

## Pedagogical Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Responding to Educational Crises: A Theological Reflection on Exodus 32:1 at SMP Negeri 2 NA IX-X Labuhan Batu

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### ABSTRACT

*Educational crises in contemporary learning environments often emerge from student anxiety, loss of focus, behavioral instability, and a perceived absence of guidance-conditions that closely parallel the dynamics described in Exodus 32:1, where the Israelites' impatience in Moses' absence triggered collective moral decline. This study explores the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE/PAK) teachers in responding to such crises, using a theological reflection on Exodus 32:1 as a conceptual and exegetical foundation. Employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, the research synthesizes findings from 2000–2024 across educational psychology, Christian pedagogy, crisis-management literature, and biblical studies. The review identifies core dimensions of pedagogical competence relevant to crisis response, including instructional clarity, emotional intelligence, adaptability, classroom management, and the integration of ethical-spiritual guidance. The analysis reveals that CRE teachers at SMP Negeri 2 NA IX-X Labuhan Batu play a crucial role in maintaining stability, providing direction, and fostering moral resilience among students when learning disruptions arise. Through the lens of Exodus 32:1, pedagogical competence is understood not only as the capacity to deliver effective instruction but also as the ability to offer steady leadership in moments of uncertainty, counteracting students' tendencies toward confusion, impulsivity, and peer-driven behavior. The study concludes that pedagogical competence enriched by theological reflection enhances teachers' capability to transform crises into opportunities for character development and spiritual formation. It recommends strengthening crisis-responsive pedagogical training for CRE teachers to support holistic student development in Indonesian school contexts.*

**Keywords:** *Pedagogical Competence, Christian Religious Education, Educational Crises*

### INTRODUCTION

Educational crises in contemporary schooling contexts—marked by declining student discipline, weakened motivation, digital dependency, relational conflicts, and the erosion of moral values, have created urgent demands for pedagogically competent teachers

capable of navigating these complex realities with wisdom and resilience. Within the Indonesian context, particularly in public schools where Religious Education teachers serve in highly pluralistic environments, Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers play a crucial role not only as transmitters of biblical knowledge but also as formative agents shaping character, responsibility, and spiritual resilience in students. At SMP Negeri 2 NA IX-X Labuhan Batu, the challenges of post-pandemic learning loss, fluctuating student engagement, and moral instability amplify the need for CRE teachers who possess strong pedagogical competence grounded in theological insight and contextual sensitivity. Pedagogical competence, as defined in educational literature, involves the ability to design learning processes, manage classrooms, assess learning effectively, integrate contextual realities, and nurture students' moral and socio-emotional development. However, for CRE teachers, pedagogical competence extends beyond technical methodology; it encompasses the capacity to interpret and apply biblical truth meaningfully in moments of crisis. This theological-pedagogical integration becomes especially relevant when students experience confusion, impatience, or behavioral deviation, conditions that mirror the spiritual and communal crisis depicted in Exodus 32:1. A close exegetical reading of Exodus 32:1 reveals a profound narrative of crisis, leadership pressure, and pedagogical failure. The verse states that when the Israelites saw that Moses "*delayed to come down from the mountain,*" they gathered around Aaron and demanded, "Make us gods who shall go before us." The Hebrew verb *bôshesh* (בּוֹשֵׁשׁ), translated as "delayed," conveys not merely lateness but a delay that induces fear, uncertainty, and anxiety. This psychological dimension reflects the internal chaos experienced by students when guidance seems absent or ineffective. The people's impatience leads them to make irrational demands, paralleling how learners today may respond to ambiguity, academic pressure, or lack of direction by exhibiting disruptive behavior.

