

Pedagogical Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Cultivating the Value of Persevering Faith: A Study Based on Genesis 49:18 at SMK Negeri 3 Gunungsitoli

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in cultivating the value of persevering faith among students, grounded in the theological perspective of Book of Genesis 49:18. The research was conducted at SMK Negeri 3 Gunungsitoli, involving 453 Christian students guided by two CRE teachers. Employing a qualitative case study design integrated with a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), data were collected through classroom observations and in-depth interviews. The findings reveal that pedagogical competence significantly shapes students' understanding and internalization of persevering faith as active hope, patient endurance, and sustained trust in God's salvation. Teachers' theological depth in interpreting Genesis 49:18, combined with narrative-based, dialogical, and contextual teaching strategies, enabled students to connect biblical truth with their lived experiences. Relational pedagogy and consistent spiritual modeling by teachers emerged as the most influential factors in nurturing students' spiritual resilience. Students demonstrated growth in cognitive understanding of faith perseverance, affective commitment to God amid personal struggles, and behavioral consistency in spiritual practices. The integration of empirical findings with the SLR confirms that faith perseverance is most effectively cultivated through pedagogies that are biblically grounded, relationally authentic, and contextually adaptive. Despite structural challenges such as large student numbers and limited instructional time, competent pedagogy proved capable of generating meaningful spiritual formation. This study contributes theoretically by integrating Old Testament theology with contemporary Christian pedagogical discourse and offers practical implications for CRE teachers in vocational education to intentionally form persevering faith amid the complex challenges of adolescent life.

Keywords: *Pedagogical Competence, Christian Religious Education, Persevering Faith*

INTRODUCTION

Christian Religious Education (CRE) in contemporary schooling is not merely concerned with the transmission of biblical knowledge but is fundamentally oriented toward the

formation of enduring faith, moral character, and spiritual resilience in students. In the context of Indonesia's pluralistic and rapidly changing educational environment, Christian students are increasingly exposed to academic pressure, moral challenges, digital distractions, and existential uncertainty. These conditions demand not only cognitive competence from students but also spiritual perseverance that enables them to remain steadfast in faith amid adversity. Within this framework, the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education teachers becomes a strategic and irreplaceable factor in cultivating the value of persevering faith among learners (Groome, 2011; Knight, 2006). Pedagogical competence refers to a teacher's ability to design, implement, and evaluate learning in ways that are contextually relevant, developmentally appropriate, and transformational in nature (Creswell, 2014; Slavin, 2018). For CRE teachers, this competence goes beyond instructional technique; it includes theological depth, spiritual modeling, narrative communication, pastoral sensitivity, and the capacity to translate biblical truths into students' lived experiences. The cultivation of faith perseverance is therefore not merely a theological objective but also a pedagogical outcome that must be intentionally formed through reflective, dialogical, and contextual teaching strategies.

This study is grounded in the theological insight of Book of Genesis 49:18, a short yet profound confession uttered by Jacob: *"I wait for your salvation, O Lord."* This verse emerges in the middle of Jacob's prophetic blessings over his sons and stands as an explicit expression of hope, dependence, and perseverance amid uncertainty. Exegetically, the Hebrew verb *qiwwîti* ("I wait" or "I hope") conveys an active, enduring trust rather than passive resignation (Wenham, 2008). It reflects a posture of faith that remains steadfast despite delayed fulfillment or unresolved struggle. The object of this hope is *yeshu'ateka* ("Your salvation"), emphasizing that perseverance is anchored not in human strength but in God's redemptive faithfulness. Genesis 49:18 provides a powerful foundation for shaping students' understanding of faith as a dynamic journey marked by endurance, expectation, and reliance on God. Faith, in this biblical sense, is not merely doctrinal assent but a lived commitment sustained through trials and temporal uncertainty (Osborne, 2010; Wright, 2012). Therefore, teaching perseverance of faith is not achieved through cognitive instruction alone but through pedagogical processes that integrate biblical reflection, moral formation, emotional engagement, and spiritual practice. In the vocational school context, where students are prepared for direct engagement with the world of work and social reality, the need for persevering faith becomes even more critical. Students at SMK level often face identity struggles, economic pressure, and anxieties about future employment. These realities can weaken spiritual commitment if not accompanied by strong faith formation. At SMK Negeri 3 Gunungsitoli, where 453 students are Christian and are guided by two CRE teachers, the challenge of nurturing persevering faith is both extensive and complex. Class sizes, diverse spiritual maturity levels, and limited instructional time demand a high level of pedagogical competence for faith values to be internalized effectively.

