



Spiritual Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers as Agents of Peace: A Reflective Study of Genesis 43:23 at SMP Negeri 3 Dolok Panribuan

Lasma D. Pasaribu

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

* correspondence: lasma.pasaribu8008@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of spiritual competence in shaping Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers as agents of peace through a reflective examination of Genesis 43:23 at SMP Negeri 3 Dolok Panribuan. Genesis 43:23, situated within the Joseph narrative, presents a theological affirmation of peace grounded in divine providence, where fear is transformed into reassurance through trust in God's sovereignty. In pluralistic educational contexts, such a text provides a foundational framework for cultivating reconciliation, emotional stability, and relational harmony. Employing a quantitative descriptive design with a correlational approach, this study involved 43 Christian students selected through total sampling. Data were collected using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire measuring two variables: the spiritual competence of the CRE teacher (including integrity, emotional self-regulation, humility, forgiveness, fairness, and dialogical openness) and students' understanding of biblical peace (narrative comprehension, theological interpretation, and ethical application). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Product-Moment correlation at a 0.05 significance level. The findings reveal that the teacher's spiritual competence was perceived at a high level and that students demonstrated strong understanding of the peace theme in Genesis 43:23. A positive and statistically significant correlation was identified between teacher spiritual competence and students' theological comprehension. The results indicate that when teachers consistently embody peace-oriented spirituality, they create a classroom climate conducive to deeper cognitive engagement and moral internalization. The study concludes that spiritual competence is a central dimension of effective CRE pedagogy, functioning both as a pedagogical instrument and as a theological witness that nurtures peaceable character within contemporary educational settings.

Keywords: *Spiritual Competence, Christian Religious Education, Agents of Peace*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of peace occupies a central position in biblical theology and Christian pedagogy. In the Old Testament, peace (Hebrew: *shalom*) encompasses not merely the absence of conflict but the presence of wholeness, reconciliation, and restored relationships. Genesis 43:23 offers a subtle yet profound illustration of peace-making within a context of fear and suspicion. When Joseph's brothers return to Egypt, anxious about potential retaliation, the steward reassures them, "Peace to you; do not be afraid." This utterance reflects not only diplomatic courtesy but theological grounding in divine providence. According to Walter Brueggemann (1982), the Joseph narrative portrays God's hidden yet faithful activity in transforming hostility into reconciliation. Similarly, Gordon J. Wenham (1994) emphasizes that the Joseph cycle demonstrates divine sovereignty working through human relationships to produce restoration rather than revenge. Thus, Genesis 43:23 may be read as a pedagogical paradigm of peace-building grounded in trust in God's providential care. In contemporary educational settings, especially within pluralistic societies such as Indonesia, the formation of peace-oriented character is an urgent priority. Christian Religious Education (CRE) does not function solely to transmit doctrinal content but to cultivate spiritual maturity, moral discernment, and social harmony. Thomas H. Groome (2011) argues that Christian education must integrate faith knowledge with lived practice, shaping believers who embody reconciliation in daily life. Within this integrative framework, the spiritual competence of the teacher becomes essential. Spiritual competence refers to the educator's capacity to internalize biblical values, demonstrate spiritual integrity, exercise emotional self-regulation rooted in faith, and guide students toward Christ-centered character formation. It is not reducible to devotional routine but encompasses the embodiment of virtues such as patience, humility, forgiveness, and peace-making. The importance of teacher influence is strongly supported in educational research. John Hattie (2009), through extensive meta-analytical synthesis, demonstrates that teacher-related factors significantly shape student achievement and disposition. Although Hattie's work primarily addresses academic outcomes, its implications extend to value-based education, where teacher credibility and relational authenticity influence moral internalization. Furthermore, Parker J. Palmer (1998) contends that good teaching flows from the identity and integrity of the teacher; what teachers are spiritually affects how they teach. In Christian pedagogy, the messenger and the message cannot be separated. If Genesis 43:23 presents peace as a theological affirmation rooted in divine assurance, then the CRE teacher must embody that same assurance and peace-making posture within the classroom.