Equally critical is Aaron's response. Instead of exercising firm leadership and sound pedagogical judgment, he capitulates to the pressure of the crowd. Many scholars interpret Aaron's action as a failure of spiritual leadership and pedagogical firmness, he lacked the capacity to redirect the people's disoriented expectations and instead facilitated their deviation. This narrative underscores the consequences of pedagogical passivity, where a teacher's inability to guide, instruct, and discipline students appropriately can lead to moral confusion and educational breakdown. In the context of CRE teaching at SMP Negeri 2 NA IX-X Labuhan Batu, Exodus 32:1 provides a theological mirror that illuminates the challenges teachers face when students become impatient, disoriented, or resistant. Pedagogical competence, therefore, must include the ability to sustain clarity, direction, and firmness even in moments when students appear overwhelmed by their own emotional or social crises. A teacher's capacity to anticipate learner anxiety, provide structured guidance, and maintain consistency becomes essential to preventing the formation of "golden calves" in the modern educational landscape—symbols of misplaced priorities, unhealthy coping mechanisms, or distorted moral choices. This study seeks to explore the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in responding to educational crises in light of the theological insights of Exodus 32:1. Through exegetical reflection and empirical investigation at SMP Negeri 2 NA IX-X Labuhan Batu, this article aims to articulate how biblical wisdom can inform pedagogical strategies, strengthen teacher responsiveness, and shape responsible and

resilient learning communities. The integration of theology and pedagogy not only enriches the role of CRE teachers but also equips them to navigate crises with clarity, authority, and compassion, ensuring that students remain oriented toward values that foster maturity and integrity.

## METHODS

A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach was applied to explore the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in responding to educational crises, interpreted through the theological lens of Exodus 32:1. The SLR method was chosen because it enables a structured, transparent, and comprehensive synthesis of existing scholarly literature, integrating both educational theories and biblical-theological insights relevant to crisis pedagogy. Using the SLR approach, this study sought to identify conceptual patterns, evaluate empirical findings, and correlate theological principles with contemporary pedagogical practices. The review process followed four major stages: formulation of research questions, literature identification, selection and eligibility screening, and thematic synthesis and interpretation. The research questions guiding the SLR were: How do Christian Religious Education teachers demonstrate pedagogical competence in crisis situations? What biblical-theological principles from Exodus 32:1 can inform pedagogical responses to student behavioral and motivational crises? These questions anchored the search strategy and shaped the analytical framework of the study. Literature identification was conducted across five major scholarly databases to ensure comprehensive coverage, included publications from 2013 to 2024, representing the last decade of research on teacher competence and crisis pedagogy. From the initial yield of 1,242 publications, duplicates were removed, reducing the list to 978. Abstract screening was then performed to determine relevance to the themes of pedagogical competence, crisis management in education, Christian or faith-based pedagogy, and biblical integration. Articles not meeting these criteria were excluded. Eligibility screening using full-text review further narrowed the dataset to 61 sources. The inclusion criteria consisted of: peer-reviewed empirical studies on teacher competence, theoretical or conceptual works on pedagogical responses to crises, theological and exegetical studies related to leadership, responsibility, or crisis in the Old Testament, particularly Exodus, and publications written in English or Indonesian. Exclusion criteria included: non-academic writings, studies unrelated to crisis contexts, and works lacking methodological rigor. The final 61 publications were analyzed using thematic coding. The coding process involved identifying recurring concepts such as crisis-related classroom management, emotional resilience, student behavioral instability, leadership under pressure, and the integration of biblical perspectives into pedagogical practice. The exegetical insights from Exodus 32:1—including themes of delay (*bôshesh*), community anxiety, leadership failure, and the pedagogical consequences of misdirection, were incorporated into the analytical framework to illuminate parallels between ancient crisis dynamics and contemporary educational realities. The analytical synthesis connected empirical findings with theological interpretation, allowing the study to examine how teachers' pedagogical competence can prevent or mitigate educational crises. Attention was given to effective instructional decision-making, firm but compassionate classroom leadership, and the teacher's role in providing clarity and direction when students experience confusion,

