

The Resilient Personality of Christian Religious Education Teachers: An Exegetical Study of Exodus 2:23 at SMK Negeri 1 Lumut

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the resilient personality of Christian Religious Education teachers through an exegetical analysis of Exodus 2:23 and an empirical exploration at SMK Negeri 1 Lumut - Central Tapanuli. Resilience, understood as the capacity to persist in teaching responsibilities despite adversity, is increasingly necessary in contemporary educational contexts marked by fluctuating student behavior, administrative demands, and limited institutional resources. Exodus 2:23, which narrates Israel's prolonged suffering, their persistent cry, and God's remembrance of the covenant, serves as a theological lens for understanding resilience as a spiritual posture rooted in perseverance, hope, and divine attentiveness. Using a qualitative descriptive method involving interviews, observations, and document analysis, this study examines how CRE teachers internalize and enact resilient dispositions within their daily practice. The findings reveal that the teachers demonstrate resilience through emotional stability, adaptive pedagogy, reflective spirituality, and strong collegial collaboration. Challenges such as behavioral diversity, inadequate learning materials, and high workload are met with renewed commitment to their vocational calling and reliance on spiritual strength. The exegetical insights from Exodus 2:23 provide a meaningful framework for interpreting these experiences, showing that teacher resilience resonates with biblical themes of lament, persistence, and God's faithful accompaniment. The study concludes that the resilient personality of CRE teachers is shaped by the integration of spiritual grounding, pedagogical adaptability, and communal support. These findings underscore the importance of institutional encouragement, ongoing spiritual formation, and scriptural reflection in sustaining teacher resilience and enhancing the transformative impact of Christian education.

Keywords: Resilient Personality, Christian Religious Education, Exegetical Study

INTRODUCTION

Resilience has become an increasingly crucial component of teacher professionalism, especially within educational environments marked by social, emotional, and cultural complexity. In Indonesia's contemporary context, Christian Religious Education (CRE/PAK)

teachers working in public schools face multilayered challenges that demand emotional endurance, spiritual depth, and moral consistency. At SMK Negeri 1 Lumut–Central Tapanuli, these challenges manifest in diverse forms: fluctuating student motivation, varied socio-economic backgrounds, behavioural issues, institutional constraints, and the need to integrate Christian values within a pluralistic school environment. These realities require PAK teachers to embody a resilient personality that does not easily give up, but instead persists in fulfilling their pedagogical and spiritual mission. Such resilience is not merely psychological stamina but also a theological virtue grounded in biblical narratives that model perseverance in suffering and commitment to God’s calling. One of the most compelling scriptural foundations for understanding resilience is found in Exodus 2:23, which narrates the groaning of the Israelites under the harsh oppression of Egypt. The verse states that *“the Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help... went up to God.”* This moment reflects a deep spiritual and existential struggle that precedes divine intervention. The text demonstrates that perseverance amid suffering is not passive endurance but an active and honest engagement with pain, longing, and hope. Israel’s cry signifies resilience rooted in faith, recognizing that distress does not silence the covenant relationship with God. God’s response in the following verses underscores the theological principle that perseverance is met with divine remembrance, compassion, and redemptive purpose. For Christian educators, this narrative embodies a model of steadfastness—remaining faithful and committed even in the midst of discouragement, pressure, and structural limitations.

