

Professional Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Teaching Honesty: A Reflection on Exodus 20:16 at SD Negeri 071150 Ombolata Alasa

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ABSTRACT

Honesty is a foundational virtue within Christian and national educational frameworks, yet many students in rural Indonesian contexts face increasing challenges related to dishonesty, peer influence, and weak moral formation. This study examines the professional competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in teaching honesty at SD Negeri 071150 Ombolata Alasa, using Exodus 20:16 as the primary theological lens. Through an exegetical understanding of the commandment "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor," honesty is interpreted not merely as a prohibition against lying but as a relational ethic essential for justice, trust, and communal life. To investigate how teachers communicate this virtue, a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was conducted following PRISMA procedures, identifying 1,200 relevant studies published between 2010 and 2024. After screening and full-text evaluation, 87 articles were selected to explore four thematic areas: biblical-theological foundations of honesty, professional competence of CRE teachers, pedagogical strategies for value formation, and contextual influences on student behavior. The findings show that effective honesty education depends on three key competencies: mastery of biblical content, skillful pedagogical practice, and teachers' personal integrity. Cultural characteristics of North Nias—such as communal harmony and reluctance to admit mistakes—require teachers to frame honesty as compassionate truthfulness. The study concludes that professional competence in teaching honesty is both a pedagogical and spiritual vocation, requiring teachers to embody biblical truth while cultivating an environment that nurtures integrity in both interpersonal and digital contexts.

Keywords: Professional Competence, Christian Religious Education, Honesty

INTRODUCTION

Honesty is a foundational moral virtue that shapes students' character, worldview, and social behavior, especially within the Indonesian educational context where integrity is

emphasized as part of the national curriculum and cultural expectations. In many public schools located in rural and semi-rural environments, such as SD Negeri 071150 Ombolata Alasa in North Nias, teachers face increasing challenges related to dishonesty, including cheating, misinformation, peer pressure to lie, and the normalization of deceptive practices in everyday interactions. These problems are not simply disciplinary issues but reflect deeper gaps in students' moral formation, family environment, and the wider moral ecology that students inhabit. Within this context, Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers are entrusted not only with cognitive instruction but also with shaping moral identity, guiding students toward a life aligned with biblical values, particularly the virtue of honesty. The professional competence of Christian Religious Education teachers encompasses pedagogical, ethical, theological, and personal dimensions that enable them to integrate faith values into learning. This competence includes mastery of biblical teachings, the ability to contextualize Scripture in the educational setting, sensitivity to students' life experiences, and the skill to cultivate classroom environments that encourage truthfulness, accountability, and moral courage. Among the biblical foundations supporting the practice of honesty in education, Exodus 20:16-*"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor"* stands as a timeless command that speaks not only against lying but also against all forms of distortion, manipulation, and injustice in interpersonal relationships. This verse provides a theological and moral framework for teachers to promote integrity as a lived value rather than merely a cognitive concept. An exegetical reading of Exodus 20:16 reveals that the commandment originally addressed the legal context of Israelite society, where false testimony in court had severe consequences, threatening social cohesion, justice, and covenantal relationships. The commandment underscores God's concern for truth in both formal and informal settings, affirming that dishonesty disrupts community life, destroys trust, and violates God's character as a God of truth (Deut. 32:4). When applied to education, the passage becomes a powerful ethical lens for understanding how dishonesty among students similarly damages communal learning, undermines fairness, and erodes moral formation. Therefore, CRE teachers bear a crucial responsibility to embody truthfulness and to model ethical consistency that reflects God's nature.

In the school context of SD Negeri 071150 Ombolata Alasa, the role of the CRE teacher becomes increasingly strategic due to the diverse moral challenges faced by students. Many students are influenced by family economic pressures, social media culture, and peer environments that may tolerate or even encourage dishonesty. These realities demand that teachers not only teach about honesty but also demonstrate professional competence that integrates biblical ethics into practical pedagogical strategies. Approaches such as storytelling, reflective dialogue, moral dilemma discussions, and teacher modeling have been shown to strengthen students' internalization of honesty. At the same time, teachers must adopt inclusive and empathetic pedagogical practices that recognize students' developmental stages and cultural backgrounds within the North Nias context. Professional competence in teaching honesty requires teachers to become facilitators of character formation rather than merely transmitters of doctrinal content. This includes the ability to identify factors that contribute to dishonest behavior, create safe learning environments where students feel comfortable telling the truth, and employ formative assessments that reward integrity rather than solely academic outcomes. The integration of Exodus 20:16 into classroom life therefore demands an approach that is

both theological and pedagogical-teachers must articulate the biblical value of honesty while simultaneously shaping the habits, attitudes, and decision-making skills of their students. Given these considerations, the present study examines the professional competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in teaching honesty through the lens of Exodus 20:16 at SMP Negeri 071150 Ombolata Alasa. By exploring the exegetical meaning of the text and its pedagogical implications, this research aims to highlight effective strategies for moral formation and to contribute to broader discussions on the integration of Scripture in character education within Indonesia's pluralistic school settings.

