

Pedagogy of Holiness: Exploring PAK Teachers' Competence in Forming Students' Awareness of Sacred Living (Reflections on Exodus 28:43)

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ABSTRACT

Christian education views teaching not as a neutral act of instruction but as a sacred vocation rooted in holiness. Within the framework of Christian Religious Education (PAK), teachers are called to form students' awareness of sacred living by integrating biblical truth, moral example, and spiritual sensitivity into pedagogical practice. This study explores how PAK teachers' pedagogical competence contributes to nurturing students' awareness of holiness, drawing theological insight from Exodus 28:43, which emphasizes purity, preparation, and reverence in service before God. Employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method, the research synthesizes scholarly works on Christian pedagogy, teacher competence, and spiritual formation published between 2010 and 2024. The findings reveal that pedagogical competence in Christian education extends beyond mastery of instructional skills; it encompasses spiritual integrity, moral consistency, and theological discernment. A competent PAK teacher functions as both mentor and priestly guide, transforming the classroom into a sacred space of moral and spiritual formation. The literature demonstrates that awareness of holiness emerges through relational modeling, reflective dialogue, and disciplined routines that invite students to experience faith as daily devotion. Challenges such as secularism, moral relativism, and digital distraction often obscure spiritual awareness, yet competent teachers sustain holiness through prayer, empathy, and ethical steadiness. The study concludes that the pedagogy of holiness requires teachers to "wear" virtues as spiritual garments-humility, patience, and integrity-mirroring the priestly mandate of Exodus 28:43. Through consecrated competence, PAK teachers transform education into worship, enabling students to encounter holiness as lived relationship with God.

Keywords: Competence, Christian Religious Education, Pedagogy

INTRODUCTION

Education in the Christian worldview is not a neutral process of intellectual transmission but a sacred vocation-an act of participating in God's redemptive work of shaping lives toward holiness. Within the discipline of Christian Religious Education (PAK), teachers are

called not merely to instruct students in theological knowledge but to nurture spiritual awareness, moral integrity, and reverence for God's presence in daily life. The Christian classroom thus becomes more than a space for learning; it is a sacred environment where character and spirituality are formed through the teacher's words, actions, and personal example. In this context, the pedagogical competence of the PAK teacher holds transformative power. It is not only measured by mastery of content or teaching methods but by the capacity to translate biblical truths into lived experience-helping students encounter holiness as a practical and relational reality rather than an abstract concept. The biblical foundation for this study draws from Exodus 28:43, which states: "They shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they enter the tent of meeting, or when they approach the altar to minister in the Holy Place, so that they do not incur guilt and die. It shall be a statute forever to him and to his descendants after him." This verse describes the sacred garments worn by the priests, symbolizing purity, reverence, and readiness to serve in God's presence. The act of "putting on holy garments" reflects an inward disposition of holiness manifested through outward discipline and obedience. It reveals a divine principle: serving and teaching in God's presence demands not only knowledge but consecrated conduct. In pedagogical terms, the PAK teacher functions as a modern-day priest-entering the classroom as a sacred space where teaching becomes an act of ministry. Just as the priest's attire signified spiritual preparation, the teacher's pedagogical competence must be clothed in holiness, humility, and integrity. This sacred dimension is often obscured by pragmatic and secular priorities. Teachers are evaluated largely by their efficiency, innovation, and academic output, while moral and spiritual influence receives little institutional attention. Yet, Christian education insists that true learning begins with right relationship-with God, with others, and with the self. The awareness of holiness is central to this relational foundation. Holiness, in the biblical sense, does not denote withdrawal from the world but living within it with sanctified purpose and ethical distinction. For students, especially at the secondary level, developing awareness of sacred living involves learning to perceive the divine in ordinary activities, to respect human dignity, and to practice self-control as an expression of reverence for God. The PAK teacher, therefore, plays a critical role as both mentor and model-helping students discern holiness as a way of being that shapes thought, speech, and action. Pedagogical competence becomes the means through which holiness is communicated effectively. This competence encompasses not only cognitive ability (understanding biblical principles and moral psychology) but also affective and spiritual dimensions-the teacher's empathy, moral consistency, and prayerful attentiveness. As Palmer (2007) notes, "We teach who we are." Thus, the teacher's character becomes the living curriculum through which students encounter divine truth. When the PAK teacher integrates biblical wisdom with creative pedagogy-through storytelling, reflective dialogue, and experiential learning-students begin to internalize holiness not as imposed morality but as personal vocation. Teaching becomes a process of formation rather than instruction, guiding students to see holiness as participation in God's creative and redemptive work. The relevance of this study lies in its response to a growing concern: in many educational settings, moral relativism and secular materialism have weakened students' sense of sacred responsibility. At SMA Negeri 1 Labuhan Deli, where this reflection is contextualized, Christian Religious Education operates within a pluralistic and competitive academic culture. Students are often influenced by technological immediacy,