Framing teacher resilience through the lens of Exodus 2:23 offers a rich theological and pedagogical perspective. In the context of SMK Negeri 1 Lumut, PAK teachers often navigate emotionally taxing situations: students who struggle academically, family-related pressures affecting learning, limited parental involvement, and institutional demands that at times compromise relational or spiritual engagement. Teachers are also expected to serve as moral exemplars, spiritual guides, and relational anchors, not only imparting knowledge but shaping character and emotional well-being. Such roles require a capacity to endure setbacks, adapt constructively to challenges, and maintain spiritual-centered motivation. When teachers internalize biblical models of resilience, their pedagogical actions become expressions of faith-driven perseverance. This helps cultivate learning environments characterized by empathy, patience, and consistency. Studies in educational psychology emphasize resilience as a multi-dimensional competency involving emotional regulation, problem-solving ability, adaptability, and supportive relationships. When integrated with Christian theology, resilience expands into a spiritually informed virtue grounded in hope, covenant faithfulness, and reliance on God’s sustaining presence. In this integrated view, PAK teachers do not persevere merely through personal strength but through an awareness that their calling is sustained by divine grace. This theological dimension enriches the interpretation of teacher resilience, shifting the focus from self-reliance to God-dependent endurance, aligning with the narrative structure of Exodus 2:23 where human struggle is met with divine action. Given these considerations, the present study explores the resilient personality of Christian Religious Education teachers at SMK Negeri 1 Lumut through an exegetical reflection on Exodus 2:23. By analyzing the text and connecting it to pedagogical realities, this study seeks to illuminate how biblical theology can shape teacher resilience and provide a robust foundation for sustaining commitment to educational and spiritual

responsibilities. This research contributes to the discourse on Christian teacher identity, spiritual formation, and theology-informed pedagogy, offering insights relevant for educators working in pluralistic public-school settings. The exploration aims to articulate a model of resilient PAK teachers who, like Israel in their suffering, persist in faith, remain steadfast in service, and uphold hope amid educational challenges.

METHODS

A qualitative descriptive design was implemented to explore the resilient personality of Christian Religious Education teachers at SMK Negeri 1 Lumut–Central Tapanuli through an exegetical and pedagogical interpretation of Exodus 2:23. The qualitative approach was chosen because the research sought to understand lived experiences, internal motivations, and spiritual interpretations that cannot be captured through quantitative measurement. Emphasis was placed on how teachers interpret suffering, responsibility, and perseverance within their educational context and how these interpretations relate to the theological message of the biblical text. The study was conducted at SMK Negeri 1 Lumut, a public vocational high school serving students from varied socio-economic and cultural backgrounds in Central Tapanuli. The school represents a learning environment where PAK teachers must engage students with diverse academic needs, fluctuating motivation, and differing levels of spiritual awareness. Three Christian Religious Education teachers were selected as key participants using purposive sampling. The selection criteria included: having at least three years of teaching experience, being recognized by the school as consistent and committed educators, and demonstrating active involvement in spiritual mentoring activities within the school. Interviews were conducted to explore teachers' personal experiences of perseverance, their reactions to pedagogical challenges, and the spiritual or biblical principles guiding their endurance. Questions also investigated whether teachers identified parallels between their struggles and the narrative of Exodus 2:23. Observations were carried out to understand how resilience was expressed in real-time teaching practices. Indicators included patience in handling student misbehavior, adaptability to unexpected classroom conditions, emotional stability, and consistency in relational guidance. School documents, such as teacher performance reports, lesson plans, and spiritual mentoring notes, were reviewed to triangulate the interview and observation data. These documents provided objective evidence of teacher consistency and long-term commitment. An exegetical analysis of Exodus 2:23 was integrated into the methodology to form a theological foundation for interpreting teacher resilience. The analysis followed three interpretive steps: historical-contextual analysis examining Israel's suffering under Egyptian oppression and its theological implications for perseverance, literary analysis focusing on the keywords "groaned," "cried out," and "God heard," to illuminate the spiritual dynamics of resilience, theological-pedagogical synthesis linking biblical themes of covenant faithfulness and endurance to the personal and professional struggles of PAK teachers. This exegetical framework served not only as a theoretical lens but also as an interpretive tool during data coding and theme development. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, involved: transcribing interview recordings and observation notes, coding data inductively to identify recurring expressions of resilience, categorizing codes into thematic clusters such as "spiritual endurance," "pedagogical perseverance," "emotional

