

Professional Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Explaining Hope in Prayer: An Exegetical Study of Genesis 48:21 at SDN 173318 Lumban Barat

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the professional competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in explaining the theological meaning of hope in prayer, using Genesis 48:21 as an exegetical foundation and focusing on its pedagogical application at SDN 173318 Lumban Barat. Genesis 48:21 captures Jacob's final words to Joseph, a declaration filled with eschatological confidence that "God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers." This verse embodies hope rooted in divine companionship, covenantal fidelity, and forward-looking faith, elements essential for shaping students' spiritual understanding. Employing a qualitative descriptive method supported by scriptural exegesis and educational literature, this research analyzes how CRE teachers translate the theological insights of the text into meaningful classroom instruction. Data were gathered through observations, interviews, and document analysis to explore teachers' pedagogical competence in presenting prayer as an act of trusting God's ongoing guidance. The findings reveal that professionally competent CRE teachers demonstrate three core capabilities: (1) exegetical clarity, enabling them to articulate the biblical concept of hope with accuracy and relevance; (2) pedagogical integration, shown through the use of storytelling, reflective questions, and contextualized examples that connect students' lived experiences with Jacob's faith; and (3) spiritual modeling, where teachers' personal prayer life and hopeful attitudes reinforce students' understanding of prayer as relational and future-oriented. The study concludes that integrating exegetical insight with pedagogical skill significantly enhances students' comprehension of hope in prayer, contributing to their spiritual maturity and emotional resilience amid life's uncertainties.

Keywords: Professional Competence, Christian Religious Education, Hope

INTRODUCTION

The development of Christian Religious Education (CRE) in Indonesian elementary schools increasingly requires teachers to embody strong professional competence, particularly in communicating spiritual values that shape students' worldview and faith identity. One of the most crucial aspects of CRE pedagogy is teaching students about hope in prayer, a

concept that forms the foundation of Christian spirituality and ethical resilience. In the context of SDN 173318 Lumban Barat, where students come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and often face emotional and environmental challenges, the role of the Christian Religious Education teacher becomes even more significant. Teachers are expected not only to deliver cognitive biblical knowledge but also to guide students to experience prayer as a source of assurance, strength, and trust in God's future guidance. This pedagogical responsibility requires a profound level of professional competence, integrating theological understanding, pedagogical skill, and spiritual maturity. The emphasis on hope in prayer resonates deeply with the biblical narrative in Genesis 48:21, where Jacob, nearing the end of his life, addresses Joseph with a statement of profound theological and emotional meaning: *"Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you and take you back to the land of your fathers."* This verse encapsulates a multi-layered message that is vital for pedagogical reflection. First, Jacob acknowledges the reality of human limitation ("I am about to die"), reminding believers that earthly life is finite. Second, he affirms God's consistent faithfulness ("God will be with you"), expressing a foundational assurance central to biblical hope. Third, he articulates a future promise connected to divine purpose ("take you back to the land of your fathers"), presenting hope not as passive waiting but as trust in God's unfolding plan. The Hebrew expression *'elohim yihyeh 'immakem* emphasizes the continuous, covenantal presence of God, which becomes the anchor of hope even in the face of uncertainty. The verse thus provides a rich theological framework for teachers to explain how prayer cultivates hope rooted in God's abiding companionship. Applying this exegetical understanding to the pedagogical context at SDN 173318 Lumban Barat highlights the strategic role of the CRE teacher. Professional competence in this setting includes the ability to translate biblical truths into developmentally appropriate language that resonates with students' daily experiences. Many students in the region may encounter anxieties related to family instability, academic pressure, or socio-economic insecurity. Therefore, teaching them about hope through prayer is not merely a theological exercise but a pastoral intervention that nurtures emotional resilience and character formation. Teachers must be able to communicate that prayer is not only a ritual but a relational dialogue with God who listens, accompanies, and guides.

Professional competence in CRE requires the integration of pedagogical clarity, such as selecting appropriate teaching strategies, using narrative methods, and facilitating reflective practices that help young learners internalize spiritual truths. Teachers must also model sincerity and consistency in their own prayer lives so that students can witness authentic expressions of faith. This embodiment of professional and spiritual integrity aligns with the broader goals of Indonesian Christian education, which aims to cultivate learners who are spiritually grounded, morally responsible, and hopeful about their future. Genesis 48:21 becomes a theological lens through which teachers can interpret and teach hope in prayer. The verse's emphasis on divine presence and future restoration offers a powerful message for students at SDN 173318 Lumban Barat, many of whom need reassurance and guidance in navigating life's uncertainties. A CRE teacher with strong professional competence can bridge the biblical narrative with the lived reality of the classroom, enabling students to understand prayer as an active expression of trust in God's promises. This study therefore explores how the professional competence of

