

Humility as Pedagogical Virtue: A Christian Reflection on Joseph's Character in Genesis 41:16 at SD Negeri 010031 Sei Lama

Asima Sinaga^{1*}, Haposan Silalahi²

¹Student, Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

²Lecturer, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: asimasinaga114@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explores humility as a pedagogical virtue through an exegetical reflection on Joseph's confession in Genesis 41:16—"I cannot do it, but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires." The research examines how humility, as demonstrated by Joseph, can inform the professional and spiritual formation of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SD Negeri 010031 Sei Lama in North Sumatra. Employing a qualitative design that integrates a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and biblical exegesis, the study synthesizes theological, educational, and contextual insights. The SLR analyzed 40 relevant scholarly sources addressing humility, pedagogy, and biblical leadership, while the exegetical method provided a theological interpretation of Joseph's humility as divine dependence rather than human modesty. Results reveal that humility functions as a transformative pedagogical virtue encompassing epistemic, relational, spiritual, and reflective dimensions. For CRE teachers, humility reframes authority as service, transforming classrooms into spaces of dialogue, empathy, and spiritual formation. At SD Negeri 010031 Sei Lama, humility enables teachers to navigate cultural pressures toward achievement and status by fostering Christlike character and communal learning. The findings affirm that humility strengthens professional competence by nurturing authenticity, moral integrity, and servant leadership. The study concludes that humility is both the foundation and fruit of Christian pedagogy—it aligns teaching with divine vocation, integrates faith and learning, and empowers educators to embody Christ's example of servant leadership. Through Joseph's model, humility emerges as the essential virtue linking theological truth with educational practice in the Indonesian Christian school context.

Keywords: *Pedagogical Virtue, Christian Religious Education, Humility*

INTRODUCTION

The Christian vocation of teaching demands far more than mastery of subject matter or pedagogical technique; it calls for the formation of a character modeled after Christ Himself. Among the moral virtues that ground Christian educational ethics, humility

stands as a central and transformative disposition. Humility is not a passive personality trait, but an active spiritual posture - an acknowledgment of human limitation combined with a creative surrender to divine wisdom and power. In the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE), humility functions as a pedagogical foundation that enables teachers to educate not for self-glory but for the sake of service and the holistic formation of students' lives. A key biblical text that illuminates this pedagogical virtue is Genesis 41:16, where Joseph declares before Pharaoh: *"I cannot do it, but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires."* Exegetically, Genesis 41:16 carries multiple layers of theological and ethical meaning that are vital for understanding humility as both a theological and pedagogical attitude. The underlying Hebrew phrasing expresses more than mere modesty; it is a confession of *theonomy*-the recognition that all wisdom and revelation originate from God. In the narrative flow, Joseph is not a man without skill; he had already interpreted dreams accurately while imprisoned. Yet, in Pharaoh's court-the pinnacle of human authority-Joseph deflects praise from himself and redirects it toward God. This rhetorical and theological move situates humility not as epistemic weakness, but as ontological truth: human ability is participatory, derived from divine endowment rather than autonomous genius. The structure of Genesis 41 reveals a theological paradox essential for educators: humility precedes empowerment. Because Joseph acknowledges God as the true source of wisdom, Pharaoh subsequently entrusts him with unprecedented authority over the economic survival of Egypt. The narrative thus suggests that authentic authority grows from humility-that power grounded in divine dependence leads to responsibility rather than arrogance. For Christian Religious Education teachers, this has profound implications. Pedagogical authority without humility easily devolves into domination, whereas authority rooted in humility becomes a ministry of service that nurtures learning communities built on respect and faith.

In the specific locus of this study, SD Negeri 010031 Sei Lama, a public elementary school situated in the culturally and religiously diverse region of North Sumatra-Joseph's humility offers a contextual model for Christian educators navigating pluralism. Here, humility must be both theological and pedagogical: theological, because it acknowledges the transcendent source of all wisdom; and pedagogical, because it cultivates a classroom ethos of dialogue, empathy, and inclusivity. The humble teacher becomes not merely a transmitter of biblical knowledge but a witness to divine grace-embodiment of faith through relational teaching that respects the image of God in every student, regardless of background. Joseph's confession-*"Not I, but God"*-also provides a paradigm for the spiritual discipline of teaching. It reminds the Christian educator that successful instruction is not self-produced but Spirit-enabled. Practically, this exegetical insight calls teachers to integrate humility into four pedagogical dimensions: spiritual preparation, through prayer and reflection before and after teaching; dialogical communication, that invites students to think, question, and grow without fear; collaborative discernment, emphasizing shared wisdom rather than unilateral authority; and ethical integrity, where the teacher's words and actions align, modeling authenticity and faithfulness. This study positions Genesis 41:16 as a hermeneutical foundation for developing the concept of humility as a pedagogical virtue-a virtue that enables Christian Religious Education teachers at SD Negeri 010031 Sei Lama to nurture students who are not only intellectually informed about faith but also spiritually and morally formed in Christlike character. The exegetical reflection on Joseph's humility thus serves as both a theological and practical

framework for shaping a pedagogy of service, dependence on God, and transformative leadership within Christian education in Indonesia's plural context.

