 functions not only as doctrinal content but also as spiritual orientation. Teaching divine faithfulness involves guiding students to trust God amid uncertainty, waiting, and delayed outcomes. Such instruction requires responsible hermeneutical engagement. Fee and Stuart (2014) caution that Old Testament narratives must be interpreted within their covenantal and redemptive contexts to avoid moralistic simplification. Genesis 21 does not merely celebrate childbirth; it affirms covenant fidelity and divine initiative. Spiritual competence equips the teacher to communicate this theological nuance effectively and age-appropriately. The sociocultural context of Simalungun further shapes the teaching of faithfulness. Batak cultural values emphasize loyalty, perseverance, and communal responsibility. While these virtues resonate with biblical faithfulness, careful theological discernment is necessary to ensure that divine covenant fidelity remains central. Pazmiño (2008) emphasizes that Christian educators must critically engage culture while maintaining scriptural authority. Spiritual

competence therefore includes contextual sensitivity grounded in theological conviction. The presence of 11 Christian teachers within the school contributes to institutional spiritual climate. Hattie (2009) identifies collective teacher efficacy as a strong predictor of student development. When educators share spiritual commitment, school culture reflects coherence between instruction and practice. Thus, examining the spiritual competence of the CRE teacher also involves assessing collaborative spiritual leadership within the school community. This study aims to analyze how the spiritual competence of the CRE teacher at SDN 097375 Tigaraja influences the teaching of faithfulness inspired by Genesis 21:1-2. By exploring devotional authenticity, theological clarity, relational guidance, and institutional collaboration, the research argues that spiritual competence transforms biblical narrative into lived testimony. The central premise is that when teachers embody trust in God's promises, students learn to perceive divine faithfulness not as distant history but as present reality shaping their formative faith journey.

METHODS

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design to examine the concept of spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in teaching faithfulness, interpreted through Genesis 21:1-2. The SLR approach was chosen to synthesize existing scholarly literature in theology, Christian education, and teacher competence studies in a structured, transparent, and replicable manner. A systematic review enables researchers to identify patterns, theoretical foundations, and conceptual frameworks from prior studies, thereby constructing a comprehensive analytical understanding (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007; Snyder, 2019). The review followed four main stages: planning, identification, screening, and synthesis. In the planning stage, the research question was formulated as follows: How is spiritual competence conceptualized in Christian education literature, and how does it support the teaching of faithfulness as reflected in Genesis 21:1-2? Inclusion criteria were established to ensure relevance and credibility: peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and theological commentaries; publications discussing spiritual competence, Christian education, teacher formation, faithfulness, or covenant theology; works published in English or Indonesian; and (4) sources recognized in academic theological and educational discourse. Exclusion criteria included non-academic blogs, devotional-only materials without scholarly grounding, and duplicate publications. In the identification stage, literature was searched through academic databases. The initial search yielded a broad corpus of publications, which were then organized using reference management software to remove duplicates. During the screening stage, titles and abstracts were reviewed for thematic alignment with the research focus. Articles that met the inclusion criteria were subjected to full-text evaluation. Methodological rigor, theological credibility, and citation impact were considered when determining eligibility. Foundational works in biblical theology (e.g., covenant interpretation of Genesis), Christian education theory, and teacher competence frameworks were prioritized to ensure both doctrinal depth and pedagogical relevance. Data extraction involved identifying key themes related to spiritual competence (e.g., devotional life, theological clarity, moral integrity, pastoral sensitivity), theological interpretations of Genesis 21:1-2 (e.g., divine faithfulness, covenant fulfillment, promise