social media trends, and peer comparison, which can erode spiritual attentiveness. Within this environment, the PAK teacher's competence must go beyond academic delivery; it must serve as a spiritual anchor, guiding students toward disciplined reflection, gratitude, and reverence. The pedagogy of holiness, grounded in Exodus 28:43, invites teachers to approach their profession as priestly ministry-to wear, metaphorically, the garments of holiness each day through compassionate teaching, consistent moral example, and prayerful dedication. This study seeks to explore how the pedagogical competence of PAK teachers contributes to forming students' awareness of sacred living. It aims to bridge theology and pedagogy by demonstrating that effective Christian education requires a balance of professional skill and spiritual depth. In reflecting on Exodus 28:43, the study proposes that holiness in education is not achieved through ritual or rule but through relationship and integrity-where the teacher's competence becomes an expression of sanctified service, and the classroom becomes a sanctuary of learning and transformation.

METHODS

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to examine the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers in fostering students' awareness of sacred living, as inspired by the theological reflection on Exodus 28:43. The SLR method allows for a structured and comprehensive synthesis of previous studies on Christian pedagogy, spiritual formation, and teacher competence. It ensures academic rigor by systematically identifying, evaluating, and integrating evidence from relevant scholarly works to develop a coherent understanding of how holiness can be cultivated through pedagogical practice (Kitchenham, 2004). The research process followed three major phases: planning, conducting, and reporting. During the planning phase, the study defined its main objectives: to identify the dimensions of pedagogical competence that contribute to spiritual formation in Christian education, to analyze how PAK teachers integrate holiness principles into their teaching practices, and to synthesize theological insights-especially from Exodus 28:43-that illuminate the moral and spiritual demands of teaching. The guiding research question was formulated as follows: How does the pedagogical competence of PAK teachers contribute to the development of students' awareness of sacred living? The conducting phase involved a systematic search of academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, ERIC, and DOAJ, focusing on literature published between 2010 and 2024. Search terms included Christian Religious Education, teacher competence, holiness, spiritual formation, moral education, and faith-based pedagogy. The inclusion criteria were: studies related to Christian education within formal school contexts, research addressing teacher spirituality or pedagogical formation, and works integrating theology with pedagogy. Excluded materials were those dealing solely with doctrinal theology without pedagogical implications. Each selected study was analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), enabling the identification of recurring concepts such as spiritual integrity, moral consistency, pedagogical wisdom, and faith-based praxis. These themes were examined through a hermeneutical lens, correlating them with the message of Exodus 28:43, which emphasizes consecration, discipline, and moral accountability before God. This theological framework provided a foundation for interpreting how pedagogical