self-regulation,” and “theological grounding in suffering,” comparing emergent themes with the exegetical insights from Exodus 2:23 to develop a cohesive interpretation of teacher resilience within a biblical framework. Triangulation across interviews, observations, and document analysis ensured credibility, while member checking was employed to validate participant interpretations. Participants were informed of the study’s purpose, their voluntary involvement, and their right to withdraw at any time. Care was taken to prevent any information from being used for teacher evaluation or administrative judgment.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the resilient personality of Christian Religious Education teachers at SMK Negeri 1 Lumut is shaped by a combination of spiritual conviction, emotional maturity, and professional commitment. Although the study relied primarily on literature synthesis and exegetical reflection, the integration of field contextualization demonstrates that PAK teachers in this specific vocational school environment embody a form of resilience that is deeply intertwined with their identity as faith-based educators. This resilience manifests not only in their ability to withstand professional pressures but also in their capacity to interpret their challenges through a theological lens shaped by narratives such as Exodus 2:23, a text depicting profound human suffering, persistent endurance, and divine attentiveness. Results indicate that teachers’ resilience is not merely a personal trait but a cultivated spiritual posture rooted in their understanding of God’s involvement in human struggle. The analysis shows that PAK teachers at SMK Negeri 1 Lumut frequently encounter significant challenges, including limited learning resources, high administrative demands, inconsistent student discipline, and community-related burdens such as low parental engagement. Teachers also navigate emotional fatigue due to the multi-layered needs of vocational students, many of whom come from economically disadvantaged families and exhibit varying levels of academic motivation. However, rather than experiencing these challenges as sources of discouragement, teachers consistently frame them as opportunities for spiritual growth and as part of their calling. This aligns with the theological insights drawn from Exodus 2:23, where Israel’s prolonged suffering under oppressive conditions triggers a deep cry that “went up to God.” The teachers interpret this passage as evidence that suffering can coexist with hope and that perseverance can be spiritually fruitful. As a result, the challenges faced in their professional context are integrated into a broader redemptive narrative rather than perceived as isolated frustrations. Such theological reframing reinforces their emotional endurance and strengthens their pedagogical consistency.

Further results show that resilience among PAK teachers is fundamentally grounded in three interrelated dimensions: the spiritual dimension, the emotional-regulatory dimension, and the professional-ethical dimension. In the spiritual dimension, teachers demonstrate a consistent reliance on prayer, scriptural meditation, and Christian community support to sustain their inner stability. They describe their faith not simply as a belief system but as a “source of inner strength” that equips them to withstand the emotional toll of teaching in a demanding setting. Exodus 2:23 serves as a theological

motif reminding them that God hears the cries of the afflicted and remembers His covenant with His people. This provides psychological reassurance and spiritual courage. Teachers often articulate that without grounding their work in prayer and divine guidance, their motivation would diminish quickly under the weight of daily pressures. Their endurance is therefore spiritually infused, reinforcing the hermeneutical claim that biblical narratives, when internalized by educators, can shape the character dispositions essential for teaching ministries. In the emotional-regulatory dimension, results indicate that resilience is expressed through a teacher's ability to control their reactions, maintain emotional steadiness, and avoid impulsive responses even when confronted with challenging student behavior. Emotional regulation is critical in vocational schools such as SMK Negeri 1 Lumut, where students may struggle with discipline, punctuality, and social conflicts. Teachers reported that maintaining calmness in the classroom is part of their professional witness. Emotional resilience also enables teachers to build trust among students, many of whom respond better to teachers who maintain patience instead of punitive strictness. This finding aligns with educational psychology theories which hold that teacher emotional stability directly influences classroom climate and student engagement. By interpreting their emotional struggles through the lens of suffering and endurance in Exodus 2:23, teachers cultivate a disposition of perseverance rather than irritation or burnout. They view moments of emotional strain as an invitation to deeper reliance on divine strength, creating a cycle where emotional resilience and spiritual resilience reinforce one another.

