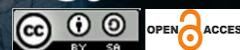




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Mature Personal Character Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in the Divine Formation Process: An Exegetical Study of Genesis 35:9-10 at SD Negeri 091258 Bangun-Simalungun

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the mature personal character competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers through the lens of divine formation as reflected in Genesis 35:9-10. The passage, which recounts God's reaffirmation of Jacob's identity as Israel, provides a theological framework for understanding how spiritual transformation shapes the character and professional integrity of teachers serving in contemporary educational contexts. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the research integrates biblical exegesis with field-based inquiry conducted at SD Negeri 091258 Bangun-Simalungun, a multicultural public elementary school in Indonesia. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis involving two CRE teachers. Exegetical findings highlight three core principles of divine formation-identity renewal, divine encounter, and perseverance-that serve as interpretive lenses for analyzing teacher maturity. Field results demonstrate that teachers who internalize a God-shaped identity show greater consistency, emotional stability, and authenticity in their classroom interactions. Spiritual disciplines such as prayer and Scripture reflection function as ongoing "divine encounters" that strengthen teachers' moral clarity and capacity for empathy. Perseverance emerges as a key characteristic, expressed through patience, resilience, and commitment to addressing students' academic and behavioral needs. The study concludes that mature personal character competence in CRE teachers is not solely a professional construct but a spiritual reality formed through continuous engagement with God's transformative work. These insights underscore the importance of integrating spiritual formation into teacher development programs. By embodying the values demonstrated in Jacob's transformation, CRE teachers can more effectively guide students toward holistic growth within Indonesia's pluralistic educational settings.

Keywords: *Personal Character, Christian Religious Education, Divine Formation*

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary educational contexts, especially within Indonesian public schools, Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers are increasingly expected to demonstrate personal maturity, moral consistency, and spiritual depth that can guide students toward holistic formation. As education systems confront rapid cultural shifts, digital disruptions, and moral fragmentation, the role of CRE teachers becomes more than merely transferring biblical knowledge; they are called to embody character competence shaped by divine formation. This study locates such formation within the theological framework of Genesis 35:9-10, where God reaffirms Jacob's identity transformation—from Jacob, "the deceiver," to Israel, "the one who struggles with God"—as a paradigm of mature personal character shaped by divine intervention. This passage offers a powerful theological foundation for understanding the inner maturity required of CRE teachers who serve in pluralistic public schools such as SD Negeri 091258 Bangun-Simalungun. Genesis 35:9-10 stands as a pivotal moment in the narrative of Jacob's spiritual journey. After years marked by conflict, deceit, familial brokenness, and divine encounters, Jacob returns to Bethel, the place where he first experienced God's revelation. In this renewal encounter, God not only blesses him but reaffirms his new name and calling. The passage highlights two formative processes: divine visitation (*"God appeared to Jacob again"*) and divine affirmation (*"Your name shall not be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name"*). Theologically, these movements emphasize that character maturity is not merely the result of human effort but a dynamic interaction between divine shaping and human responsiveness. In the context of CRE teachers, this exegetical insight underscores that mature personal character competence is grounded in a continuous process of spiritual formation initiated and sustained by God. In Indonesian Christian education discourse, teacher competence has generally been framed around pedagogical, professional, social, and personal dimensions. However, the personal competence of CRE teachers possesses a distinctive spiritual essence, as it is expected to reflect Christlike maturity, emotional stability, moral integrity, humility, resilience, and spiritual wisdom. These qualities directly resonate with the transformation of Jacob into Israel, a narrative that illustrates the maturation of faith, the deepening of identity, and the cultivation of ethical courage. As teachers who carry the responsibility of shaping students' moral and spiritual awareness, CRE teachers must themselves undergo an inner formation that aligns their identity, motivations, and practices with divine purposes.

The school setting of SD Negeri 091258 Bangun-Simalungun represents a multicultural and multireligious learning environment characteristic of the Simalungun region. CRE teachers working in such contexts must demonstrate maturity not only in teaching Christian doctrine but also in navigating cultural diversity, social harmony, and interreligious sensitivity. Their character maturity becomes a model for students who observe how teachers embody values such as patience, empathy, self-control, authenticity, and accountability. Such maturity is especially crucial in contexts where students often face various emotional, familial, and socio-economic challenges that require teachers to serve as stabilizing, nurturing, and morally grounded figures. By drawing exegetical insights from Genesis 35:9-10, this study highlights how Jacob's renewed identity provides a theological blueprint for understanding the personal