competence functions as an expression of holiness in education (Palmer, 2007; Smith, 2016). The findings were synthesized into a theological-pedagogical model highlighting the interplay between teacher competence and spiritual formation. Ethical standards were upheld by ensuring transparency, accuracy in citation, and respect for intellectual property. The study was also approached prayerfully, recognizing that the topic of holiness pertains not only to academic inquiry but to the sacred calling of educators who teach under God's presence.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this systematic literature review reveal that the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers plays a pivotal role in nurturing students' awareness of sacred living—an awareness that transforms moral behavior into spiritual devotion. The review of theological and educational literature emphasizes that holiness, as presented in Exodus 28:43, is not a static state of perfection but a dynamic process of consecration and obedience in everyday life. The verse—"They shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they go into the tent of meeting or when they approach the altar to minister in the Holy Place, lest they bear guilt and die. This shall be a statute forever for him and for his offspring after him."—underscores the seriousness of sacred vocation. For PAK teachers, this passage becomes a metaphor for pedagogical integrity: just as priests were required to minister with reverence and purity, so must teachers approach their educational calling with holiness of intention, discipline of conduct, and faithfulness in guidance. Across the reviewed studies, a consistent pattern emerges: teacher competence and holiness are inseparable in Christian education. Pedagogical competence, in this context, extends beyond mastery of instructional techniques to encompass spiritual wisdom, ethical consistency, and theological discernment. Knight (2006) argues that Christian education aims to restore the image of God in humanity, and thus, teaching becomes a ministry rather than a profession. When teachers embody holiness in their teaching, they communicate more than doctrine—they transmit life, modeling what it means to live "set apart" for God. In the context of SMA Negeri 1 Labuhan Deli, where students navigate the complexities of adolescence amid a pluralistic environment, the teacher's holiness becomes a lived curriculum—a visible testimony that shapes students' moral imagination and sense of identity. The first theme that arises from the literature concerns the theological foundation of holiness as relational and moral formation. Holiness in Scripture, as reflected in Exodus 28:43, represents a call to live in right relationship with God and others. The garments of Aaron symbolize external signs of internal consecration; they remind educators that holiness involves visible expressions of inner devotion (Wright, 2018). For teachers, this means that pedagogical actions—lesson planning, communication, discipline, and assessment—must all reflect divine order and moral consistency. Palmer (2007) describes this as "teaching from the heart," where the integrity of the teacher's inner life shapes the moral ecology of the classroom. Students are deeply perceptive of their teacher's authenticity; when a teacher demonstrates patience, fairness, and reverence, students internalize these as sacred qualities of life. The second major theme relates to pedagogical competence as a vessel of spiritual influence. Competence in Christian education involves the ability to translate biblical principles into pedagogical practice. The reviewed works (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Rahmayanti, 2016; Nouwen, 1975) highlight three primary dimensions of this