Previous studies affirm that perseverance of faith in adolescents is significantly influenced by the quality of religious instruction, teacher modeling, and contextualized learning strategies (Richards & Bredfeldt, 1998; Palmer, 2007). Systematic literature also indicates that faith formation is most effective when biblical narratives are connected with

students' existential struggles through reflective dialogue and experiential learning (Kolb, 2015; Bruner, 1996). However, empirical studies that specifically examine how pedagogical competence shapes the cultivation of persevering faith rooted in Old Testament theology, particularly Genesis 49:18, remain limited, especially within vocational school settings in Indonesia. This research, therefore, seeks to fill that gap by examining how the pedagogical competence of CRE teachers at SMK Negeri 3 Gunungsitoli contributes to the cultivation of persevering faith among Christian students through the lens of Genesis 49:18. By integrating a qualitative case study with a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), this study aims to offer both empirical and theoretical contributions to the development of contextually grounded Christian pedagogy. The central assumption of this study is that persevering faith is not merely taught but formed through pedagogical intentionality, spiritual authenticity, and biblically rooted educational praxis.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design integrated with a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to investigate how the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers cultivates the value of persevering faith based on Genesis 49:18. The case study was conducted at SMK Negeri 3 Gunungsitoli, involving 453 Christian students and two CRE teachers as the primary participants. The qualitative approach was selected to enable an in-depth exploration of pedagogical practices, spiritual formation processes, and lived classroom experiences related to faith perseverance. Data collection was carried out over one academic semester using multiple techniques to ensure methodological triangulation and credibility. Non-participant classroom observations were conducted to examine how Genesis 49:18 and related themes of perseverance were integrated into lesson planning, teaching strategies, classroom interactions, and assessment practices. These observations focused on pedagogical elements such as instructional design, narrative delivery, questioning techniques, student engagement, contextualization of biblical texts, and the moral-spiritual atmosphere of learning. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with the two CRE teachers to explore their theological understanding of perseverance, pedagogical strategies, challenges in faith formation, and reflections on students' spiritual responses. Supporting interviews were also selectively conducted with Christian students representing different academic levels to capture their experiences of learning, faith struggles, and perceived impact of CRE instruction on their perseverance of faith. Document analysis was used to examine school religious programs to identify the coherence between curriculum planning and classroom implementation. Qualitative data were analyzed to strengthen the theoretical foundation of the findings, a Systematic Literature Review was conducted following structured phases of identification, screening, eligibility, and synthesis. Peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and reputable theological-educational sources published primarily between 2003 and 2024 were retrieved from academic databases. The integration of case study data and SLR findings enabled a dialogical analysis between empirical realities and established theoretical frameworks. Trustworthiness of the study was ensured through credibility (triangulation of data sources and methods), dependability (systematic documentation of procedures), confirmability (audit trail and researcher reflexivity), and transferability (thick description