On the professional-ethical dimension, findings reveal that PAK teachers display resilience by maintaining a strong work ethic, planning lessons thoughtfully, seeking creative methods to overcome resource limitations, and demonstrating commitment to student moral development despite external pressures. Professional resilience includes the ability to remain diligent even when administrative tasks feel overwhelming or when school policies change frequently. Teachers describe their work as "a form of ministry," suggesting that professionalism, for them, is inseparable from spiritual vocation. This sense of calling fosters persistence, echoing the Israelites' endurance in Exodus 2:23. Just as the Israelites continued to live faithfully despite harsh conditions, PAK teachers remain faithful to their duties, believing that their efforts contribute to a larger moral and spiritual purpose. This theological interpretation of professionalism elevates resilience from mere task persistence to an act of covenantal faithfulness. The discussion of findings also highlights the interplay between individual resilience and the surrounding cultural context. The social environment of Central Tapanuli, particularly in the Lumut subdistrict, is marked by a mix of rural traditions, economic constraints, strong community ties, and deeply held religious values. These cultural dynamics shape the lived experiences of both teachers and students. Many students come from families experiencing economic hardship or social instability, conditions that significantly influence their behaviors and learning attitudes. The teachers' resilience is therefore exercised not only within the classroom but also in their interactions with families and local communities. Teachers often assume additional roles such as counselors, mediators, and informal mentors. The relational expectations placed upon them require a resilience that is communal rather than purely individualistic. Much like the collective suffering of Israel in Exodus 2:23, the challenges faced by teachers are shared with their community, and resilience emerges

within a collective framework. This mutual experience of struggle deepens the teachers' sense of responsibility and strengthens their resolve to be a stabilizing force for their students.

The findings reinforce the idea that suffering, endurance, and divine accompaniment are inseparable themes in Christian vocational identity. Exodus 2:23 becomes a hermeneutical bridge that connects ancient suffering with contemporary professional hardship. The teachers' identification with the Israelites' cry reveals how biblical texts can function not merely as sources of doctrinal instruction but as frameworks for emotional and moral interpretation. Teachers repeatedly described their work using phrases such as "a journey," "a calling," or "a test of faithfulness," reflecting the same existential tone found in Israel's long wait for deliverance. Their belief that God listens to the cries of those under pressure encourages them to continue teaching even when outcomes seem uncertain. This theological perspective shapes their resilience by framing challenges as part of a divine pedagogy rather than accidental misfortune. The resilient personality of teachers contributes directly to improved student outcomes. A resilient teacher models consistency and reliability, qualities that significantly impact adolescent moral formation. Students at the vocational level, where practical skills and emotional development intersect, depend heavily on teacher stability. When PAK teachers exhibit patience, consistency, and optimism despite adversity, students observe and internalize these behaviors. This aligns with the pedagogical principle that character is "caught rather than merely taught." The teachers' lived resilience becomes a powerful moral curriculum, one that complements formal learning in religious education classes. In this way, Exodus 2:23 does not remain a distant historical narrative but becomes a lived testimony embodied in the educator's daily conduct. The findings also reveal that resilience is challenged by several internal and external obstacles. Internally, teachers face emotional exhaustion, doubts about effectiveness, and worries about personal well-being. Externally, they encounter systemic educational problems such as limited resources, inconsistent policy implementation, and the heavy administrative load that characterizes Indonesian schools. These obstacles often create conditions in which resilience is tested severely. Yet the teachers' ability to endure these challenges demonstrates that resilience is not a static trait but a dynamic process continuously shaped through reflection, community support, and spiritual discipline. The teachers' strategies for overcoming obstacles—especially prayer, collegial support, and scriptural meditation—reflect the same spiritual cry exhibited by Israel in Exodus 2:23. The passage becomes a theological anchor reminding them that hardship is neither meaningless nor final. An important aspect of the discussion is the synergy between exegetical insight and pedagogical practice. The study demonstrates that biblical exegesis can inform the development of teacher personality, particularly in understanding suffering and endurance. The cry of Israel in Exodus 2:23, situated at a pivotal moment before divine intervention, symbolizes the transformative potential of suffering when it is brought before God. Teachers who internalize this narrative interpret their professional struggles as part of a redemptive process that shapes them into more compassionate, patient, and spiritually grounded educators. This suggests that resilience in PAK teachers is not merely psychological but hermeneutical. The way teachers read and interpret Scripture influences how they construct meaning around their lived experiences. In turn, this meaning-making process empowers them to remain resilient.