Christian Religious Education teachers can effectively convey the meaning of hope in prayer to elementary students, informed by the exegetical richness of Genesis 48:21.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design with a focused exegetical approach to explore how Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SDN 173318 Lumban Barat demonstrate professional competence in explaining “hope in prayer” as reflected in Genesis 48:21. The qualitative design was chosen because the research sought to understand the meaning, depth, and pedagogical processes through which teachers interpret and communicate biblical hope to students in real classroom contexts. The descriptive orientation allowed the researcher to portray the natural setting of teaching activities, highlight individual interpretations, and provide a holistic account of instructional practices related to prayer and spirituality. Data were collected from: classroom observations and semi-structured interviews, also document analysis. Observations were conducted to examine how CE teachers integrated the theological message of Genesis 48:21, Jacob’s assurance of God’s presence and future hope, into instructional activities. The observation process focused on teaching behaviors, clarity of biblical explanation, pedagogical strategies, student engagement, and the extent to which teachers connected scriptural hope with students’ everyday prayer life. The observations were carried out over four weeks, covering both theoretical instruction and devotional practices embedded in the school’s routine. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five CRE teachers, allowing the researcher to explore their theological understanding of Genesis 48:21, their perceptions of hope in prayer, and how these insights were transformed into pedagogical practice. Interview questions addressed teachers’ approaches to biblical interpretation, learning objectives, instructional planning, challenges in teaching spiritual concepts to elementary-level students, and their reflections on students’ responses. Interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes each. These steps provided supporting evidence regarding how hope-centered prayer instruction was structured, the theological content teachers prioritized, and the extent to which biblical hope was integrated across formal and informal learning settings. Document analysis also helped triangulate data obtained from observations and interviews. To enrich the theological foundation of the study, a biblical exegesis of Genesis 48:21 was conducted using historical-critical and literary methodologies. This exegetical component focused on understanding the original context of Jacob’s blessing, the covenantal promise embedded in his words, and its relevance for contemporary Christian educational settings. The exegetical findings then informed the interpretation of teacher practices at SDN 173318 Lumban Barat, enabling the study to link ancient biblical meaning with modern classroom realities. Data analysis followed the data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The researcher coded the data inductively, identified emerging themes related to professional competence, instructional clarity, student formation, theological accuracy, and integration of hope in prayer. Ethical considerations were observed by obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and respecting the sacred nature of prayer activities within the school setting. This methodological framework allowed the study to produce a rigorous and contextually grounded

understanding of how CRE teachers professionally communicate biblical hope to young learners.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SDN 173318 Lumban Barat possess a foundational theological understanding of Genesis 48:21, particularly the message of hope embedded in Jacob's statement to Joseph: *"I am about to die, but God will be with you and take you back to the land of your fathers."* Interviews revealed that teachers consistently interpreted this verse as a declaration of God's continuous presence and covenantal guidance, not merely a parental affirmation. This theological insight forms the cornerstone of professional competence, as teachers must accurately interpret Scripture before communicating it to students. Observations showed that teachers were able to articulate that hope in prayer is rooted not in human desire but in trusting the God who accompanies His people through every transition. Their explanations highlighted that Jacob's words represent a pastoral assurance that God's promises transcend generations. However, the depth of theological articulation varied among teachers; some provided more exegetically rich explanations while others offered simpler moral lessons. Yet, all teachers successfully emphasized that authentic hope in prayer must be grounded in awareness of God's faithful presence. The results further show that teachers demonstrated professional pedagogical competence by employing various instructional strategies that made the theological message accessible to elementary students. Classroom observations revealed the use of narrative-based teaching, where teachers retold the story of Jacob and Joseph using simplified language, gestures, and storytelling techniques to help students visualize the context of Genesis 48:21. Teachers also incorporated guided prayer practices, enabling students to experience hope in prayer rather than merely understanding it cognitively. Analogies were frequently used, such as comparing God's guidance to a parent accompanying a child on a journey, which helped students relate spiritual concepts to daily life. Several teachers also employed learning aids including biblical illustrations, verse posters, and short reflective worksheets that invited students to connect the narrative to personal experiences such as fear, anxiety, or future aspirations. These strategies reflect a high level of pedagogical awareness, demonstrating the teachers' ability to translate complex biblical themes into developmentally appropriate spiritual lessons.