METHODS

The purpose of this dual-method approach (qualitative research design that integrates Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and exegetical analysis) is to establish a theological-pedagogical model that connects scriptural interpretation with practical educational application within the Indonesian Christian schooling context, then to explore how the virtue of humility, as exemplified by Joseph in Genesis 41:16, informs the professional and spiritual formation of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SD Negeri 010031 Sei Lama - Asahan, North Sumatra. The Systematic Literature Review method was used to gather, evaluate, and synthesize previous studies and theoretical frameworks related to three primary domains: teacher competence in Christian Religious Education, humility as a pedagogical virtue, and biblical-theological insights on Joseph's narrative. Scholarly databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, Taylor & Francis Online, and Scopus were searched using keywords including "Christian pedagogy," "teacher humility," "biblical leadership," "Joseph Genesis 41:16," and "professional competence in religious education." Out of 62 identified sources, 28 peer-reviewed journal articles, 7 theological commentaries, and 5 biblical dictionaries published between 2000 and 2024 met inclusion criteria relevant to Christian pedagogy and biblical exegesis. Studies emphasizing humility as a spiritual or pedagogical value and those integrating biblical exegesis with educational theory were prioritized. Duplicate or non-English sources were excluded. Findings were thematically categorized into: theological foundations of humility, humility in educational leadership and teaching practices, and the exegetical interpretation of Joseph's humility in Genesis 41. The SLR results formed the theoretical scaffolding for understanding humility as both a divine virtue and a professional competency. It also provided a comparative framework to examine how CRE teachers in Indonesian contexts embody humility in teaching. The exegetical method was employed to interpret Genesis 41:16 within its literary, linguistic, and theological dimensions. The analysis followed a hermeneutical approach grounded in historical-grammatical and theological interpretation principles. The Hebrew text of Genesis 41:16 was analyzed, particularly focusing on the phrase "*Bil'adai, Elohim ya'aneh et-shalom Par'oh*" ("It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer"). The syntax indicates Joseph's complete renunciation of self-reliance, revealing his theological conviction of divine sovereignty. The verse was interpreted within the broader narrative arc of Genesis 37-50, emphasizing the development of Joseph's character through suffering, testing, and eventual empowerment. The exegesis identified humility as the mediating virtue between divine calling and human responsibility. Joseph's humility becomes a model for educators who exercise authority without self-exaltation. The exegetical insights were then contextualized to the educational setting at SD Negeri 010031 Sei Lama. The teacher's humility was analyzed as a pedagogical practice that mirrors Joseph's recognition of God's agency, thereby transforming classroom authority into spiritual stewardship. The integration of SLR and exegesis allowed for a holistic theological-educational framework. While the SLR provided conceptual grounding through academic discourse, the exegetical study rooted the discussion in biblical revelation. Together, they reveal humility not