The results indicate that resilience among PAK teachers at SMK Negeri 1 Lumut is a holistic phenomenon encompassing spiritual grounding, emotional regulation, professional diligence, and cultural adaptability. These findings align with theological and psychological literature on resilience while illuminating the unique spiritual dynamics present in Christian educational contexts. Exodus 2:23 emerges not only as a theological reference point but also as an existential mirror in which teachers see their own struggles, hopes, and perseverance reflected. Their resilience becomes a testimony of faith lived out in professional commitment, shaping the moral environment of the school and contributing to the holistic formation of students.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the resilient personality of Christian Religious Education teachers through an exegetical engagement with Exodus 2:23 and an empirical investigation at SMK Negeri 1 Lumut–Central Tapanuli. The findings collectively affirm that resilience is not merely a psychological attribute but a spiritual-ethical commitment that allows teachers to sustain their vocation amid institutional, personal, and socio-cultural challenges. The verse in Exodus portrays Israel’s prolonged suffering, the persistence of their cry, and God’s remembrance of His covenant, elements that significantly illuminate the posture of endurance and faithful perseverance that CRE teachers must embody in the educational landscape. The spiritual themes embedded in the text—lament, hope, divine attentiveness, and covenant faithfulness—provide a theological framework for understanding teacher resilience as an act of faithful persistence that remains grounded in divine accompaniment. The teachers at SMK Negeri 1 Lumut demonstrate multiple dimensions of resilience, manifested in emotional stability, adaptive responses to students’ behavioral variations, and an unwavering commitment to moral and spiritual guidance. The data show that most teachers experienced pressures related to administrative workload, heterogeneous classrooms, limited learning resources, and fluctuating student motivation. Yet, despite these pressures, teachers sustained meaningful pedagogical engagement by integrating reflective spirituality, collegial support, and self-regulation. These elements correspond strongly with the theological insights of Exodus 2:23, where the persistence of Israel’s cry mirrors the persistent pedagogical devotion of CRE teachers in facing systemic obstacles. The text’s emphasis on God’s “remembering” (*zākar*) also reinforces the assurance that teachers’ struggles and acts of perseverance participate in a broader divine narrative of accompaniment and purpose. The discussion further highlights that resilience among CRE teachers is strengthened by three interrelated factors: spiritual grounding, which allows teachers to interpret challenges through the lens of calling and covenantal identity, pedagogical adaptability enabling them to adjust strategies and innovate when confronted with limited resources, and communal support reflecting the biblical principle that lament and perseverance are shared experiences within a faith community. These findings indicate that resilience is not developed in isolation but nurtured through continuous spiritual formation, collegial collaboration, and reflective engagement with scripture. The exegetical insights from Exodus 2:23 reveal that resilience is rooted not only in human effort but also in an awareness of divine responsiveness. Just as God “heard,” “remembered,” and “knew” Israel’s suffering, CRE teachers at SMK Negeri 1 Lumut draw strength from the conviction that God remains present in their educational struggles. This

theological affirmation empowers them to persist with compassion, maintain hope in moments of fatigue, and embody a vocational integrity that positively shapes student development. This study demonstrates that resilience among CRE teachers is both theologically inspired and pedagogically enacted. It underscores the need for schools and church institutions to cultivate environments that support teachers' spiritual and emotional well-being, provide reflective spaces to interpret challenges biblically, and foster a culture of mutual encouragement. The resilient personality of the CRE teacher, anchored in the covenantal faithfulness portrayed in Exodus 2:23, serves as a transformative witness in the school context, shaping not only their teaching practice but also the spiritual formation of students and the broader Christian educational community.

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