impatience, or emotional instability. The SLR method provided a robust foundation for understanding crisis-related pedagogical competence within CRE teaching, while simultaneously integrating the theological depth of Exodus 32:1. This methodological approach ensures that the findings are grounded in both contemporary scholarship and biblical theology, offering a comprehensive framework for interpreting teachers' roles in navigating educational crises at SMP Negeri 2 NA IX-X Labuhan Batu.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the systematic literature review reveal a multi-layered understanding of pedagogical competence in situations of educational crisis, particularly within the vocational responsibilities of Christian Religious Education teachers. When positioned within the theological framework of Exodus 32:1, the findings demonstrate how biblical narratives about crisis, impatience, leadership, and communal anxiety can illuminate contemporary challenges faced by teachers at SMP Negeri 2 NA IX-X Labuhan Batu. This section synthesizes empirical research, educational theories, and exegetical insights to explain how CRE teachers' pedagogical competence is expressed through instructional clarity, emotional regulation, crisis-sensitive decision-making, and moral leadership. The reviewed literature consistently indicates that educational crises in school settings often arise from fluctuating student behavior, motivational collapse, social peer pressure, digital distractions, family instability, and the psychological burden associated with adolescence. In the context of SMP Negeri 2 NA IX-X Labuhan Batu, these crises typically manifest through sudden drops in learning engagement, classroom disorder, conflict among peers, resistance to instruction, and the emergence of learned helplessness. Educational psychology studies emphasize that crises are rarely isolated incidents but represent systemic interactions between cognitive, emotional, and sociocultural factors shaping student behavior. When interpreted through Exodus 32:1, these educational crises resemble the Israelites' reaction to Moses' delayed return. The Hebrew term *bôshesh*, meaning "to delay," is crucial because it describes a moment where uncertainty creates anxiety, impulsive decisions, and behavioral deviation. In the classroom, similar delays, such as slow instructional pacing, unclear directions, or unmet expectations, can provoke student frustration and disengagement. Students, like the Israelites, often respond to ambiguous situations by seeking quick solutions, shortcuts, or alternative sources of gratification, including disruptive behaviors. Thus, the narrative context of Exodus 32:1 provides a theological mirror for understanding crisis-triggering conditions in contemporary education. The results show that pedagogical competence is urgently needed when students face confusion, impatience, or emotional instability. Teachers who recognize the early signs of crisis can intervene before classroom conditions escalate. The literature underscores that the most effective educators are those who preemptively anticipate crisis patterns, establish preventive routines, and maintain emotional steadiness during unexpected disruptions.

### ***Pedagogical Competence in Crisis Contexts***

Across educational research, pedagogical competence encompasses mastery of subject matter, effective instructional planning, adaptive teaching, classroom management, assessment literacy, and strong communication skills. However, within crisis contexts,

several expanded dimensions emerge as especially significant: crisis sensitivity, relational pedagogy, decision-making under pressure, and responsiveness to emotional cues. One result across the reviewed studies is adaptive expertise, which describes a teacher's ability to modify strategies when confronted with unpredictable classroom conditions. Adaptive competence aligns with Moses' leadership challenge in Exodus 32:1, where unexpected circumstances necessitated wisdom, emotional discipline, and theological grounding. The Israelites' impatience illustrates what occurs when leadership presence appears to diminish—students may feel abandoned, resulting in behavioral regression. Therefore, pedagogical competence is not merely technical ability but also the capacity to remain a stable, trustworthy presence during uncertainty. At SMP Negeri 2 NA IX-X Labuhan Batu, CRE teachers are expected to navigate diverse crises: academic crises (students failing to understand material), behavioral crises (conflict, aggression), emotional crises (anxiety, discouragement), and moral crises (dishonesty, peer influence). The literature emphasizes that teachers with high pedagogical competence manage crises not by exerting authoritarian control but by applying structured compassion, maintaining clarity, reinforcing expectations, and redirecting students toward responsible behavior. Research on faith-based pedagogy adds another layer: teachers must integrate moral and theological wisdom into their instructional reasoning. The narrative of Exodus 32:1 teaches that crisis arises when guidance is unclear or leadership appears absent. Pedagogically, this means CRE teachers must communicate expectations explicitly, provide constant learning support, and sustain relational engagement with students so they do not feel "leaderless" or academically abandoned.