of context). The study sought to generate a robust, Biblically grounded, and empirically validated understanding of how pedagogical competence functions as a formative instrument in cultivating persevering faith among vocational school students.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMK Negeri 3 Gunungsitoli plays a decisive role in cultivating the value of persevering faith among Christian students. Through classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis, this research identified five major thematic dimensions: teachers' theological understanding of perseverance based on Genesis 49:18, pedagogical strategies for internalizing faith perseverance, narrative and contextual learning as a medium of spiritual formation, teacher modeling and relational pedagogy, and the impact of pedagogical competence on students' spiritual resilience. The first significant finding concerns the depth of the CRE teachers' theological understanding of perseverance rooted in Book of Genesis 49:18, "*I wait for your salvation, O Lord.*" Both CRE teachers demonstrated a coherent theological interpretation that perseverance is not merely human endurance but an active form of hope anchored in God's redemptive promise. In classroom discourse, perseverance was consistently framed as "waiting in obedience," "holding firm in uncertainty," and "trusting God amid delayed outcomes." This theological framing aligns with Wenham's interpretation that the verse represents an existential confession of faith amid unresolved struggle (Wenham, 2008).

From the perspective of exegetical-pedagogical integration, teachers emphasized the Hebrew nuance of *qiwwîti* (to wait with expectation), which they translated into practical faith expressions such as persistence in prayer, moral consistency under peer pressure, and patience in vocational preparation. This theological clarity became the epistemological foundation for pedagogical decision-making. The SLR findings corroborate that theological coherence in teaching significantly influences students' faith internalization (Groome, 2011; Knight, 2006). Students' responses during interviews revealed that many perceived perseverance not merely as "not giving up" but as "continuing to trust God even when situations do not change quickly." This indicates that the theological substance of Genesis 49:18 had moved beyond abstract doctrine into a form of lived faith awareness. The alignment between teachers' theological understanding and students' conceptualization demonstrates the effectiveness of biblically grounded pedagogy.

Pedagogical Strategies in Cultivating Persevering Faith

The next major finding concerns the diverse pedagogical strategies employed to cultivate perseverance of faith. The two CRE teachers consistently used a combination of narrative exposition, reflective dialogue, guided prayer, formative assessment, and contextual application. Lesson plans showed that Genesis 49:18 was not taught as an isolated verse but was integrated into thematic units on "Faith in Suffering," "Hope in Uncertainty," and "Trust in God's Timing." Classroom observations indicated that teachers adopted a dialogical learning model rather than a monological lecture format. Students were

encouraged to share personal experiences related to disappointment, family struggle, academic failure, and future anxiety. These lived experiences were then interpreted through the theological lens of waiting for God's salvation. This pedagogical strategy reflects Bruner's constructivist paradigm, where meaning is constructed through narrative interpretation of experience (Bruner, 1996). Formative assessment of faith perseverance was also evident through reflective journals, faith testimonies, and group discussions rather than purely cognitive testing. The SLR findings emphasize that perseverance as a spiritual value cannot be measured solely through objective tests but requires reflective and process-oriented evaluation (Kolb, 2015; Palmer, 2007). In this case study, pedagogical competence was reflected not only in instructional delivery but also in the teachers' ability to design spiritually formative assessment. The findings also reveal challenges. With 453 Christian students and only two CRE teachers, individual spiritual mentoring was limited. Teachers acknowledged that pedagogical ideals often collided with structural limitations such as time constraints, large class sizes, and administrative demands. The pedagogical commitment of the teachers remained consistent, showing that competence is not merely technical efficiency but spiritual fidelity in educational service.