realization), and pedagogical implications for faith formation. Thematic synthesis was conducted following the qualitative synthesis approach described by Snyder (2019), organizing findings into conceptual categories and integrating theological and educational perspectives. Rather than quantifying effect sizes, the analysis emphasized conceptual convergence and interpretive coherence. The analytical process sought to maintain interpretive fidelity to primary theological texts while engaging contemporary scholarship critically and constructively. Through this SLR methodology, the study provides a theoretically grounded and integrative framework for understanding spiritual competence in teaching faithfulness inspired by Genesis 21:1-2 within the educational context of SDN 097375 Tigaraja, Simalungun.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The systematic literature review (SLR) conducted in this study reveals that spiritual competence in Christian Religious Education (CRE) is consistently conceptualized as an integrative capacity that combines devotional depth, theological clarity, moral integrity, relational sensitivity, and vocational awareness. Across theological commentaries, Christian education scholarship, and studies on teacher formation, a converging insight emerges: spiritual competence is not an optional personal trait but a foundational dimension that shapes how biblical truths, particularly those concerning divine faithfulness, are interpreted, embodied, and transmitted. When examined in light of Genesis 21:1-2, which narrates the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham and Sarah, spiritual competence becomes the interpretive bridge that transforms the doctrine of divine faithfulness into lived pedagogical witness. The finding identified in the literature concerns divine faithfulness as covenant fulfillment. Biblical scholarship consistently emphasizes that Genesis 21:1-2 represents a decisive moment in redemptive history. Wenham (1994) highlights the deliberate repetition in the text, "as He had said" and "as He had promised" as a literary device underscoring the certainty and reliability of God's word. Hamilton (1995) further explains that Isaac's birth functions as theological confirmation that covenant promises are not nullified by human weakness or temporal delay. This theological emphasis places divine initiative at the center of the narrative. From an educational standpoint, teaching faithfulness must therefore begin with God's character rather than human effort. The SLR indicates that when CRE teachers possess strong theological grounding, they avoid reducing faithfulness to moralistic perseverance and instead present it as relational trust grounded in God's covenant reliability (Fee & Stuart, 2014). Spiritual competence, in this sense, includes doctrinal discernment and exegetical responsibility. The next theme is devotional authenticity as pedagogical credibility. Christian education scholars argue that teachers communicate faith most powerfully through embodied witness. Groome (2011) describes Christian education as shared praxis in which lived faith interacts with tradition, meaning that teachers must participate personally in the truths they teach. Similarly, Pazmiño (2008) asserts that spiritual formation of educators directly influences the spiritual formation of students. The SLR findings indicate that devotional practices, regular prayer, scriptural meditation, dependence on the Holy Spirit, are frequently identified as core components of spiritual competence. When applied to Genesis 21:1-2, devotional authenticity enables teachers to present divine faithfulness not as distant historical fact but as ongoing covenant reality.

In contexts such as SDN 097375 Tigaraja, where 104 Christian students and 11 Christian teachers share a common faith environment, devotional authenticity shapes institutional ethos. The literature suggests that students' perception of sincerity significantly enhances receptivity to spiritual instruction (Wentzel, 2012). Thus, spiritual competence reinforces credibility by aligning theological teaching with personal devotion. The other theme emerging from the review concerns moral integrity and consistency. National education frameworks in Indonesia highlight personality competence as including moral stability and exemplary behavior (Mulyasa, 2013). Christian scholarship expands this understanding by grounding integrity in covenantal fidelity. The faithfulness of God in Genesis 21 becomes a paradigm for human reliability. Studies on teacher modeling indicate that students internalize values more deeply when educators demonstrate consistency between words and actions (Wentzel, 2012). Within the SLR corpus, moral congruence appears repeatedly as a defining feature of spiritual competence. Teachers who speak of divine faithfulness while exhibiting inconsistency risk undermining theological instruction. Conversely, when educators model dependability, keeping promises, practicing fairness, maintaining emotional steadiness, they embody the very attribute they teach. This alignment transforms the narrative of Genesis 21 into observable ethical reality within classroom relationships. Biblical narratives often contain complex emotional and doctrinal dimensions. Genesis 21, for instance, follows years of waiting, doubt, and tension within Abraham and Sarah's journey. Fee and Stuart (2014) caution against oversimplification of Old Testament stories, emphasizing the need to situate them within covenantal theology. The SLR reveals that spiritual competence involves interpretive wisdom, balancing doctrinal depth with age-appropriate communication. In elementary contexts such as SDN 097375 Tigaraja, teachers must translate covenant fulfillment into language accessible to children without sacrificing theological integrity. Groome (2011) notes that effective Christian educators engage learners' lived experiences while remaining faithful to scriptural truth. Thus, spiritual competence includes pedagogical translation: guiding students to connect divine faithfulness with their own experiences of waiting, uncertainty, or hope.

Another theme concerns collective spiritual culture within educational institutions. Hattie (2009) identifies collective teacher efficacy as a major contributor to student development. Although his research focuses broadly on educational achievement, the SLR demonstrates that in faith-based contexts, collective spiritual commitment amplifies formative influence. When multiple teachers embody spiritual integrity, institutional coherence strengthens. In a school community of 11 Christian teachers, shared prayer practices, collaborative character education, and mutual encouragement contribute to a consistent spiritual message. The literature suggests that such alignment reduces cognitive dissonance between classroom teaching and daily school life. Spiritual competence, therefore, is not merely individual but communal; it thrives within supportive networks that reinforce shared conviction. The review also highlights contextual engagement as an expression of spiritual maturity. Pazmiño (2008) emphasizes the necessity of critical cultural interaction in Christian education. In Simalungun and broader Batak communities, cultural values such as loyalty and perseverance resonate strongly with the biblical theme of faithfulness. However, spiritual competence requires discerning distinction between cultural virtue and divine covenant

