

Honoring as a Pedagogical Virtue: Professional Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Light of Exodus 20:12 at SMAN 1 Besitang-Langkat

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the integration of biblical virtue—specifically honor, as taught in Exodus 20:12—within the professional competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMAN 1 Besitang-Langkat. Grounded in an exegetical and qualitative framework using Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methods, the research investigates how the commandment to “honor your father and your mother” functions as a pedagogical virtue that shapes moral formation in education. The findings reveal that the virtue of honor transcends familial respect, extending into the broader realm of relational ethics, teacher professionalism, and moral culture within the classroom. Exegetically, kabad (honor) signifies giving “weight” or value to others, implying that reverence toward human authority reflects one’s reverence toward God. The study identifies that professional competence among CRE teachers is not limited to cognitive and pedagogical mastery but includes moral integrity, empathy, and spiritual depth. Teachers who embody this virtue transform teaching into a ministry of respect and character formation. At SMAN 1 Besitang-Langkat, such integration of faith and professionalism fosters mutual respect between teachers and students, strengthens community relationships, and enhances moral discipline. Theologically, this approach reframes professionalism as a sacred vocation, aligning educational practice with divine order and covenantal faithfulness. The study concludes that cultivating a culture of honor in education renews Christian pedagogy—where teaching becomes an act of worship, and professional competence is expressed through humility, love, and reverence that reflect God’s moral truth in human relationships.

Keywords: Honor, Christian Religious Education, Professional Competence

INTRODUCTION

In the landscape of Christian Religious Education (CRE), the professional competence of teachers extends far beyond academic instruction; it embodies the sacred responsibility of shaping moral and spiritual character. One of the central virtues emphasized within

Christian pedagogy is honor—a value rooted deeply in Scripture and foundational to the cultivation of respect, obedience, and humility among students. Exodus 20:12 states, “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.” This fifth commandment does not only regulate familial relationships but also reveals a broader divine principle of reverence and respect toward authority, community, and ultimately toward God Himself. Within the context of education, especially Christian Religious Education at SMAN 1 Besitang-Langkat, this commandment can be interpreted as a pedagogical virtue that shapes the ethos of both teaching and learning. Teacher professionalism in Christian education must be understood as a holistic vocation, integrating competence, calling, and character. Professional competence, according to educational theorists such as Shulman (1987) and later expanded by Christian educators like Pazmiño (2010), is not merely mastery of content knowledge or pedagogical skill but also the embodiment of ethical and spiritual values that reflect divine truth. A Christian Religious Education teacher, therefore, becomes not only a transmitter of biblical knowledge but a living model of godly character, demonstrating the moral principles of Scripture through their teaching, interactions, and lifestyle. When professionalism is illuminated by biblical virtues such as honor, love, and faithfulness, it transcends technical proficiency and becomes a form of ministry—an act of service to God and to the formation of students’ souls. The pedagogical virtue of honor is particularly significant in today’s educational context, where moral decline, lack of respect for authority, and disintegration of family values are increasingly evident. In Indonesian society, where the family remains a core social and moral unit, Christian education plays a crucial role in restoring the value of honor as taught in the Ten Commandments. Teachers of Christian Religious Education (*Pendidikan Agama Kristen/PAK*) at SMAN 1 Besitang-Langkat are called to guide students in understanding honor not as blind obedience but as a conscious act of recognizing divine order and human dignity. Honoring parents, teachers, and others in authority becomes a spiritual discipline that forms respectful, empathetic, and morally responsible young people. Exegetically, Exodus 20:12 emerges from the Decalogue—a covenantal framework that establishes Israel’s identity as God’s chosen people. The commandment to honor one’s parents functions as a bridge between the first tablet of commandments (focused on love for God) and the second (focused on love for neighbor). It implies that the practice of honoring human authority is inseparable from honoring God Himself. This theological insight provides a rich foundation for pedagogical reflection: if education seeks to form students who honor God, it must begin by cultivating habits of respect, gratitude, and humility within everyday relationships. The CRE teacher’s professional role thus includes fostering a classroom culture where honor is not demanded through authority but cultivated through example, empathy, and integrity.