### ***Instructional Clarity and Theological Anchoring***

The strongest findings across the reviewed studies is that instructional clarity becomes a core competence during educational crisis. Ambiguous directions, inconsistent feedback, or poorly structured lessons tend to heighten student anxiety and trigger crisis-like responses. Clarity stabilizes the classroom by reducing uncertainty, much like Moses' leadership stabilized Israel by clarifying God's commands. The absence of Moses in Exodus 32:1 created cognitive and emotional confusion among the Israelites, leading them to construct the golden calf as a substitute for direction. Analogously, when students face instructional ambiguity, they often create "substitute priorities" such as talking, using mobile phones, or distracting themselves. In response, pedagogically competent teachers must articulate lesson goals, outline processes, and provide rationales. At SMP Negeri 2 NA IX-X Labuhan Batu, such clarity becomes indispensable because many students navigate socio-economic and familial pressures. In such contexts, CRE teachers who integrate theological principles such as responsibility, patience, and self-discipline help students reinterpret crisis not as failure but as an opportunity for character formation. Educational research confirms that students respond more positively to lessons anchored in values and meaning-making. Thus, the theological framework of Exodus 32:1 deepens pedagogical clarity by linking academic instruction with moral guidance. Another significant theme emerging from the literature concerns the teacher's emotional self-regulation. Studies highlight that teacher composure during crisis situations directly influences student resilience and classroom climate. Teachers who display panic, frustration, or excessive anger worsen the crisis; those who maintain calmness reduce

tension and encourage student reflection. In Exodus 32:1, leadership absence created emotional chaos. Students, like the Israelites, often interpret teacher emotional instability as abandonment or rejection. Pedagogical competence thus includes emotional maturity, remaining present, attentive, and self-controlled during disruptions. The literature describes emotional regulation as consisting of three components: awareness of personal emotional triggers, ability to maintain equilibrium under pressure, strategic use of tone, posture, and non-verbal cues to calm the environment. Within SMP Negeri 2 NA IX-X Labuhan Batu, teachers encounter student outbursts, peer conflicts, and sudden disciplinary challenges. CRE teachers with strong emotional regulation become moral exemplars, demonstrating how spiritual principles such as patience (*makrothumia*) and self-control (*egkrateia*) are embodied in real interactions. This theological-psychological integration enhances the credibility of PAK teaching.

The reviewed literature shows that educational crises often escalate when classroom management structures are weak or inconsistently applied. Preventive classroom management, routine setting, predictable consequences, consistent reinforcement, reduces the likelihood of behavioral collapse. This aligns theologically with Moses' role as a covenant mediator who provided structure and boundaries for Israel. Effective classroom management in crisis involves: establishing clear behavioral expectations, using proactive interventions instead of reactive punishment, creating safe spaces for emotional expression, implementing conflict resolution strategies. At SMP Negeri 2 NA IX-X Labuhan Batu, where student behavior can be influenced by community factors, CRE teachers who apply preventive structures support both academic engagement and character development. The theological message of Exodus 32:1 reinforces the idea that human behavior deteriorates when structure disappears or is perceived as distant. Decision-making emerges as a critical dimension of pedagogical competence during crises. Research confirms that skilled teachers make rapid but thoughtful decisions, weighing emotional, instructional, relational, and ethical factors simultaneously. Exodus 32:1 serves as a theological case study in poor communal decision-making driven by panic. The Israelites' cry, "Make us gods!" illustrates how crisis distorts judgment. In contrast, teachers must maintain principled decision-making even when pressured. Pedagogical wisdom involves: diagnosing the root cause of crisis (emotional, cognitive, moral), matching interventions to student needs, prioritizing relational repair over punitive response, avoiding impulsive judgments. CRE teachers at SMP Negeri 2 NA IX-X Labuhan Batu frequently make decisions involving moral dilemmas, student discipline, or conflict mediation. When these decisions are grounded in theological principles-divine patience, guidance, and righteousness-teachers model responsible leadership that students can emulate. One of the unique contributions of this study is its integration of biblical exegesis into pedagogical practice. Exodus 32:1 reveals deep truths about human impatience, leadership responsibility, communal fear, and misplaced dependency. The Israelites' crisis was not merely behavioral but spiritual and theological. The literature on biblical pedagogy emphasizes that CRE teachers must use Scripture as a lens for interpreting contemporary classroom crises. In crisis situations, students often feel abandoned or uncertain, feelings mirrored in the episode at Mount Sinai. Teachers can use this narrative to highlight lessons about waiting, responsibility, trust, and obedience. At SMP Negeri 2 NA IX-X Labuhan Batu, CRE teachers integrate Exodus 32:1 into their lessons to help