competence: spiritual intelligence, which enables teachers to discern divine meaning in human experience; moral pedagogy, the capacity to guide ethical behavior through example and reflection; and spiritual creativity, the ability to integrate prayer, reflection, and narrative into learning. These dimensions mirror the structure of Exodus 28:43, where priestly service required purity, attentiveness, and devotion. A competent PAK teacher similarly ministers to students through disciplined instruction-cultivating awareness that learning itself can be an act of worship. The literature also suggests that awareness of sacred living grows through imitation and participation. Smith (2016) asserts that humans are “liturgical beings”-we learn holiness not through abstract moral lessons but through embodied practices that shape desire. In the classroom, this means that routines of prayer, respect, and self-reflection function as liturgies of holiness. The PAK teacher’s role, therefore, is not merely to command moral behavior but to invite students into a rhythm of sacred living. A case study by Suryani (2019) found that students who participated in daily classroom devotions led by spiritually consistent teachers showed greater moral discipline, emotional stability, and empathy toward others. The consistent exposure to an environment of reverence shaped students’ internal sense of sacred order. Another recurring theme in the reviewed works is the integration of holiness with emotional intelligence and self-regulation. According to Deci and Ryan’s (2000) self-determination theory, intrinsic motivation is sustained when individuals experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When translated into Christian pedagogy, holiness nurtures these same needs through spiritual alignment. The PAK teacher’s competence enables them to create a classroom climate where discipline arises from love, not fear. Students learn to regulate emotions and behaviors out of reverence for God and respect for others. This aligns with the priestly function described in Exodus 28:43: the priest’s purity was not self-centered but relational-it maintained harmony within the covenant community. Similarly, pedagogical holiness sustains relational peace within the learning community. Holiness also functions as a form of resistance against secular moral fragmentation. Several studies (Palmer, 1998; Smith, 2009; White, 2000) warn that modern education often separates morality from spirituality, leading to utilitarian ethics and performance-based identity. In contrast, a competent PAK teacher restores the unity of truth and goodness by grounding learning in God’s holiness. The classroom becomes a “tabernacle of learning”-a sacred space where divine presence is acknowledged and human dignity is upheld. This transformation begins with the teacher’s spiritual posture. As Nouwen (1975) states, “The spiritual life begins with the willingness to be led where we would rather not go.” The PAK teacher’s daily discipline-preparing lessons prayerfully, responding to conflict with grace, and speaking truth in love-becomes a sacramental act that mediates holiness to students. From a pedagogical standpoint, Exodus 28:43 highlights the inseparability of competence and consecration. Just as priests were required to wear garments of holiness before entering sacred service, teachers must be clothed with virtues before guiding others. This metaphor underscores the need for self-preparation. Literature on teacher formation (Arikunto, 2022; Karwono & Mularsih, 2018) identifies professional development as both cognitive and moral. A teacher who masters pedagogy without cultivating holiness risks producing knowledge devoid of transformation. In contrast, a teacher who integrates faith and skill models spiritual wholeness. Pedagogical competence thus becomes a spiritual garment-woven with threads of patience, empathy, discipline, and love. In educational praxis, the competent

PAK teacher serves as a bridge between theology and formation. According to Rahmayanti (2016), moral awareness is best cultivated through dialogue and reflection rather than didactic moralizing. The teacher's task is to awaken students' conscience through narratives that reveal God's holiness in human life. When discussing Exodus 28:43, for instance, teachers may invite students to consider how sacred responsibility applies to their own daily conduct-how integrity in small tasks reflects reverence for God. This reflective pedagogy transforms abstract theology into lived spirituality. It empowers students to see holiness not as distant perfection but as attainable faithfulness in ordinary contexts. Awareness of sacred living requires the integration of intellect and affection. Smith (2016) describes education as "formation of loves," where the goal is not only to think rightly but to love rightly. In this sense, pedagogical competence involves shaping both the mind and the heart. The PAK teacher encourages students to love holiness-to see purity, kindness, and humility as desirable and beautiful. Literature by White (2000) and Knight (2006) affirms that the most effective moral instruction occurs when teachers present holiness as joy, not burden. Students who perceive holiness as freedom-freedom from selfishness, impurity, and fear-develop intrinsic motivation to live sacredly. An important insight drawn from the literature is that spiritual awareness flourishes through communal experience. The Israelites' holiness in Exodus 28:43 was not individualistic; it was communal obedience under divine law. Likewise, holiness in education grows within relationships of accountability and shared faith. A study by Mustofa et al. (2020) revealed that when teachers intentionally built classroom communities based on respect and prayer, students demonstrated greater moral empathy and less peer conflict. The teacher's competence in fostering such community required careful balance-firm discipline combined with warmth and spiritual sensitivity. The classroom, therefore, became a reflection of the body of Christ, where each member's holiness contributed to collective peace. The review also highlights several challenges in implementing the pedagogy of holiness. Contemporary education often prioritizes cognitive achievement over moral depth (Darmawan & Kustandi, 2020). Teachers face institutional pressures to produce measurable results, leaving little time for spiritual reflection or relational engagement. Moreover, digital culture has fragmented students' attention, making it harder to cultivate silence, reflection, or reverence. Despite these obstacles, the literature points to resilience among PAK teachers who maintain spiritual discipline through prayer, journaling, and mentoring. These practices align with the biblical principle of "wearing the priestly garments" daily-an act of readiness and reverence before serving others. Teachers who sustain their spiritual vitality become reservoirs of peace in noisy classrooms, embodying the "no guilt before God" ideal of Exodus 28:43.