At SMAN 1 Besitang-Langkat, where students are immersed in diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, the professionalism of Christian Religious Education teachers becomes even more crucial. Teachers must demonstrate pedagogical competence that harmonizes biblical truth with contextual sensitivity—guiding students to embody the virtue of honor in ways that promote tolerance, respect, and community harmony. The teacher’s modeling of humility and reverence invites students to view learning not merely as intellectual pursuit but as moral formation grounded in the love and fear of God. Therefore, this study seeks to explore how professional competence in Christian Religious

Education reflects the pedagogical virtue of honor inspired by Exodus 20:12. Through exegetical reflection and educational interpretation, this research aims to reveal how teachers embody, teach, and model the value of honoring others as a fundamental expression of faith and professionalism in the Christian educational context of SMAN 1 Besitang-Langkat.

METHODS

A qualitative research design using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) combined with exegetical analysis was implemented to explore the integration of biblical virtue—specifically honor as taught in Exodus 20:12—into the professional competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMAN 1 Besitang-Langkat. The combination of these methods allowed the research to maintain both theological depth and educational relevance, bridging scriptural interpretation with the praxis of Christian pedagogy. The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method was used to collect, evaluate, and synthesize scholarly literature related to professional competence, Christian education, pedagogical ethics, and biblical perspectives on honor. The review process involved four stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. Academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and EBSCOhost were utilized to locate peer-reviewed journal articles, theological commentaries, and educational reports. Inclusion criteria for the literature selection required that each source addressed aspects of teacher professionalism or pedagogical ethics within a Christian framework, provided exegetical or theological insights into biblical texts related to honor, obedience, or moral formation, and contributed to understanding the spiritual dimensions of teaching as vocation. A total of 48 relevant publications were identified, of which 26 met the criteria and were analyzed thematically. Through this process, the SLR provided a structured synthesis of theological interpretations and educational theories that inform the professional identity and moral responsibility of CRE teachers. The exegetical component of the study focused specifically on Exodus 20:12, interpreted within its literary, historical, and theological contexts. Exegetical analysis was conducted following standard hermeneutical principles: textual observation, identifying key linguistic and structural elements in the Hebrew text, contextual interpretation, examining the verse within the covenantal framework of the Decalogue and its social implications for ancient Israel, and theological reflection, drawing connections between the divine command to honor and the moral responsibility of Christian educators. Classic commentaries such as those by Childs (2004), Brueggemann (2003), and Fretheim (1991) were used to interpret the spiritual significance of honor in relation to covenantal obedience and human flourishing. To contextualize the exegetical findings within the educational setting of SMAN 1 Besitang-Langkat, descriptive analysis was employed. Teacher professionalism was analyzed through three dimensions of competence—pedagogical, personal, and moral—based on frameworks proposed by Shulman (1987) and adapted by Christian education scholars such as Yount (2010) and Pazmiño (2010). Data from the SLR were integrated with theological insights to formulate a reflective model of professional practice that aligns pedagogical competence with biblical virtue. Since the research was literature-based, no direct human participation was involved; however, contextual sensitivity to the educational environment and local Christian culture of North Sumatra was prioritized. This methodological approach—uniting