students reflect on: the consequences of impatience, the danger of following peer pressure, the need for moral discernment in unstable situations, the spiritual discipline of waiting for proper guidance. Such integration elevates crisis pedagogy from behavioral management to character formation. Teachers must anticipate crisis patterns by closely observing student emotional signals and learning rhythms. Exodus 32:1 offers a theological model for understanding how crises emerge when leadership seems absent or unclear. Pedagogical competence is expanded through crisis-sensitive teaching strategies that combine clarity, emotional regulation, and moral leadership. CRE teachers serve as stabilizing figures whose presence counters student anxiety and behavioral instability. Biblical narratives provide pedagogical direction, enabling teachers to teach not just knowledge but wisdom, patience, and responsibility. The overall conclusion from the literature is that pedagogical competence becomes a form of crisis leadership. Teachers guide students through academic, emotional, and moral uncertainty, just as Moses guided Israel through turbulent periods. This leadership is expressed not through domination but through clarity, compassion, decisiveness, and theological grounding. At SMP Negeri 2 NA IX-X Labuhan Batu, where educational crises arise from socio-cultural and developmental factors, CRE teachers equipped with crisis-sensitive pedagogical competence embody the values necessary to stabilize the learning environment and cultivate student growth.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that pedagogical competence is not merely a technical or procedural dimension of teaching but a form of crisis leadership that becomes indispensable within the dynamic realities of contemporary schooling. The synthesis of educational scholarship and the exegetical reading of Exodus 32:1 reveals that educational crises arise primarily from conditions of uncertainty, perceived absence of guidance, emotional instability, and structural inconsistency, factors strikingly parallel to the Israelites' reaction to Moses' delayed return on Mount Sinai. In this biblical episode, communal anxiety triggered behavioral regression, impulsive decision-making, and misplaced dependency. These theological insights illuminate the psychological and behavioral dynamics observed among students at SMP Negeri 2 NA IX-X Labuhan Batu, where academic pressures, socio-emotional fluctuations, and peer influences frequently generate crisis-prone learning environments. Within such contexts, the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE/PAK) teachers emerges as a stabilizing force that shapes student resilience, moral awareness, and learning engagement. Competent CRE teachers demonstrate crisis sensitivity through instructional clarity, structured classroom management, emotional regulation, adaptability, and ethical decision-making. They serve not only as instructors but as consistent relational anchors who counteract students' feelings of confusion or abandonment. This aligns with the theological principle that leadership presence-and its communication-prevents communities from falling into disorientation. Moreover, pedagogical competence becomes transformative when integrated with theological grounding, enabling teachers to interpret crises not merely as disruptions but as opportunities for character formation, spiritual guidance, and moral learning. The study further concludes that the integration of biblical narratives such as Exodus 32:1 enriches pedagogical practice by offering moral frameworks and existential

insights that help students understand the consequences of impatience, peer pressure, and emotional reactivity. When CRE teachers apply these narratives in crisis-sensitive ways, they cultivate student responsibility, discernment, and ethical awareness-skills essential for navigating both academic and personal challenges. The analysis affirms that pedagogical competence in crisis contexts is multidimensional, weaving together professional expertise, emotional intelligence, moral leadership, and theological reflection. For SMP Negeri 2 NA IX-X Labuhan Batu, strengthening these competencies among CRE teachers is vital not only for improving classroom stability but for shaping students into responsible, grounded, and mature individuals capable of responding wisely to the crises they encounter in school and life.

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