Student Responses and Indicators of Spiritual Formation

The discussion of student responses shows that the pedagogical practices used by the teachers had a meaningful impact on students' spiritual understanding and emotional development. Many students displayed increased attentiveness and emotional resonance when teachers connected Jacob's expression of hope to concrete situations such as preparing for exams, facing family challenges, or making future plans. Through journal reflections collected as part of classroom activities, students expressed newly formed insights such as believing that God is always with them, trusting God during difficulties, and understanding prayer as a source of comfort and confidence. Teachers also observed behavioral changes, such as students voluntarily praying before activities, showing

greater calmness during stressful school tasks, and sharing testimonies about moments when they felt God's help. These outcomes reflect the success of teachers' efforts in integrating biblical truth with practical life lessons. The consistency of student engagement demonstrates that effective teaching rooted in sound exegesis has a direct influence on students' spiritual formation and understanding of hope. The results also reveal several contextual challenges. Some teachers struggled with limited access to systematic theological resources, which influenced the depth of their biblical explanation. The school's relatively large class sizes sometimes hindered personalized guidance for students who required more spiritual or emotional support. Students came from diverse family backgrounds, and not all were familiar with prayer practices at home, requiring teachers to invest more time in basic spiritual instruction. Time constraints within the school schedule also limited silent reflection or extended devotional activities. Nevertheless, teachers adapted effectively by simplifying theological concepts, using relatable illustrations, and maximizing brief prayer moments within daily routines. Their adaptive strategies reflect strong professional competence, showing that effective CRE teaching requires not only theological skill but also flexibility, empathy, and practical improvisation.

Alignment of Findings with Exegetical Insights from Genesis 48:21

The discussion reveals a strong alignment between teachers' instructional practices and the exegetical meaning of Genesis 48:21. The key themes of divine accompaniment, covenantal hope, and intergenerational promise were consistently embedded in teachers' explanations and learning activities. By presenting hope as a response to God's faithfulness rather than positive thinking, teachers helped students understand the spiritual essence of prayer. The integration of narrative, prayer practice, and reflective activities mirrors the relational nature of Jacob's blessing. Theologically, the study confirms that competent CRE teachers bridge exegesis with pedagogy: they do not merely teach biblical information but foster spiritual imagination, inviting students to trust God as Jacob trusted Him. This alignment demonstrates holistic professionalism, rooted in Scripture, expressed through effective pedagogy, and producing observable spiritual growth in students.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the professional competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in explaining hope in prayer, as reflected in Genesis 48:21, is demonstrated through a robust combination of theological clarity, pedagogical effectiveness, and responsiveness to students' spiritual needs. The exegetical exploration of Genesis 48:21 shows that Jacob's blessing to Joseph is fundamentally a proclamation of hope anchored in God's enduring presence and covenantal faithfulness. Teachers at SDN 173318 Lumban Barat successfully integrated this core theological message into their instructional practices, emphasizing that genuine hope in prayer is not rooted in human desire but in trusting a God who accompanies His people through every stage of life. Their ability to communicate this message reveals a solid foundation of biblical understanding, which is essential for maintaining professional integrity in CRE instruction. Teachers demonstrated competence by adopting age-appropriate strategies such as storytelling, guided prayer,

analogies, and reflective activities that made the theological concept of hope accessible and meaningful to elementary students. These strategies not only enhanced comprehension but also facilitated emotional engagement, allowing students to internalize prayer as a source of comfort, guidance, and assurance. The evidence of increased student attentiveness, deeper personal reflections, and observable behavioral changes indicates that the teaching practices effectively supported students' spiritual formation. The integration of biblical truth with real-life application affirmed that professional competence in CRE teaching extends beyond transferring knowledge; it involves shaping character, nurturing faith, and cultivating resilience grounded in God's promises. The study also highlights contextual challenges such as limited theological resources, diverse student backgrounds, and structural constraints within the school environment. However, the ability of teachers to creatively adapt, through simplified explanations, relatable illustrations, and flexible prayer moments, demonstrates strong adaptive professional competence. These adaptations reveal that effective CRE teaching is deeply relational and requires sensitivity to students' developmental stages and spiritual readiness. The findings affirm that the professional competence of CRE teachers is most evident when exegesis and pedagogy converge to produce transformative learning experiences. By faithfully interpreting Genesis 48:21 and integrating its themes into classroom practice, teachers played a significant role in nurturing students' understanding of hope in prayer as an expression of trust in God's faithful presence. This study underscores the importance of equipping CRE teachers with ongoing theological training and pedagogical development to ensure that biblical teachings continue to be communicated with clarity, relevance, and spiritual depth. Such competence is essential for shaping students who not only understand the meaning of hope but also learn to embody it in their personal journeys of faith.

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