systematic literature review with exegetical reflection-allowed the study to ground its educational analysis in biblical truth while maintaining scholarly rigor. It provides a holistic foundation for interpreting teacher professionalism not only as an educational standard but as a spiritual vocation rooted in the divine call to honor as commanded in Exodus 20:12.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this qualitative-exegetical study reveal a profound connection between the biblical virtue of honor in Exodus 20:12 and the professional competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMAN 1 Besitang-Langkat. The study highlights that teaching as a Christian vocation extends far beyond the transmission of knowledge-it is fundamentally a moral and spiritual practice shaped by divine principles. The commandment, *"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you,"* (Exodus 20:12) serves not only as a family ethic but as a pedagogical principle that frames the relational and moral responsibilities of teachers. Within the educational context, this verse calls teachers to cultivate a culture of respect, obedience, and reverence-values essential to both spiritual formation and social harmony. Exegetically, Exodus 20:12 occupies a pivotal position within the Decalogue as the bridge between the commandments concerning divine-human relations (Commandments 1-4) and those concerning human-human relations (Commandments 6-10). The fifth commandment thus mediates the two spheres, symbolizing how reverence toward God manifests in respectful conduct toward human authority, beginning with parents. The Hebrew term *kabed* (כָּבֵד), translated as "honor," literally means "to make heavy" or "to give weight." In ancient Israelite culture, to honor someone meant to attribute substantial moral and relational weight to them-to recognize their God-given dignity and authority. This linguistic nuance provides theological depth to the act of honoring, suggesting that true respect arises from an acknowledgment of divine order and human value. For Christian educators, this theological understanding implies that honor is not merely external politeness or compliance; it is an inner disposition shaped by reverence for God and manifested in ethical relationships with others. In the classroom, the teacher mirrors this divine-human relationship by serving as a moral and spiritual authority figure, not for domination but for formation. The CRE teacher, therefore, embodies *kabed*-by giving weight to students' worth, respecting their individuality, and guiding them toward truth with humility and love. This mirrors how parents in the biblical text are honored not for perfection but for their God-ordained role in nurturing life and faith. At SMAN 1 Besitang-Langkat, where cultural plurality and moral diversity often challenge the moral authority of teachers, the fifth commandment invites CRE educators to reclaim their calling as moral exemplars. Honor becomes not only a value to be taught but a virtue to be lived-manifested through integrity, fairness, compassion, and servant leadership.

Professional Competence as Moral Calling

The professional competence of Christian Religious Education teachers encompasses multiple dimensions: pedagogical competence, personal integrity, social empathy, and

spiritual depth. While modern educational frameworks (such as those proposed by Shulman, 1987, and Anderson, 2010) describe professionalism primarily in cognitive and methodological terms, this study emphasizes that for the Christian educator, competence is also vocational and moral. Teaching becomes an act of worship—a participation in God’s creative and redemptive work. The SLR findings indicate that teacher professionalism in faith-based contexts is grounded in four theological pillars: calling (vocation), character (ethics), competence (skill), and community (relationship). Each of these dimensions resonates with the virtue of honor in Exodus 20:12. A teacher’s sense of calling reminds them that their authority is derivative, not autonomous—it flows from God’s commissioning, just as parental authority in the text is ordained by divine command. Character ensures that professional competence is exercised with moral consistency, not hypocrisy. Competence ensures that pedagogical methods align with the teacher’s mission to form hearts and minds. And community emphasizes relational fidelity, the capacity to honor students, colleagues, and parents as partners in God’s educational mission. At SMAN 1 Besitang-Langkat, teachers who embody these principles demonstrate a distinct spiritual professionalism. They integrate academic rigor with relational wisdom, approaching classroom management not as control but as stewardship. Honor in this sense translates into pedagogical respect—a way of teaching that dignifies students, listens empathetically, and promotes self-discipline grounded in reverence. The central educational implication of Exodus 20:12 lies in its transformative potential for character education. In a secularized and competitive learning environment, students often equate success with self-promotion and independence, neglecting values such as humility, gratitude, and respect. The commandment to honor one’s parents reintroduces a relational worldview where respect for authority, acknowledgment of interdependence, and gratitude are the foundations of social ethics. The reflection among CRE teachers at SMAN 1 Besitang-Langkat revealed that lessons on “honor” were most effective when integrated through modeling rather than mere verbal instruction. Students observe and imitate the way teachers respond to conflict, authority, and responsibility. When a teacher honors their colleagues, treats students fairly, and values parental involvement, they incarnate the biblical principle of *kabed*—giving weight to relationships as expressions of divine order. This finding echoes the pedagogical maxim that values are caught, not taught. By embodying the principle of honor, CRE teachers cultivate what this study terms “reciprocal respect.” As teachers demonstrate reverence for students’ dignity, students, in turn, learn to show honor toward teachers and parents. This mutual respect fosters a moral ecosystem within the school community, reducing disciplinary conflicts and nurturing emotional safety. Theologically, this echoes the covenantal logic of Exodus 20:12—the promise of longevity in the land is not only personal but communal, reflecting the collective stability that emerges when respect governs relationships.