character maturity required of CRE teachers. The divine formation process in the text—marked by encounter, blessing, correction, and calling—mirrors the spiritual formation journey expected of teachers who must align their character with God’s transformative work. This emphasis moves beyond general moral expectations toward a deeply rooted spiritual identity that shapes behavior, attitudes, and ethical decision-making. This article aims to conduct an exegetical examination of Genesis 35:9-10 to uncover principles of divine character formation, analyze how these principles inform the mature personal character competence expected of CRE teachers, and contextualize these insights within the lived experience of teachers at SD Negeri 091258 Bangun-Simalungun. Through this approach, the study bridges biblical theology with contemporary pedagogical demands, offering an integrated understanding of the spiritual and professional identity of CRE teachers. Ultimately, this research argues that the divine formation process exemplified in Jacob’s transformation is foundational for cultivating mature personal character competence, enabling CRE teachers to faithfully and effectively guide students amid the complexities of modern education.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design that integrates biblical exegesis with educational field analysis to explore the mature personal character competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in relation to the divine formation process reflected in Genesis 35:9–10. The approach was selected because the core objective of the study is to understand meaning, interpret lived experiences, and connect theological insights with practical realities within a specific educational setting. Through this design, the research emphasizes depth, interpretation, and contextual understanding rather than statistical generalization. The first methodological component consisted of a textual-exegetical analysis of Genesis 35:9-10. This step involved close reading of the Hebrew text, examination of literary structure, exploration of key theological themes, and consultation of reputable biblical commentaries and scholarly works. Special attention was given to the narrative progression, semantic nuances of the name change from Jacob to Israel, and the theological implications of divine encounter and identity reaffirmation. This exegetical work served as the foundation for identifying principles of divine formation—encounter, affirmation, correction, and transformation—which subsequently informed the interpretive framework for analyzing teacher character competence. The second component involved a field-based descriptive inquiry at SD Negeri 091258 Bangun-Simalungun. This school was selected as the research locus due to its multicultural environment and its distinctive demands on CRE teachers who must demonstrate maturity in navigating social dynamics and religious diversity. Data were collected through: semi-structured interviews with CRE teachers to explore their perceptions, experiences, and spiritual formation processes; non-participant observations of teaching interactions, focusing on behaviors reflecting mature personal character such as patience, self-control, empathy, responsibility, and moral integrity; and teacher self-reflection journals, to identify how spiritual maturity and character competence are integrated into teaching practice. Participants consisted of two CRE teachers currently serving at the school. Purposive sampling was applied to select participants with appropriate experience and willingness to provide in-depth reflections. Ethical considerations were ensured by obtaining informed consent, maintaining

anonymity, and acknowledging the voluntary nature of participation. The research adhered to ethical guidelines for studies involving human subjects and respected the religious and cultural sensitivities of the school community. This integration allowed the study to draw meaningful connections between divine formation in Scripture and the personal character maturity demonstrated by CRE teachers in the field. This methodological framework enabled the study to holistically examine how the divine formation process reflected in Jacob's transformation informs the mature personal character competence of CRE teachers at SD Negeri 091258 Bangun-Simalungun.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The integration of exegetical insights from Genesis 35:9-10 with empirical data from SD Negeri 091258 Bangun-Simalungun revealed three major thematic findings regarding the mature personal character competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers. These findings illustrate how the divine formation process exemplified in Jacob's transformation provides a meaningful framework for understanding and assessing the maturity of CRE teachers in real educational contexts. The exegetical analysis highlighted that in Genesis 35:9-10, God's reaffirmation of Jacob's new identity as Israel signifies not merely a name change but the establishment of a renewed inner orientation. Jacob's transition from deceit to spiritual resilience reflects a deep identity shift that redefines his purpose and ethical grounding. Field data revealed that CRE teachers at SD Negeri 091258 Bangun experience a similar form of identity formation rooted in spiritual awareness and commitment to God's calling. Interviews indicated that teachers understood their identity as educators not just professionally, but theologically, as individuals shaped by God's ongoing work. Teachers explained that their sense of calling (*"panggilan ilahi"*) strengthened their self-understanding and guided how they navigated classroom challenges. This identity renewal manifested in greater consistency between personal faith and professional responsibilities. Observations showed that teachers who consciously grounded their identity in spiritual formation demonstrated calmer responses to student misbehavior, more empathetic communication, and greater emotional resilience. Thus, Jacob's identity transformation provides a theological blueprint for understanding the internal maturity that CRE teachers must develop to serve effectively in diverse school environments.

Genesis 35:9 emphasizes that "God appeared to Jacob again," indicating a reaffirming divine encounter that stabilizes Jacob after a long period of conflict and personal struggle. This encounter offered reassurance, correction, and renewed direction. The field findings revealed a parallel dynamic in the spiritual lives of the teachers. Many referenced personal devotional practices-prayer, Scripture reflection, and worship-as moments of "encounter" that strengthened their emotional stability and moral clarity. These spiritual encounters were consistently linked to the teachers' ability to manage frustration, remain patient with students, and make ethical decisions in challenging moments. Observations noted that teachers who practiced regular spiritual disciplines displayed greater composure during unexpected classroom disruptions, indicating that divine encounters function as reservoirs of inner peace and self-control. This supports the exegetical argument that divine presence is formative, enabling teachers to embody maturity similar