Narrative and Contextual Learning as a Medium of Faith Formation

Narrative-based pedagogy emerged as a core instructional approach in shaping students' perseverance of faith. Teachers consistently employed biblical storytelling, personal testimonies, and contextual analogies drawn from students' vocational tracks such as engineering, hospitality, and agriculture. Genesis 49:18 was often connected to narratives of waiting in Scripture, including Joseph's imprisonment and restoration, Israel's wilderness journey, and the endurance of early Christians. This narrative method enabled students to perceive perseverance not as an abstract virtue but as a concrete faith journey experienced by real people in real struggles. The SLR findings support that narrative learning enhances moral and spiritual imagination, enabling students to internalize values through identification with story characters (Richards & Bredfeldt, 1998; Wright, 2012). Contextualization further strengthened the pedagogical impact. Teachers intentionally related the theme of perseverance to students' anxieties about job prospects, financial hardship, broken family backgrounds, and societal pressure. Students reported that they felt "seen," "understood," and "spiritually supported" when biblical teaching resonated with their personal realities. This aligns with contextual theology principles that emphasize the incarnation of biblical truth within socio-cultural realities (Osborne, 2010). The integration of narrative and context reflects high-level pedagogical competence, as teachers demonstrated not only mastery of content but also adaptive instructional intelligence. This finding reinforces the SLR conclusion that effective Christian pedagogy must function as a hermeneutical bridge between Scripture and lived experience. One of the most striking results of this study is the centrality of teacher modeling in cultivating persevering faith. Students repeatedly emphasized in interviews that the consistency, integrity, patience, and prayerfulness of the CRE teachers deeply influenced their understanding of perseverance. Teachers were perceived not merely as instructors but as spiritual companions who embodied the values they taught.

This modeling was evident in several dimensions: teachers' faithfulness in leading daily devotions, their calmness in addressing disciplinary issues, their perseverance in teaching despite heavy workloads, and their pastoral responses to students experiencing personal crises. Such relational pedagogy aligns with Palmer's (2007) assertion that "we teach who we are," particularly in faith-based education. The SLR findings further confirm that character modeling is a primary agent of spiritual formation, often more influential than verbal instruction (Groome, 2011; Knight, 2006). In the present study, teacher modeling functioned as a living exegesis of Genesis 49:18. Students observed perseverance not only in biblical text but also in the lived witness of their teachers. Relational pedagogy also presented emotional challenges for teachers. Both CRE teachers reported experiencing spiritual fatigue due to the magnitude of student needs and the emotional labor involved in pastoral care. This finding highlights the necessity of institutional support for teachers' spiritual and psychological well-being to sustain long-term pedagogical effectiveness.

Cognitively, students demonstrated an improved biblical understanding of perseverance as trust in God's salvation rather than mere human effort. Many students could articulate Genesis 49:18 and explain its meaning within both biblical and contemporary contexts. This indicates successful integration of theological knowledge and pedagogical clarity. Affectively, students expressed deeper emotional attachment to God in times of difficulty. Interview data revealed that several students had experienced family conflict, economic hardship, and academic failure. Yet they testified that biblical teaching on perseverance helped them "not to give up on God" and "not to lose hope about the future." These testimonies reflect affective internalization of faith rather than superficial compliance. Behaviorally, practitioners observed increased consistency in students' participation in worship, prayer activities, and ethical decision-making. Teachers reported reduced instances of absenteeism during CRE sessions and greater student engagement in spiritual activities. These behavioral indicators suggest that perseverance of faith was not confined to reflection but manifested in concrete spiritual habits. The study also identified a spectrum of faith perseverance among students. Not all students demonstrated the same level of spiritual endurance. Some remained spiritually passive or struggled to apply biblical values consistently. This variation underscores the complexity of faith formation and the influence of external factors such as family background, peer environment, and social media.

The integration of empirical findings and SLR data yields a coherent theoretical-practical synthesis. The SLR consistently emphasizes that pedagogical competence in Christian education encompasses four key dimensions: theological depth, instructional adaptability, relational authenticity, and reflective praxis (Groome, 2011; Knight, 2006; Slavin, 2018). All four dimensions were strongly evident in the pedagogical practices observed in this case study. The SLR highlights that perseverance of faith is most effectively formed through pedagogies that are narrative-based, dialogical, contextual, and exemplified by teacher modeling (Bruner, 1996; Palmer, 2007; Kolb, 2015). These theoretical insights were empirically confirmed in the SMK Negeri 3 Gunungsitoli context. Genesis 49:18 provides a biblical framework that situates perseverance within God's salvific promise. Pedagogically, this verse serves as a spiritual anchor through which students interpret their struggles as part of a larger redemptive narrative. The

convergence of biblical exegesis, empirical pedagogy, and educational theory demonstrates that persevering faith is not merely taught but cultivated through integrated pedagogical ecosystems.