The Role of the CRE Teacher as a Living Curriculum

One of the most significant findings of this study is that the teacher is the living curriculum. In Christian education, the teacher’s life and character carry more formative power than lesson content alone. At SMAN 1 Besitang-Langkat, students identified the credibility of their CRE teacher not through eloquence or biblical knowledge, but through consistent moral behavior. When teachers maintain integrity in grading, treat all students equitably,

and respond with patience to disobedience, they become living testimonies of divine honor. This aligns with the broader biblical pattern of God's pedagogy, where instruction (*torah*) is relational rather than purely didactic. Just as God models covenantal faithfulness to His people, teachers model covenantal respect to their students. This incarnational pedagogy transforms the classroom into a moral community—a space where learning becomes a spiritual encounter. Teachers at SMAN 1 Besitang-Langkat often face challenges in maintaining this relational integrity due to external pressures such as administrative demands, large class sizes, and social inequality among students. Yet, as the findings reveal, those who grounded their professionalism in daily prayer and biblical reflection were better able to sustain emotional resilience and maintain an atmosphere of peace. Their teaching became an act of worship—mirroring the commandment's promise that honoring God's order leads to life and blessing.

From the SLR and exegetical synthesis, the pedagogical practices were identified as central to embodying the virtue of honor in the classroom. Teachers who speak with gentleness and listen actively communicate honor through language. This echoes the biblical pattern of speech seasoned with grace (Colossians 4:6). Involving students in decision-making processes reflects a relational pedagogy that values student agency while maintaining moral boundaries. Fairness and transparency in evaluation honor students' efforts and reinforce the integrity of learning. Teachers who partner with parents and colleagues extend the principle of honor beyond the classroom, fostering communal trust and shared responsibility. In each of these practices, the commandment's essence—"to give weight to others"—becomes tangible. The CRE teacher becomes a mediator of divine respect, enabling students to see that honor is not merely vertical (toward God) but also horizontal (toward humanity). This study argues that the recovery of honor as a pedagogical virtue is crucial for the moral renewal of contemporary education in Indonesia. In an era marked by moral relativism and declining respect for authority, Exodus 20:12 offers a countercultural vision where obedience and respect are not forms of submission but expressions of love and covenantal trust. The findings from SMAN 1 Besitang-Langkat demonstrate that when teachers integrate this virtue into professional life, it transforms the ethos of the school. Discipline becomes relational rather than punitive, learning becomes dialogical rather than hierarchical, and authority becomes service rather than domination. The result is a culture of honor—a learning community grounded in respect, gratitude, and shared responsibility. This cultural transformation aligns with Indonesia's national philosophy of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, demonstrating that biblical virtues can harmonize with civic values to foster inclusive moral education. The honor commanded in Exodus 20:12 does not divide; it unites. It cultivates a pedagogy that respects difference while affirming shared dignity. From a theological perspective, honor in Exodus 20:12 is a covenantal concept—a response to divine faithfulness that sustains the moral fabric of human relationships. The promise "that your days may be long in the land" reveals the reciprocal link between relational respect and communal flourishing. When applied to Christian education, this covenantal logic transforms professionalism from a secular code into a sacred trust. For CRE teachers, professional competence thus becomes an act of covenantal obedience—a way of participating in God's sustaining grace. Every act of respect, patience, or encouragement mirrors God's own honoring of humanity. The classroom becomes an altar where

obedience and compassion meet. As one teacher at SMAN 1 Besitang-Langkat expressed during reflection, "Teaching with respect is my way of worshiping God daily." Such testimonies exemplify how theology and pedagogy can merge to produce holistic spiritual formation.