At SMP Negeri 3 Dolok Panribuan, the educational environment reflects both religious identity and broader societal diversity. The school includes 43 Christian students and 7 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher. While Christians constitute a visible group within the school, the broader Indonesian context remains religiously plural and culturally complex. In such a setting, the CRE teacher carries a dual responsibility: to maintain theological fidelity and to model peace-building dispositions that resonate within a multicultural national framework. Teaching Genesis 43:23 therefore demands more than exegetical explanation; it requires spiritual competence that enables the teacher to translate the biblical narrative into lived experience of reconciliation, trust, and relational

healing. The dimension of spiritual competence, particularly in relation to peace-making, remains relatively underexplored. Many studies focus on instructional methods, curriculum development, or assessment strategies, yet fewer examine how the teacher's spiritual maturity shapes classroom ethos. This gap is significant, especially when teaching narratives such as Genesis 43:23 that directly address fear, misunderstanding, and restoration. The teacher's tone, demeanor, and relational conduct may either reinforce or undermine the message of divine peace embedded in the text. This study seeks to analyze the spiritual competence of the CRE teacher as an agent of peace through a reflective study of Genesis 43:23 at SMP Negeri 3 Dolok Panribuan. By involving 43 Christian students and considering the collaborative presence of 7 Christian teachers, the research aims to explore how spiritual integrity, peace-oriented character, and faith-based relational modeling influence students' understanding of biblical peace and its practical implications. Ultimately, the study contributes to the discourse on how spiritual competence in Christian Religious Education fosters not only theological comprehension but also the cultivation of peaceable character within diverse educational contexts.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative descriptive design with a correlational approach to examine the relationship between the spiritual competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher and students' understanding of peace as reflected in Genesis 43:23 at SMP Negeri 3 Dolok Panribuan. A quantitative design was selected because it enables systematic measurement of perceptions and the statistical examination of relationships between defined variables (Creswell, 2014). The correlational approach was considered appropriate to determine whether and to what extent the teacher's spiritual competence is associated with students' comprehension of biblical peace and their disposition toward peace-making behavior. The population of this study consisted of 43 Christian students enrolled at the school during the academic year of the research. Because the population size was manageable, total sampling was applied, meaning that all 43 students participated as respondents. Although the school has 7 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher, the primary source of data was the students. This decision was based on the objective of measuring students' perceptions of the teacher's spiritual competence and their own understanding of Genesis 43:23 as a theological foundation for peace. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The instrument was divided into two main variables. The first variable measured the spiritual competence of the CRE teacher, including indicators such as consistency between teaching and personal conduct, demonstration of peaceable character, emotional self-control, prayerful attitude, fairness, forgiveness, humility, and the ability to mediate conflicts constructively. These indicators were formulated based on Christian education theory and teacher competence frameworks (Groome, 2011; Palmer, 1998). The second variable measured students' understanding of peace in Genesis 43:23, including their ability to explain the narrative context, interpret the meaning of "peace" in relation to divine providence, recognize reconciliation within the Joseph story, and apply principles of peace-making in school relationships. To ensure content validity, the questionnaire items were reviewed by two experts in Christian Religious Education and educational research methodology. A

pilot test was conducted with a small group of students outside the research sample to evaluate clarity, coherence, and internal consistency. Instrument reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, with a threshold of 0.70 considered acceptable for social science research (Creswell, 2014). Items that did not meet reliability standards were revised prior to full data collection. Data collection was conducted during scheduled CRE class sessions with formal approval from the school administration. Students completed the questionnaire anonymously to minimize social desirability bias and encourage honest responses. Clear written and verbal instructions were provided to ensure uniform understanding of each item. Respondents were given adequate time to complete the instrument without academic pressure. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine mean scores, standard deviations, and categorical levels of each variable. Inferential analysis was conducted using Pearson Product-Moment correlation to test the strength and direction of the relationship between teacher spiritual competence and students' understanding of peace in Genesis 43:23. Statistical significance was tested at the 0.05 level. Through this methodological framework, the study aimed to generate empirical evidence concerning how the spiritual competence of a CRE teacher functions as a formative factor in cultivating peace-oriented theological understanding among students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the spiritual competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher at SMP Negeri 3 Dolok Panribuan plays a significant and measurable role in shaping students' understanding of peace as reflected in Genesis 43:23. Descriptive statistical analysis of responses from 43 Christian students revealed that the overall mean score for the teacher's spiritual competence variable was categorized in the high range. Students generally perceived the CRE teacher as demonstrating consistency between faith teaching and daily conduct, emotional stability in classroom management, fairness in treating students, humility in interaction, and a peace-oriented approach when addressing conflict. Particularly strong agreement was recorded for items measuring the teacher's ability to calm tense classroom situations, to speak in a reassuring tone during misunderstandings, and to model forgiveness when students made mistakes. These findings suggest that the teacher's spiritual life is not confined to devotional language but is embodied in relational practice. Within Christian pedagogy, such embodiment is essential because spiritual competence is inherently performative; it is expressed through lived example rather than mere conceptual exposition. On the dependent variable, students' understanding of peace in Genesis 43:23 also demonstrated a high mean score. Most respondents were able to articulate the narrative context of Joseph's brothers returning to Egypt with anxiety and guilt, fearing retribution for past wrongdoing. Students understood that the steward's words, "Peace to you; do not be afraid," were grounded in the assurance of divine providence and not merely in diplomatic courtesy. They recognized that peace in this context reflects trust in God's sovereignty rather than circumstantial security. Furthermore, a substantial proportion of students were able to connect the Joseph narrative with broader themes of reconciliation, forgiveness, and relational restoration. This indicates that the teaching process did not remain at the surface level of historical recounting but facilitated