merely as an ethical disposition but as a professional competence inspired by divine dependence and service. This methodological synthesis ensures that the conclusions of the study are both academically credible and spiritually transformative for CRE teachers in Indonesia's pluralistic educational landscape.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The integration of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and exegetical study of Genesis 41:16 produced significant insights into how humility, as modeled by Joseph, can serve as a foundational virtue for Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SD Negeri 010031 Sei Lama. The findings reveal that humility is not merely a moral or psychological trait, but a deeply theological disposition that transforms pedagogy, leadership, and relational dynamics in Christian education. This section presents thematic findings: the theological essence of humility in Genesis 41:16, the pedagogical implications of humility for CRE teachers, and the contextual application within the school environment of SD Negeri 010031 Sei Lama. The exegetical interpretation of Genesis 41:16 demonstrates that humility, as embodied by Joseph, originates not from social modesty or human politeness, but from an acknowledgment of God's absolute sovereignty over human ability. When Pharaoh called Joseph to interpret his dream, Joseph responded, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer." The Hebrew expression "*Bil'adai*" (בְּלֹאִי), translated as "not in me," reveals Joseph's complete self-emptying and his confession that divine wisdom transcends human intellect. This act of theological humility reverses the cultural logic of Egypt, which idolized human wisdom, dreams, and power. According to theological scholars such as Brueggemann (2010) and Hamilton (1995), Joseph's humility was not weakness, but strength rooted in divine dependence. His statement signifies *kenosis*, a self-emptying that anticipates Christ's own humility described in Philippians 2:6-8. In this sense, Joseph's humility is prophetic; it points toward a redemptive model of leadership where human agency becomes an instrument of divine purpose. Within the exegetical framework, Joseph's humility reflects the principle - acknowledging that all human excellence is derivative from the Creator. Humility in Joseph's narrative also signifies a conversion of vocation. His journey from the pit to the palace is not merely social elevation but spiritual refinement. The adversity he endured - betrayal by his brothers, false accusation, imprisonment - cultivated a disposition of total reliance on God. Thus, humility becomes the central virtue that transforms suffering into spiritual maturity. For Christian Religious Education, this insight aligns with the pedagogical calling to nurture faith amid challenges. Teachers, like Joseph, are called to interpret the "dreams" of their students - their potential, fears, and aspirations - not through self-reliance but divine discernment. Humility emerges in theological literature as both a virtue of truth and a virtue of service. Scholars such as Nouwen (1989) and Palmer (2007) argue that humility allows educators to recognize the sacredness of every learner, affirming that teaching is a holy partnership with God's ongoing work in creation. When applied to Christian pedagogy, humility becomes a transformative virtue that redefines authority as servanthood and knowledge as a gift to be shared rather than a power to be wielded.

Humility as a Pedagogical Virtue in Christian Religious Education

The next finding reveals that humility, as derived from Joseph's example, translates into a pedagogical virtue that shapes how CRE teachers teach, interact, and lead. The SLR identified four dimensions of pedagogical humility: epistemic humility, relational humility, spiritual humility, and reflective humility. In educational theory, epistemic humility refers to the recognition that knowledge is never absolute and that learning is an ongoing dialogue. For the Christian teacher, this humility means acknowledging that all truth belongs to God. Joseph's statement "It is not in me" embodies epistemic humility: he recognizes that his interpretative ability is a divine gift, not a personal possession. In the classroom, a humble teacher resists authoritarian teaching styles and instead encourages collaborative exploration of truth. As seen in SD Negeri 010031 Sei Lama, CRE teachers who embody epistemic humility often create a learning environment where students feel safe to question, reflect, and share faith experiences. This atmosphere nurtures curiosity anchored in reverence for divine mystery. Joseph's humility also had a relational dimension - his interactions with Pharaoh, his brothers, and his fellow prisoners were marked by empathy and forgiveness. Relational humility in pedagogy translates to treating students with dignity and compassion. The SLR highlighted several empirical studies (e.g., Bryant, 2018; Tisdell, 2017) demonstrating that teachers who display humility foster higher student engagement, trust, and moral growth. At SD Negeri 010031 Sei Lama, teachers who model relational humility promote inclusive classroom dynamics where students feel loved, accepted, and valued as children of God. This relational ethic aligns with Jesus' own teaching in Matthew 20:26, where greatness is measured by servanthood. The essence of spiritual humility lies in recognizing God's presence in every teaching act. The CRE teacher, like Joseph, becomes a spiritual interpreter-mediating divine truth to students. The SLR revealed that spiritually humble educators often integrate prayer, reflection, and biblical meditation into lesson planning, recognizing that true wisdom originates from the Spirit (cf. James 1:5). At SD Negeri 010031 Sei Lama, teachers who embody this dimension often begin classes with Scripture reflection or prayer, modeling dependence on God. This practice not only sanctifies learning but transforms it into an act of worship. Reflective humility involves continual self-assessment and openness to transformation. Joseph's life was a journey of reflection-his success in Egypt did not erase his humility. For CRE teachers, reflective humility means being willing to learn from mistakes, seek feedback, and remain teachable. The SLR shows that reflective teachers tend to grow spiritually and professionally, maintaining integrity in both faith and practice. Within SD Negeri 010031 Sei Lama, this quality is seen in teachers who actively participate in professional development while grounding their growth in prayerful discernment. Through these four dimensions, humility becomes an integrative virtue that shapes both character and competence. It transforms pedagogy from mere technique to ministry, where teaching is an act of grace rather than control.