Holiness is enacted through habituated practices that invite students into sacred awareness. These include daily devotions, moments of silence, gratitude exercises, confession of mistakes, and reflection journals. Each practice functions as a small liturgy, reminding students that learning is not merely intellectual acquisition but spiritual formation. Gardner's (2011) theory of multiple intelligences supports this holistic approach: students grasp spiritual truths through diverse modalities-art, music, service, and dialogue. A competent PAK teacher creatively engages these avenues, showing that holiness can be expressed through beauty, kindness, and excellence in every subject. The findings also affirm that the teacher's moral credibility is the most powerful influence in

forming students' sacred awareness. As Palmer (2007) insists, "We teach who we are." Students discern integrity intuitively; they are inspired not by religious rhetoric but by consistent authenticity. When teachers confess mistakes, forgive offenses, or maintain calm amid conflict, they communicate holiness through action. Such credibility transforms the classroom into a sanctuary of trust. It fulfills the priestly vision of Exodus 28:43, where holiness is not ornamental but existential-it protects, purifies, and consecrates. The SLR findings further reveal that pedagogical competence is both divine gift and human responsibility. Teachers are called, but they must also cultivate their calling through study, reflection, and obedience. The literature encourages schools to support this process through spiritual formation programs for teachers-retreats, mentoring circles, and reflective writing. Such practices sustain the teacher's own holiness, enabling them to transmit it authentically. According to Nouwen (1975), "We cannot give what we do not live." Therefore, teacher competence in forming holiness is contingent upon their own communion with God. When examined theologically, Exodus 28:43 offers three pedagogical implications that shape the understanding of holiness in education. First, holiness demands preparation-teachers must enter their vocation with purified hearts, much like priests entering the sanctuary. This corresponds with pre-lesson prayer, reflective preparation, and moral readiness. Second, holiness involves presence-teachers must minister among students with attentiveness and reverence, recognizing God's dwelling within the learning community. Third, holiness requires perseverance-a lifelong commitment to integrity despite fatigue, misunderstanding, or institutional limitation. These dimensions converge in the PAK teacher's daily life, where teaching becomes an altar of worship and formation. The reviewed works also highlight that the awareness of sacred living cannot be imposed; it must be awakened. Students must encounter holiness as mystery-as something that evokes awe rather than compliance. Teachers accomplish this by integrating biblical narratives of holiness into moral reflection. For example, discussing Moses' encounter with the burning bush can inspire students to recognize that even ordinary ground can become holy when approached with humility. The competent teacher facilitates such encounters, helping students perceive God's presence in study, service, and community. This pedagogy aligns with the biblical-education as transformation of the whole person. In relation to SMA Negeri 1 Labuhan Deli, a school marked by cultural diversity and moral challenges of youth, the teacher's competence in holiness functions as moral light. Students are often exposed to competing value systems; thus, the teacher's steady example offers a moral compass. Literature by Knight (2006) and Smith (2016) indicates that adolescents develop moral awareness primarily through relational modeling. When teachers embody sacred calm, they anchor students amid moral ambiguity. This quiet witness fulfills the distinction of Exodus 28:43-living distinctly without arrogance, purely without pride. The relationship between holiness and educational justice emerges as an important theme. Holiness entails fairness, respect, and compassion for all students, reflecting the impartiality of God. A competent PAK teacher ensures that sacred awareness includes social sensitivity-caring for the marginalized, speaking truth to power, and promoting peace. Holiness thus becomes not private piety but public virtue. Studies by White (2000) and Palmer (1998) affirm that genuine holiness expresses itself through justice and mercy. By linking holiness with pedagogy, the PAK teacher reveals that sacred living transforms not only personal morality but also communal ethics. The final synthesis of the reviewed literature confirms that holiness in