theological interpretation. The data show that students perceived peace not simply as absence of punishment but as the presence of divine assurance that transforms fear into trust. Inferential statistical testing using Pearson Product-Moment correlation revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between the teacher's spiritual competence and students' understanding of biblical peace. The correlation coefficient indicated a moderate to strong association, meaning that higher perceptions of teacher spiritual competence were accompanied by higher levels of theological comprehension among students. This result reinforces educational theory that teacher identity and relational integrity directly influence learning outcomes, particularly in value-laden subjects such as religious education. When teachers embody the virtues they teach, students are more likely to internalize the meaning of those virtues. In this study, the CRE teacher's consistent modeling of calmness, fairness, and forgiveness appears to have strengthened students' ability to interpret Genesis 43:23 as a message of divine peace rather than mere narrative detail.

Regression analysis further demonstrated that spiritual competence significantly contributed to the variance in students' understanding of the peace theme. Although theological comprehension is influenced by multiple factors, such as family faith formation, church involvement, and cognitive ability, the data indicate that the classroom relational climate generated by the teacher plays a meaningful role. In effect, spiritual competence functions as a mediating variable that translates biblical text into lived meaning. Students who perceived their teacher as spiritually grounded were more confident in discussing themes of fear, guilt, forgiveness, and reconciliation. This suggests that emotional and relational safety, fostered by the teacher's spiritual maturity, provides a context in which students can process complex theological themes without defensiveness or confusion. Genesis 43:23 occurs within the broader Joseph cycle, a narrative that progressively moves from betrayal to restoration. Joseph's brothers, burdened by past wrongdoing, interpret present circumstances through the lens of fear. The steward's reassurance interrupts this fear narrative by redirecting attention to divine agency. Students in this study demonstrated awareness that peace in this passage is inseparable from recognition of God's providential governance. The CRE teacher's spiritual competence appears to have reinforced this interpretation by modeling trust rather than anxiety in classroom situations. When conflicts or misunderstandings arose during lessons, students reported that the teacher responded calmly and constructively rather than reactively. Such responses mirror the theological logic of Genesis 43:23, where reassurance displaces suspicion. The congruence between textual content and teacher behavior likely enhanced students' interpretive clarity. Another significant finding concerns students' application of peace principles to interpersonal relationships. A high percentage of respondents agreed with statements linking biblical peace to practical behaviors such as apologizing after conflict, refraining from revenge, resolving misunderstandings through dialogue, and supporting classmates who experience anxiety. This suggests that theological understanding translated into ethical orientation. The teacher's spiritual competence may have functioned as a catalyst for this translation. By consistently demonstrating respectful listening and equitable treatment, the teacher provided a living example of reconciliation in practice. Students not only learned about peace conceptually but observed its enactment. In educational psychology, such

modeling strengthens moral internalization because students perceive alignment between verbal instruction and lived conduct.

The context of SMP Negeri 3 Dolok Panribuan also shapes the interpretation of these findings. Although the study focused on 43 Christian students and involved 7 Christian teachers, the school operates within a broader Indonesian society characterized by religious diversity and cultural plurality. Teaching peace within this context has implications beyond intra-classroom harmony. Students' recognition that biblical peace extends toward others and promotes relational responsibility indicates that Genesis 43:23 was not interpreted in exclusivist terms. Instead, students understood peace as a universal virtue rooted in divine sovereignty. The CRE teacher's spiritual competence likely contributed to this inclusive interpretation by avoiding sectarian rhetoric and emphasizing reconciliation as a character trait relevant to all human interaction. An additional dimension of the results involves students' perception of the teacher's emotional regulation. Items measuring emotional self-control received high agreement. Students reported that the teacher remained composed when faced with disruptive behavior and refrained from humiliating students publicly. Emotional stability is a critical component of spiritual competence because it reflects internalized trust in God rather than reactive impulse. Genesis 43:23 addresses fear and anxiety; thus, a teacher who models calm assurance reinforces the text's theological emphasis. If the teacher had responded to classroom tensions with visible frustration or partiality, the message of divine peace might have appeared contradictory. Instead, consistency between message and demeanor enhanced credibility.