METHODS

The SLR method, to investigate the professional competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in teaching honesty through the theological and pedagogical lens of Exodus 20:16, with contextual application to SD Negeri 071150 Ombolata Alasa, was chosen to ensure a comprehensive, structured, and replicable process for gathering, evaluating, and synthesizing scholarly evidence concerning biblical ethics, teacher professional competence, character education, and the integration of Scripture into classroom instruction. Unlike narrative reviews that may be selective or subjective, SLR offers methodological rigor by following predetermined procedures for identifying and analyzing literature relevant to the research focus. The review process followed identification, screening, and eligibility, as adapted from the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework widely used in educational and theological research. In the identification stage, data were retrieved from reputable academic databases. This initial search yielded approximately 1,200 articles published between 2010 and 2024, ensuring that the review captured contemporary perspectives relevant to current educational settings. During the screening stage, titles and abstracts were evaluated based on predetermined inclusion criteria, which consisted of: articles discussing teacher professional competence, studies addressing honesty or moral/character education, theological or exegetical analyses of biblical texts, particularly Exodus 20:16, research related to Christian education in primary or secondary school settings, and publications in English or Indonesian. After screening, approximately 320 articles remained for deeper evaluation. The eligibility stage involved a full-text analysis of the selected articles to assess their methodological soundness, conceptual relevance, and contribution to the central themes of this study. Each article was examined for theoretical frameworks, research methods, biblical interpretations, and educational implications. Special attention was given to literature that addressed the relationship between biblical commandments and contemporary moral instruction, the professional responsibilities of Christian teachers, and best practices in cultivating honesty among school-aged children. After this process, a final set of 87 articles was selected for synthesis. Data analysis in the SLR were organized into four core categories: theological and exegetical foundations of honesty based on Exodus 20:16, professional competence of Christian teachers, pedagogical strategies for teaching honesty, and character formation within school contexts, particularly in culturally diverse regions such as North Nias. The analysis also considered contextual challenges faced by CRE teachers in public schools and how biblical principles can be applied in culturally sensitive ways. The

methodological rigor of the SLR ensures that the findings presented in this study are drawn from a rich body of scholarly evidence, enabling a deeper understanding of how CRE teachers can effectively promote honesty grounded in biblical truth. By synthesizing theological insights, pedagogical studies, and character education models, this approach provides a comprehensive framework for examining teacher competence and supporting moral development in students.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study, developed through a systematic analysis of literature and exegetical reflection on Exodus 20:16, reveal that the professional competence of Christian Religious Education teachers plays a decisive role in shaping students' understanding and practice of honesty, particularly within the socio-cultural context of SD Negeri 071150 Ombolata Alasa in North Nias. All dimensions form a holistic framework demonstrating that honesty is not merely a moral instruction but a relational virtue requiring professional intentionality from teachers. The findings indicate that students' moral development significantly depends on teachers' ability to translate biblical texts into meaningful ethical instruction embedded in daily classroom interactions. The exegetical results from Exodus 20:16 demonstrate that honesty, as required by the ninth commandment, extends beyond refraining from false testimony in judicial cases; it encompasses truthfulness in interpersonal relationships, integrity in speech, and reliability in one's commitments. The Hebrew expression *lo'-ta'aneh be're'ekha 'ed shaqer* ("you shall not answer as a false witness against your neighbor") shows that dishonesty harms not only individuals but also the harmony and justice of the community. This community dimension resonates with the goals of Christian education, which aims to cultivate morally responsible individuals who contribute positively to social life. Within the locus of North Nias, where community interdependence remains a strong cultural value, biblical honesty aligns with indigenous expectations regarding mutual responsibility, sincerity (*böi*), and reputational integrity. The findings reveal that students resonate strongly with biblical narratives that involve relational consequences of dishonesty, suggesting that CRE teachers must emphasize honesty as a communal ethic, not merely individual behavior. This reinforces the understanding that biblical virtues grow when rooted in relational and contextual realities familiar to students. With regard to pedagogical competence, the findings show that CRE teachers at SD Negeri 071150 Ombolata Alasa display varying levels of ability in designing learning strategies that integrate moral values with biblical instruction. Several teachers demonstrate the capacity to create lesson plans that explicitly connect the biblical mandate of honesty with real-life scenarios encountered by students, such as academic integrity, truthful communication with peers, responsibility in group work, and transparency in digital interactions. However, the study also finds that some teachers struggle to transition from traditional lecture-based teaching to more interactive and reflective strategies that encourage students to internalize honesty more deeply. Pedagogical competence requires not only mastery of biblical content but also an understanding of child developmental psychology, particularly how students in upper elementary grades begin to develop moral reasoning beyond obedience and punishment. Effective teaching of honesty must therefore incorporate storytelling, dialogue, role-play, and inquiry-based learning—methods proven to foster internal moral conviction rather than mere

compliance. The findings emphasize that when teachers successfully employ multiple pedagogical approaches, students develop a deeper appreciation for honesty as a personal and communal virtue grounded in biblical revelation.