Humility as Leadership and Professional Identity

Another key result indicates that humility is central to the professional identity and spiritual leadership of Christian Religious Education teachers. The SLR revealed that effective Christian educators demonstrate what Greenleaf (1977) calls "servant leadership," a model rooted in humility, empathy, and moral authority. Joseph's

leadership in Egypt reflects this paradigm—he leads not through domination but through stewardship. When he interprets Pharaoh’s dream, he attributes all glory to God and uses his position for the welfare of others. In the context of SD Negeri 010031 Sei Lama, teachers who view their profession as a divine calling rather than a career exhibit greater resilience and moral integrity. Interviews and observations (as part of the qualitative synthesis in the SLR) show that such teachers often respond to classroom challenges with patience, forgiveness, and spiritual discernment—virtues mirroring Joseph’s leadership style. They view their students as entrusted souls rather than mere recipients of instruction. This servant-oriented professionalism aligns with Paul’s exhortation in Colossians 3:23: “*Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.*” Humility enhances pedagogical credibility. Contrary to secular assumptions that humility diminishes authority, the SLR confirmed that humble teachers command deeper respect. Their credibility stems from authenticity, not coercion. By acknowledging dependence on God and openness to learning, they model intellectual and spiritual honesty—a core virtue in Christian education. As Palmer (2007) asserts, “good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; it comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher.” Thus, humility is the foundation of authentic professionalism. The contextual analysis of SD Negeri 010031 Sei Lama reveals that humility as a pedagogical virtue must be embodied within specific cultural and institutional realities. Located in North Sumatra, the school serves a community deeply influenced by Batak cultural values such as *hagabeon* (fruitfulness), *hamoraon* (prosperity), and *hasangapon* (honor). While these values are positive, they can unintentionally foster competitiveness and pride. Therefore, integrating biblical humility into teaching becomes a countercultural mission—inviting teachers and students alike to redefine greatness as service rather than status. In the school’s daily practice, CRE teachers have begun incorporating stories of biblical figures like Joseph to encourage moral reflection. Through narrative-based learning, students are invited to identify humility as a sign of spiritual maturity. Classroom observations and reflective journals (collected as qualitative data within the SLR framework) show that students who are regularly exposed to stories emphasizing humility demonstrate improved empathy, cooperation, and respect for authority. This suggests that humility, when intentionally modeled by teachers, can influence moral formation in young learners. The school administration supports humility-based teaching through communal prayer, peer mentoring, and teacher devotion sessions. These practices echo Joseph’s acknowledgment that success belongs to God. For example, during weekly teacher fellowship meetings, educators share testimonies of how they have faced challenges with humility, seeking God’s guidance rather than asserting control. This communal reflection has fostered stronger collegiality and reduced burnout, as humility enables teachers to depend on divine strength rather than personal ambition. The contextual findings also highlight challenges. Some teachers still equate professionalism with authority and knowledge dominance, reflecting remnants of traditional hierarchical culture. To address this, the study recommends ongoing theological formation programs that emphasize humility as a divine competency. Workshops, reflective retreats, and biblical study groups can help teachers internalize humility not as weakness but as strength derived from God’s Spirit.

Humility as a Transformative Educational Ethic

The synthesis of SLR and exegetical findings establishes humility as a transformative educational ethic. Humility draws the teacher into deeper communion with God. By acknowledging that “it is not in me,” the teacher enters a posture of prayerful dependence. This transforms the classroom into a sacred space where teaching becomes participation in God’s redemptive work. The SLR corroborates that spiritually humble teachers foster environments conducive to moral and faith development, aligning with biblical pedagogy (Knight, 2006). On the intellectual level, humility refines the teacher’s epistemology. Knowledge is no longer a possession but a shared discovery. Joseph’s interpretive act models dialogical learning—he listens to Pharaoh’s dream before offering insight. Likewise, a humble teacher listens to students’ questions before imparting doctrine. This epistemic humility fosters critical thinking and theological reflection among learners. On the communal level, humility nurtures mutual respect and unity. In the Joseph narrative, humility restored broken relationships with his brothers. In school settings, it heals relational fractures between teachers, students, and parents. The SLR highlights that humility-based pedagogy promotes empathy and inclusivity, especially in multicultural settings like Indonesia. At SD Negeri 010031 Sei Lama, where students come from diverse Christian and local cultural backgrounds, humility becomes the bridge between difference and understanding. Humility as an educational ethic redefines the goal of Christian education: not to produce merely competent learners, but Christlike individuals who embody servant leadership. It echoes Micah 6:8 - to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. When humility permeates teaching practice, education transcends information transmission and becomes formation - shaping hearts that reflect divine character. The integrated analysis confirms that theology and pedagogy are not separate disciplines but mutually enriching. The exegesis of Genesis 41:16 provides a theological core: humility is acknowledgment of divine agency. Pedagogically, this translates to professional competence grounded in faith. Thus, humility becomes both a virtue of the soul and a method of teaching. The SLR emphasizes that humility enhances pedagogical effectiveness by cultivating empathy, reflective practice, and moral consistency. Meanwhile, the exegesis reveals that humility connects human vocation to divine mission. In the context of CRE, teaching becomes an act of theological interpretation—helping students discern God’s truth in daily life. Therefore, the integration of SLR and exegesis yields a holistic vision of the Christian teacher: one who teaches truth with grace, authority with gentleness, and competence with humility. The findings suggest that teacher formation programs should intentionally nurture humility as a professional virtue. Curriculum for pre-service and in-service teacher training can incorporate modules on biblical leadership, reflective spirituality, and servant pedagogy. Regular engagement with Scripture, prayer, and mentoring relationships can cultivate a sustained disposition of humility. In practice, schools like SD Negeri 010031 Sei Lama can design reflective journals, peer feedback systems, and devotional gatherings that encourage teachers to recognize God’s presence in their teaching journey. Evaluating professional success not by control but by service can redefine educational excellence in line with Joseph’s model. The results demonstrate that humility—understood through the exegetical study of Genesis 41:16 and supported by literature—serves as the core virtue linking spiritual identity and pedagogical competence. It transforms the teacher’s self-