The discussion also reveals that students valued opportunities for dialogue during the lesson on Genesis 43:23. Many respondents agreed that the teacher invited questions about fear, guilt, and forgiveness, creating space for personal reflection. This dialogical openness aligns with peace-building because it acknowledges student voices and reduces hierarchical intimidation. Students reported feeling safe to express confusion or share experiences of conflict. Such safety likely deepened cognitive processing, enabling them to interpret the Joseph narrative in relation to their own experiences. Peace, therefore, was not an abstract theological term but a relational reality explored within a supportive learning environment. The moderate-to-strong correlation found in this study suggests that spiritual competence is not merely a supplementary quality but a central factor in religious pedagogy. In subjects that address moral and spiritual themes, teacher authenticity influences the depth of student engagement. The CRE teacher at SMP Negeri 3 Dolok Panribuan appears to have embodied spiritual consistency in ways that reinforced textual interpretation. Students who perceived greater authenticity and peace-oriented conduct demonstrated stronger comprehension of Genesis 43:23's theological message. This finding underscores that spiritual competence contributes not only to affective climate but to cognitive clarity. When students trust the teacher's integrity, they are more receptive to theological explanation. It is important to acknowledge contextual limitations. The research involved a relatively small sample within one school, limiting generalizability. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported perception introduces potential response bias, despite anonymity measures. Nevertheless, the statistical significance and consistency of responses across multiple indicators strengthen the

credibility of the findings. Future studies may incorporate qualitative observation, interviews, or comparative cross-school analysis to deepen understanding of how spiritual competence manifests in diverse contexts. The results affirm that spiritual competence functions as both a pedagogical instrument and a theological witness. In teaching Genesis 43:23, the CRE teacher did not merely recount Joseph's narrative but embodied the peace it proclaims. Students internalized the message of divine reassurance in part because they encountered that reassurance in relational practice. The positive correlation between spiritual competence and theological understanding provides empirical evidence that peace-making in Christian education begins with the character of the teacher. In this setting, the teacher's calm presence, equitable treatment, humility, and openness to dialogue served as living commentary on the biblical text. Consequently, students not only understood that God grants peace amid fear but also experienced a microcosm of that peace within the classroom community. This alignment between narrative theology and pedagogical practice demonstrates that spiritual competence is indispensable in forming students who grasp and embody biblical peace in contemporary educational life.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the spiritual competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher significantly contributes to students' understanding of peace as reflected in Genesis 43:23 at SMP Negeri 3 Dolok Panribuan. The quantitative findings demonstrate a positive and statistically significant relationship between teacher spiritual competence and students' theological comprehension. Students who perceived their teacher as spiritually consistent, emotionally stable, humble, forgiving, and peace-oriented tended to exhibit higher levels of understanding regarding the meaning of peace within the Joseph narrative, particularly its grounding in divine providence and its implications for reconciliation. The results confirm that spiritual competence is not an abstract or secondary dimension of teacher professionalism; rather, it is a formative and functional factor in religious pedagogy. In the context of teaching Genesis 43:23, the CRE teacher's relational integrity served as a bridge between biblical text and student experience. When the teacher modeled calm assurance, fairness, dialogical openness, and constructive conflict resolution, students were better able to internalize the theological message that peace flows from trust in God and results in restored relationships. The alignment between the teacher's lived spirituality and the scriptural theme strengthened both cognitive understanding and moral application. Within the broader Indonesian context, where educational institutions operate amid religious and cultural diversity, the role of CRE teachers as agents of peace acquires strategic importance. Spiritual competence enables teachers not only to explain biblical reconciliation but also to embody it in daily interaction. The findings suggest that fostering spiritual maturity among teachers should be an intentional priority in professional development programs, as it directly influences students' theological literacy and character formation. Although limited to one school setting and based on student perceptions, this study provides empirical support for integrating spiritual competence as a central dimension of effective Christian Religious Education. Future research is encouraged to expand the scope through comparative and qualitative approaches to explore how peace-oriented spirituality shapes classroom

dynamics across diverse educational contexts. The study affirms that when CRE teachers authentically live out the peace they teach, they become credible witnesses of the biblical message, guiding students not only to understand peace intellectually but also to practice it relationally.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Prentice Hall.
- Brueggemann, W. (1982). *Genesis*. John Knox Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Groome, T. H. (2011). *Will there be faith? A new vision for educating and growing disciples*. HarperOne.
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge.
- Mulyasa, E. (2013). *Standar kompetensi dan sertifikasi guru*. Remaja Rosdakarya.
- 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.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Wenham, G. J. (1994). *Genesis 16–50* (Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 2). Word Books.