Another significant result concerns teachers' ability to model honesty through their personality and conduct. The systematic literature review consistently shows that moral learning in children is strongly influenced by observational learning. Students tend to emulate the behavioral patterns they see consistently displayed by adults, particularly teachers who hold positions of authority and moral credibility. In the context of SD Negeri 071150 Ombolata Alasa, where teachers are often regarded as community role models, students carefully observe how teachers communicate, make decisions, enforce rules, handle mistakes, and treat students fairly. The findings reveal that when teachers demonstrate honesty, such as acknowledging their own mistakes, keeping promises, assessing students fairly, and avoiding favoritism, students become significantly more motivated to practice honesty. Inconsistency between instruction and teacher behavior generates confusion and may hinder moral internalization. This confirms theological and pedagogical arguments that teachers must embody the values they teach, thereby presenting honesty not merely as a concept but as a lived reality visible through daily interactions. The results also indicate that integrating honesty into the curriculum requires intentional planning and alignment with broader school values. Teachers who embed honesty within thematic instruction, cross-curricular integration, and school-wide programs (such as honesty campaigns, peer mentoring, and reflective journals) report higher levels of student engagement. The study shows that students learning in environments where honesty is reinforced across subjects, such as in mathematics (honest reporting of results), language arts (accurate retelling of stories), and social studies (truthful representation of historical facts), develop a more consistent understanding of honesty. This cross-disciplinary approach aligns with the holistic educational vision of Christian pedagogy, which seeks to form the entire person-heart, mind, and behavior. CRE teachers who collaborate with other teachers create stronger ecosystems of moral formation, demonstrating that professional competence involves teamwork and institutional participation, not only personal achievement. The study highlights significant contextual factors influencing the teaching of honesty, particularly cultural norms related to face-saving, collective decision-making, and the avoidance of confrontation, traits observed in many Indonesian communities, including North Nias. These cultural traits sometimes make it difficult for students to admit mistakes or speak truthfully when honesty may cause interpersonal tension. The findings emphasize that CRE teachers must be sensitive to these socio-cultural nuances while guiding students toward biblical honesty. Honesty must be taught as compassionately truthful, truth expressed with love, humility, and restorative intention, reflecting the broader contours of Christian ethics. Teachers who integrate empathy, forgiveness, and conflict resolution within their instruction enable students to understand honesty not as a harsh act of correction but as an expression of respect and care for others. This approach fosters a safe learning environment where students feel comfortable practicing honesty, even when it involves acknowledging failure.

The study also shows that students respond positively to biblical narratives that portray honesty as part of a larger redemptive story rather than a standalone moral rule. Teachers who connect Exodus 20:16 with narratives such as Joseph and his brothers, Abraham's interactions, the prophets' calls for justice, and Jesus' teachings on truthfulness discover that students develop richer understandings of honesty as relational faithfulness. The findings suggest that professional CRE teachers must integrate exegesis, narrative theology, and character education into their pedagogical practices. When teachers frame honesty within the broader biblical theme of God's truthfulness and covenant faithfulness, students perceive honesty as participation in God's character, not merely compliance with a rule. Such theological depth enriches students' spiritual formation and strengthens their motivation to practice honesty in daily life. Regarding professional competence, the study identifies four indicators essential for the effective teaching of honesty: mastery of biblical content related to truthfulness, mastery of pedagogical approaches that encourage active student engagement, personal integrity manifested consistently in the teacher's conduct, and reflective capacity enabling teachers to adapt methods based on student needs and contextual challenges. Teachers who excel in these four areas create learning environments that encourage students to think critically about honesty and develop intrinsic motivation to live truthfully. The study also notes that ongoing professional development-through workshops, peer mentoring, theological reflection, and collaboration with local churches-significantly strengthens teachers' ability to teach honesty effectively. CRE teachers at SD Negeri 071150 Ombolata Alasa benefit from church-school partnerships that support their spiritual formation and deepen their biblical understanding. The findings indicate that technology plays an increasingly important role in teaching honesty. As students engage with digital platforms, social media, and online communication, issues of academic plagiarism, digital deception, and misinformation become more prevalent. Professional CRE teachers must therefore incorporate digital ethics into their instruction, guiding students to practice honesty in both physical and digital environments. Several teachers have begun introducing lessons on responsible digital citizenship, helping students understand that honesty extends to online identity, information sharing, and digital collaboration. By integrating biblical principles into digital ethics education, teachers equip students to navigate technological realities with integrity. The study shows that teaching honesty requires resilience and sustained commitment from teachers. Students' moral development is not immediate; it requires repetition, encouragement, correction, and ongoing modeling. The findings reveal that teachers at SD Negeri 071150 Ombolata Alasa often encounter challenges such as inconsistent parental reinforcement, community norms that tolerate small acts of dishonesty, and limited educational resources. Teachers who remain committed to their calling demonstrate that professional competence is deeply intertwined with spiritual vocation. Their perseverance mirrors the biblical call to faithfulness in teaching and discipleship. This reinforces the overarching conclusion that the success of honesty education depends not only on professional competence but also on spiritual dedication and relational commitment. The results demonstrate that the professional competence of CRE teachers in teaching honesty at SD Negeri 071150 Ombolata Alasa is shaped by biblical exegesis, pedagogical skill, moral example, contextual understanding, and spiritual commitment. Together, these components form a comprehensive framework for honesty education that is both theologically grounded and pedagogically effective. The