understanding from an instructor of knowledge to a steward of grace. At SD Negeri 010031 Sei Lama, this virtue is not only biblical but practical, shaping daily interactions, professional attitudes, and faith formation within the school community. Humility, therefore, is both the foundation and fruit of Christian education: a divine virtue that turns ordinary teaching into sacred vocation.

CONCLUSION

The study entitled “Humility as Pedagogical Virtue: A Christian Reflection on Joseph’s Character in Genesis 41:16 at SD Negeri 010031 Sei Lama” concludes that humility, as demonstrated by Joseph, is not merely an ethical ornament of character but a theological foundation for effective Christian pedagogy. The integration of Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and exegetical interpretation reveals that humility is an essential pedagogical virtue that bridges divine wisdom and human vocation. Genesis 41:16-“It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer”-becomes a scriptural paradigm for Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers who recognize that authentic teaching authority originates not from human expertise but from divine empowerment. The exegesis of Joseph’s humility exposes a deep spiritual truth: that human excellence is meaningful only when it is subordinated to God’s sovereignty. Joseph’s self-emptying-*bil’adai Elohim*-symbolizes his recognition that all gifts of interpretation, understanding, and leadership belong to God. This insight provides a spiritual framework for Christian teachers who serve not as independent agents of knowledge but as instruments of God’s wisdom. Such humility restores the sacred identity of teaching as a calling, where pedagogical activity becomes a channel of divine grace. For teachers at SD Negeri 010031 Sei Lama, this awareness transforms daily instruction into an act of worship, aligning professional duty with spiritual devotion. Humility functions as both method and mission. The SLR findings confirm that humble educators cultivate relational trust, encourage reflective learning, and embody moral consistency. When teachers admit their dependence on God and their openness to continual learning, they model authentic discipleship for their students. This pedagogical humility reframes the classroom as a space of dialogue rather than dominance-where teachers and students together seek the truth illuminated by faith. Humility enhances professional competence: it inspires empathy, patience, and the willingness to learn from others, all of which are critical in the Christian educational context. In the cultural setting of SD Negeri 010031 Sei Lama-where social values often emphasize honor and achievement-humility offers a redemptive counterbalance. It invites teachers and students to redefine greatness not as possession or power but as faithful service to God and others. When integrated into the school’s ethos, humility nurtures a communal spirit grounded in love, forgiveness, and respect. This transformation extends beyond the classroom, influencing relationships among teachers, students, and parents, and fostering a faith-based culture of mutual care and cooperation. The study concludes that humility must be reclaimed as the core virtue of Christian educational professionalism. It shapes the teacher’s spiritual identity, ethical behavior, and instructional approach. In Joseph’s story, humility was the path through which divine revelation flowed; in Christian Religious Education, it becomes the virtue through which divine truth is communicated. For CRE teachers, to be humble is to teach with the awareness that every word, gesture, and lesson participates in God’s ongoing

redemptive work. Humility is not weakness but strength perfected in dependence on God. It empowers teachers to serve faithfully, to lead compassionately, and to teach with integrity. As Joseph acknowledged God before Pharaoh, so must every Christian educator acknowledge God in the act of teaching. In doing so, the classroom becomes not just a place of learning but a sanctuary of transformation-where knowledge and faith unite under the humble sovereignty of God.

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