education is both formational and missional. The teacher's competence enables them to form students into bearers of divine presence in society. Sacred awareness empowers students to resist moral compromise and to live as agents of light within their families and communities. The pedagogy of holiness, therefore, is not confined to religion class but permeates all subjects and relationships. Every act of teaching-whether explaining history, guiding art, or correcting behavior-becomes an act of worship. The teacher functions as a modern Aaron, clothed not in linen robes but in virtues that reflect God's purity and love. The results of this systematic review affirm that the pedagogical competence of PAK teachers serves as both theological witness and educational instrument for forming awareness of sacred living. The teacher's spiritual integrity, moral consistency, and pedagogical skill merge to create a classroom that mirrors the peace and order of God's kingdom. Exodus 28:43 serves as a timeless reminder that ministry-including the ministry of teaching-requires consecrated hearts. Through faithful preparation, relational wisdom, and disciplined practice, PAK teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Labuhan Deli and beyond can transform education into an altar where students encounter holiness, not as doctrine alone but as lived reality. In doing so, they fulfill their divine vocation-to make visible the invisible presence of God in the everyday rhythm of learning and life.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the competence of Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers in fostering students' awareness of sacred living is not only a pedagogical responsibility but a spiritual vocation grounded in holiness. Drawing on the theological reflection from Exodus 28:43, the research reveals that holiness is inseparable from teaching, as both demand consecration, integrity, and devotion. The verse's priestly imagery-where Aaron and his sons are commanded to minister in purity lest they bear guilt-illuminates the sacred seriousness of the teaching profession in Christian education. Just as the priest's garment signified readiness to enter God's presence, the teacher's moral and spiritual competence symbolizes readiness to guide students into awareness of divine truth and moral purity. The systematic literature review underscores that PAK teachers' pedagogical competence comprises three interrelated dimensions: spiritual integrity, pedagogical intentionality, and moral consistency. Spiritual integrity ensures that teachers live what they teach-their authenticity forms the foundation of credibility and moral influence. Pedagogical intentionality enables them to design learning experiences that integrate prayer, reflection, and moral dialogue, transforming the classroom into a sacred learning community. Moral consistency, meanwhile, provides stability; students perceive holiness not as abstract doctrine but as an embodied rhythm of life modeled by their teacher. Together, these dimensions create an educational environment where holiness becomes habit-where students learn reverence, self-discipline, and compassion as integral parts of spiritual awareness. This study affirms that holiness in education is relational and participatory. It is not achieved through isolation but cultivated through communion-between teacher and student, student and God, faith and daily practice. Teachers serve as mediators of God's holiness, shaping students not only to know Scripture but to embody it in thought and action. The "awareness of sacred living" therefore signifies a transformation of perception: students begin to recognize that every act of learning, service, and interaction carries divine significance. In this way, the

classroom becomes a microcosm of worship—a sanctuary where academic pursuit and spiritual devotion meet. The study emphasizes that holiness must be taught through consistency, not coercion. Discipline in the classroom arises not from fear of authority but from reverence for God's presence. The teacher's calm authority and compassion mirror divine order, guiding students toward self-control and moral clarity. The most effective Christian educators are those who embody holiness quietly—through patience, fairness, and faithful attention to each learner. Their influence transcends subject matter, shaping the student's heart as well as the mind. The study also identifies the challenges of nurturing holiness in modern educational contexts marked by secularism, digital distraction, and moral relativism. These pressures often fragment attention and diminish reverence. Yet, within these challenges lies the opportunity for teachers to embody distinction—to be, in the words of Exodus 28:43, “set apart” through humility, peace, and prayerful diligence. When teachers live as consecrated individuals, they restore the sacredness of education itself. The pedagogy of holiness calls PAK teachers to view their competence as a spiritual craft—a divine partnership in forming hearts and minds. Their teaching becomes an offering of worship, and their students' growth becomes a testimony of God's continuing presence in education. The awareness of sacred living thus transforms the ordinary classroom into holy ground, where every lesson, word, and act of care reflects the glory of God. Through competence rooted in holiness, Christian teachers fulfill their calling not only to instruct but to sanctify—to shape a generation that knows, loves, and lives in the presence of the Holy One.

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