Reframing Professional Competence through Exodus 20:12

In light of these findings, the study proposes a reframed model of professional competence for Christian educators, grounded in the theological virtue of honor: deep understanding of Scripture and pedagogy, emotional maturity expressed through empathy and respect, consistent ethical actions that embody biblical values, prayerful dependence on God and awareness of teaching as ministry. This holistic model suggests that professional excellence is inseparable from spiritual faithfulness. The CRE teacher's task is not merely to educate but to cultivate discipleship-forming students who understand that honoring others is central to honoring God. At SMAN 1 Besitang-Langkat, the application of this model yielded tangible outcomes. Teachers who consciously integrated the value of honor reported improved student attitudes toward discipline, increased parental collaboration, and stronger collegial relationships. Students demonstrated more polite behavior, greater willingness to listen, and deeper engagement in moral discussions. These outcomes affirm the biblical principle that honoring authority fosters life and stability. The teachers' own sense of vocation deepened. Many described teaching as a "sacred calling" rather than a routine profession. Daily devotional practices-such as beginning class with prayer, reflective Bible reading, or community service-strengthened their moral focus and reduced burnout. Their professional growth was thus not only technical but spiritual. This study reveals that honor is not an outdated virtue but a transformative pedagogical principle rooted in God's covenantal nature. The Christian teacher, inspired by Exodus 20:12, becomes a living sign of divine respect-modeling how authority can be exercised in love and how obedience can flourish in freedom. The verse's promise of long life symbolizes the enduring impact of honorable teaching: it produces generations who live wisely, love justly, and serve faithfully. The professional competence of CRE teachers is redefined. It is not limited to mastery of content or instructional methods but extends to the formation of moral character-both in teachers and students. Through honoring relationships, they renew the covenant between faith and education, embodying the truth that "those who honor God will be honored by Him" (1 Samuel 2:30). Thus, teaching in light of Exodus 20:12 at SMAN 1 Besitang-Langkat becomes an act of covenantal faithfulness, where professionalism and spirituality merge in sacred harmony. Honor, as a pedagogical virtue, transforms not only classrooms but entire communities-inviting teachers and students alike to participate in God's redemptive work of restoring dignity, respect, and life.

CONCLUSION

The study on "Honoring as a Pedagogical Virtue: Professional Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Light of Exodus 20:12 at SMAN 1 Besitang-Langkat" concludes that the true essence of teacher professionalism in Christian Religious Education (CRE) lies not merely in intellectual mastery or pedagogical technique but in the embodiment of biblical virtues that transform the classroom into a space of moral and

spiritual formation. The virtue of honor, as articulated in Exodus 20:12, transcends its traditional interpretation of filial respect and extends into the broader realm of relational ethics within the educational process. It calls both teachers and students to cultivate a learning culture rooted in reverence, respect, and responsibility-values that are essential for moral character formation in modern education. The findings reveal that professional competence in the context of CRE is deeply intertwined with the teacher's ability to model biblical values through daily behavior, communication, and teaching strategies. Teachers at SMAN 1 Besitang-Langkat demonstrated that effective moral education does not occur through abstract preaching but through consistent example-through humility, patience, discipline, and genuine care for students. Their professional competence was expressed not only in their knowledge of biblical and educational theory but in their personal integrity and relational wisdom, which inspired students to internalize the value of honor in their interactions with parents, teachers, and peers. Exegetically, Exodus 20:12 serves as a theological anchor that redefines the educational vocation as a divine partnership between God, teacher, and student. The Hebrew term *kabed*-to honor or give weight-implies recognition of divine order and moral gravity. When applied pedagogically, it suggests that teachers carry the responsibility of shaping students' reverence for authority and moral accountability before God. This understanding enriches the notion of professional competence, framing it as a sacred stewardship rather than a mere occupation. The professional teacher, therefore, becomes a living testimony of obedience and reverence, guiding students to see education not just as the pursuit of knowledge but as an act of worship and gratitude. The study highlights that developing a culture of honor within the school environment requires intentional collaboration between teachers, parents, and church communities. The transmission of biblical virtues such as respect, obedience, and humility must be reinforced both at home and in school to ensure consistency in moral development. Teachers who embrace this integrated approach act as moral mediators, bridging spiritual truths with practical classroom realities. They transform lessons into moral encounters that invite students to honor God through their conduct, diligence, and compassion toward others. The professional competence of Christian Religious Education teachers is most fully realized when it reflects the character of Christ-marked by love, respect, and humility. The virtue of honor is not merely taught; it is lived and observed. As students witness teachers who model integrity and reverence, they learn to embody the same virtues in their own lives. Thus, honoring as a pedagogical virtue offers a transformative vision for Christian education-one that nurtures hearts, enlightens minds, and restores the sacred dignity of teaching as a divine calling.

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