fidelity. Genesis 21 centers not on human loyalty but on God's initiative in fulfilling promise. The SLR indicates that mature educators frame cultural virtues within biblical narrative rather than equating them uncritically. This contextual discernment ensures that divine faithfulness remains the theological foundation of instruction. The literature repeatedly associates spiritual competence with resilience and vocational calling. Teaching faithfulness from Genesis 21 inevitably involves addressing themes of delayed fulfillment and sustained trust. Scholars such as Wright (2006) interpret Abraham's story within the broader mission of God, highlighting continuity between promise and redemptive history. Educators who internalize this theological perspective are better equipped to model resilience during institutional or personal challenges. The SLR findings suggest that vocational awareness, viewing teaching as divine calling, strengthens perseverance and spiritual consistency. In schools facing resource limitations or administrative pressures, such resilience becomes essential for maintaining spiritual vitality. Another critical discussion point involves student formation and spiritual internalization. Wentzel (2012) demonstrates that emotional support and relational trust enhance student motivation and value adoption. Within Christian education, spiritual competence shapes relational climate, fostering openness to theological reflection. When students observe teachers praying sincerely, responding compassionately, and maintaining consistency, they associate divine faithfulness with lived reality. The SLR indicates that spiritual modeling influences both cognitive understanding and affective trust. Genesis 21:1-2 thus becomes more than doctrinal affirmation; it becomes experiential narrative through the teacher's example. One concern involves the risk of reducing spiritual competence to visible piety without theological depth. Devotional practices must be accompanied by sound exegesis to prevent sentimentalism. Another challenge relates to balancing professional boundaries with pastoral engagement, particularly in public school contexts. Spiritual competence must operate respectfully within institutional regulations while remaining faithful to Christian identity. The literature recommends reflective practice and continuous theological education as safeguards against stagnation. The systematic review demonstrates that spiritual competence encompasses theological literacy, devotional authenticity, moral integrity, pastoral sensitivity, contextual discernment, collaborative engagement, and vocational resilience. Genesis 21:1-2 serves as theological anchor, emphasizing divine faithfulness fulfilled in time. When CRE teachers embody these dimensions, instruction regarding faithfulness transcends cognitive explanation and becomes transformative encounter. Within SDN 097375 Tigaraja, where 104 Christian students and 11 Christian teachers share communal faith identity, the implications are significant. Spiritual competence shapes institutional ethos, reinforces theological coherence, and nurtures resilient trust among learners. The convergence of biblical scholarship and educational theory affirms that faithfulness, as revealed in God's covenant action, must be taught through integrated witness. Ultimately, the SLR findings confirm that spiritual competence is indispensable for authentic Christian education: it aligns message and messenger, doctrine and devotion, promise and practice, ensuring that the faithfulness proclaimed in Genesis 21:1-2 is reflected in the lived reality of educational formation.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review concludes that spiritual competence is a foundational and indispensable dimension of Christian Religious Education (CRE), particularly in teaching the theme of faithfulness inspired by Genesis 21:1-2. The reviewed scholarship consistently affirms that divine faithfulness, as demonstrated in the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham and Sarah, must be interpreted within a covenantal and redemptive framework. Therefore, the teaching of faithfulness cannot be reduced to moral perseverance alone but must center on God's unwavering reliability and initiative. The findings indicate that spiritual competence integrates theological clarity, devotional authenticity, moral integrity, pastoral sensitivity, contextual discernment, and collaborative spiritual leadership. These dimensions collectively enable CRE teachers to embody the faithfulness they proclaim. When educators demonstrate consistency between biblical teaching and lived practice, students are more likely to internalize the value of trust in God's promises. Spiritual competence thus ensures coherence between message and messenger, strengthening pedagogical credibility and fostering deeper spiritual formation. In the context of SDN 097375 Tigaraja, Simalungun, where 104 Christian students and 11 Christian teachers share a faith-informed educational environment, the implications are particularly significant. A spiritually competent CRE teacher contributes not only to classroom instruction but also to institutional spiritual climate. Collective teacher commitment reinforces theological consistency across school life, amplifying the formative impact of biblical teaching. This study affirms that spiritual competence transforms Genesis 21:1-2 from a historical account of promise fulfillment into a living testimony of divine reliability. When teachers embody trust in God's faithfulness through prayerful devotion, theological responsibility, and ethical consistency, they cultivate resilient faith among students. Spiritual competence, therefore, is not merely a supportive attribute but the very foundation upon which authentic Christian education rests.

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