to the emotional and moral steadiness seen in Jacob after his encounter with God. The blessing and reaffirmation of Jacob's identity in Genesis 35:10 imply a sustained journey of perseverance rather than an instantaneous transformation. Jacob's maturity unfolds through ongoing struggles and obedience to God's direction. In the field context, teachers similarly demonstrated perseverance as a key dimension of mature personal character competence. Document analysis and observations identified several consistent traits: patience in guiding slow learners, persistence in addressing recurring behavioral issues, willingness to forgive student mistakes, and commitment to fair and transparent discipline. Teachers frequently emphasized that their perseverance was not merely a professional requirement but an expression of their spiritual formation. Their narratives highlighted that challenges became opportunities for growth, mirroring Jacob's journey of progressive maturation. This perseverance reflects "*hypomonē*"-endurance with purpose-which closely aligns with the divine formation process illustrated in the Genesis text. Teachers who displayed this form of endurance contributed significantly to creating a nurturing and stable learning environment, which is essential for students facing socio-economic or emotional challenges. Thus, character perseverance emerges not only as an indicator of teacher maturity but also as a practical manifestation of divine shaping in everyday educational interactions.

The results confirm that the mature personal character competence of CRE teachers is deeply intertwined with their spiritual formation. The divine formation principles identified in Genesis 35:9-10 - identity renewal, encounters with God, and perseverance - were reflected in real classroom behaviors and teacher narratives at SD Negeri 091258 Bangun-Simalungun. These findings highlight an important implication: CRE teacher competence cannot be understood solely through pedagogical skills; it must also encompass spiritual depth and inner character shaped by divine processes. The results suggest that the cultivation of teacher maturity requires intentional spiritual formation programs within Christian education and professional development frameworks. Schools and religious institutions should consider creating spaces that nurture identity awareness, encourage spiritual practices, and strengthen resilience, enabling teachers to embody maturity consistent with biblical principles. The findings affirm that the divine formation process embodied in Jacob's transformation provides a powerful theological and practical model for shaping the mature personal character competence of CRE teachers.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the mature personal character competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers is deeply rooted in a theological framework of divine formation, as exemplified in Genesis 35:9-10. Through an integrated approach combining exegetical analysis and qualitative field data from SD Negeri 091258 Bangun-Simalungun, the research reveals that teacher maturity is not merely a product of professional training but emerges from an inner transformation shaped by divine encounter, identity renewal, and spiritual perseverance. These biblical principles provide a profound foundation for understanding how CRE teachers develop the personal character necessary to serve effectively in contemporary, multicultural educational environments. The reaffirmation of Jacob's identity as Israel in Genesis 35:9-10 illuminates the essential role that identity formation plays in cultivating teacher maturity. Just as Jacob's new name marked a

decisive spiritual reorientation, CRE teachers who anchor their professional identity in a sense of divine calling demonstrate greater consistency, authenticity, and emotional steadiness in their interactions with students. The findings show that when teachers embrace a God-shaped identity, they are better equipped to integrate faith, ethics, and character in their daily responsibilities. The study further highlights the significance of divine encounter as a transformative influence in developing emotional stability and moral clarity. The teachers' reflections on prayer, Scripture meditation, and spiritual devotion reveal that these practices function as contemporary "Bethel moments"-instances where God's presence nurtures calmness, empathy, and ethical decision-making. This mirrors Jacob's renewed strength after encountering God, suggesting that sustained spiritual discipline is essential for teachers facing the complexities of diverse classroom realities. Perseverance also emerges as a defining characteristic of mature personal character competence. Teachers who demonstrated resilience, patience, and consistency in addressing student needs embody the progression of spiritual formation found in Jacob's journey. Their willingness to persist through daily challenges reflects the biblical understanding that transformation unfolds gradually through obedience, endurance, and trust in God's guidance. This perseverance not only enhances the teachers' effectiveness but also provides students with a living example of integrity and steadfastness. This study underscores that the divine formation process is foundational for shaping the mature personal character competence of CRE teachers. The integration of biblical theology with educational practice affirms that spiritual maturity is indispensable for creating nurturing, ethical, and spiritually enriching learning environments. Therefore, efforts to develop CRE teacher competence should prioritize spiritual formation alongside pedagogical and professional development. The findings suggest practical implications for schools, churches, and teacher education institutions. Structured spiritual formation programs, reflective practices, and faith-based mentorship could strengthen teacher identity, deepen their capacity for divine encounter, and build perseverance in their professional calling. By embracing these dimensions, CRE teachers can more fully embody the values of integrity, compassion, and resilience-qualities essential for guiding students through academic, moral, and spiritual growth. In conclusion, the transformation of Jacob into Israel provides a powerful biblical paradigm for understanding the inner maturity required of CRE teachers. By aligning their lives with the divine formation process, teachers become not only transmitters of knowledge but also witnesses of God's transformative work, capable of shaping future generations with wisdom, faithfulness, and Christlike character.

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