The findings of this study carry significant implications for Christian pedagogy in vocational school contexts. First, CRE teachers must be equipped not only with pedagogical skills but also with deep theological literacy to interpret Scripture meaningfully and contextually. Second, perseverance of faith must be approached as a longitudinal formation process rather than a short-term instructional outcome. Third, institutional structures must support relational and reflective pedagogies by providing manageable class sizes, adequate teaching hours, and spiritual development programs for teachers. Fourth, evaluation of spiritual outcomes should employ formative and narrative-based assessment rather than purely cognitive testing. This study demonstrates that vocational students, often perceived as more pragmatically oriented, are deeply receptive to spiritual formation when pedagogy is authentic, contextual, and relationally grounded. Persevering faith, when cultivated through pedagogical competence, becomes a powerful source of moral resilience and existential hope for students preparing to face the uncertainties of adult life.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers plays a decisive and transformative role in cultivating the value of persevering faith among students when it is grounded in strong biblical exegesis, contextual pedagogy, and relational authenticity. Drawing from a qualitative case study at SMK Negeri 3 Gunungsitoli and strengthened through a Systematic Literature Review, this research confirms that perseverance of faith is not merely a theological ideal but a pedagogical outcome that can be intentionally formed through competent educational practice. The use of Book of Genesis 49:18 as a theological foundation has proven to be particularly powerful in shaping students' understanding of faith as active hope, patient endurance, and sustained trust in God's salvation. The findings reveal that pedagogical competence in Christian education extends far beyond technical instructional skills. It includes the integration of biblical-theological depth, narrative and contextual teaching strategies, dialogical learning, formative assessment, and, most importantly, consistent spiritual modeling by teachers. The two CRE teachers in this study were able to translate the theological meaning of "waiting for the Lord's salvation" into concrete pedagogical practices that touched students' cognitive understanding, affective commitment, and behavioral expressions of faith. As a result, many students demonstrated increased spiritual resilience in the face of academic pressure, family challenges, and uncertainty about their future. The integration of empirical data with the Systematic Literature Review confirms that faith perseverance is most effectively cultivated through pedagogies that are relational, narrative-based, and contextually grounded. Students internalize the value of perseverance not primarily through doctrinal explanation alone, but through reflective engagement with Scripture, personal life interpretation, and the lived example of their teachers. This study therefore reinforces the view that Christian pedagogy is inherently formative and transformational, not merely informative. At the same time, this research highlights structural and institutional challenges that shape the effectiveness of

faith formation, particularly the large number of students served by a limited number of CRE teachers. While pedagogical competence can significantly mitigate these limitations, long-term sustainability of faith formation requires systemic support from schools and educational policy makers. Adequate instructional time, manageable class sizes, and continuous spiritual-pedagogical training for CRE teachers are essential to ensure that the cultivation of persevering faith does not rely solely on individual dedication. This study contributes to the discourse on Christian pedagogy by offering an integrated model that connects Old Testament theology, pedagogical competence, and adolescent faith formation within a vocational education context. It provides CRE teachers with a biblically rooted and empirically validated framework for nurturing spiritual endurance in students who are preparing to enter the complex realities of the contemporary world. This study recommends that future research explore comparative models of faith perseverance across different educational levels and socio-cultural contexts, employ longitudinal designs to examine the long-term impact of pedagogical competence on spiritual maturity, and integrate quantitative measures to complement qualitative insights. In conclusion, persevering faith, as articulated in Genesis 49:18, emerges not merely as a biblical doctrine, but as a lived spiritual virtue that can be faithfully cultivated through competent, contextual, and relational Christian pedagogy.

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