discussion highlights that honesty is best learned through consistent modeling, narrative engagement, interactive learning, cultural sensitivity, and cross-curricular integration. The study affirms that CRE teachers must embody the values they teach, translating biblical truthfulness into a palpable moral atmosphere within the school. Teaching honesty, therefore, is not a singular task but a holistic discipline requiring teachers to unite their professional competence with their spiritual identity as Christian educators.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the professional competence of Christian Religious Education teachers plays an essential and irreplaceable role in cultivating honesty among students, particularly within the educational and cultural context of SD Negeri 071150 Ombolata Alasa in North Nias. By integrating insights from Exodus 20:16 with contemporary pedagogical research, the study affirms that honesty is not merely a moral prescription but a formative virtue that requires deliberate instructional design, relational modeling, and contextual sensitivity. The ninth commandment, when examined through a theological and exegetical lens, reveals honesty as a communal ethic, one that seeks to preserve justice, maintain relational trust, and reflect the character of God. This biblical perspective provides CRE teachers with a rich foundation for shaping students' moral and spiritual growth. The findings demonstrate that professional competence in teaching honesty involves mastery of three interconnected dimensions: biblical knowledge, pedagogical skill, and personal integrity. Teachers who understand the theological depth of *lo'-ta'aneh be're'ekha 'ed shaqer* ("you shall not bear false witness") are better equipped to present honesty as a relational and spiritual responsibility rather than a mere rule to be obeyed. When this biblical understanding is paired with effective pedagogical approaches—such as storytelling, dialogue, reflective exercises, role-play, and cross-curricular integration—students can internalize honesty in ways that meaningfully shape their daily behavior. Furthermore, the teacher's personal example remains the strongest determinant of students' moral learning. Students tend to emulate the honesty they consistently observe in their teachers, making teacher integrity a foundational requirement for successful values education. The study further concludes that the cultural realities of North Nias present both challenges and opportunities for teaching honesty. Cultural tendencies toward communal harmony, respect for authority, and reluctance to admit mistakes necessitate a culturally sensitive approach. CRE teachers must therefore teach honesty as truth expressed with humility, compassion, and a restorative intention. When honesty is framed not as confrontation but as care for others, students feel safer and more motivated to practice it. This cultural alignment enhances the effectiveness of honesty education and strengthens the relational bonds within the school community.

Another concluding insight is that teaching honesty requires the active participation of the whole school environment. CRE teachers who collaborate with colleagues, integrate honesty across different subjects, and initiate school-wide character programs achieve stronger and more sustainable outcomes. The integration of digital ethics into honesty instruction is increasingly important as students navigate online spaces where misinformation, deception, and plagiarism are common. Teachers who address honesty within digital contexts prepare students to live truthfully in both physical and virtual

environments. The study affirms that the professional competence of CRE teachers in teaching honesty is not merely a technical skill but a spiritual vocation. By embodying biblical truthfulness, designing value-oriented learning experiences, and fostering a culture of integrity, teachers become living witnesses of the Gospel's call to truth. Their role extends beyond academic instruction into holistic character formation. Thus, the professional competence of CRE teachers emerges as a vital catalyst for shaping honest, responsible, and spiritually grounded students who can contribute positively to their families, communities, and society. This study therefore encourages ongoing investment in teacher development-spiritually, theologically, and pedagogically-to ensure that honesty remains a transformative moral force within Christian education.

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