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Personality Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Confronting Suffering with Faith: A Case Study Based on Genesis 40:14 at SD Eka Tjipta Sungai Nusa

Vina Debora

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: vina.debydebora@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of the personality competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in helping students confront suffering with faith, grounded in the theological perspective of Genesis 40:14. The research was conducted at SD Eka Tjipta Sungai Nusa, involving four Christian students and three Christian teachers, including one CRE teacher. Employing a qualitative case study design integrated with a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), data were collected through simple semi-structured interviews with teachers and students, supported by a systematic analysis of scholarly literature on teacher personality competence, Christian education, and the theology of suffering. Data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns of teacher personality expression, faith transmission, and student spiritual responses to suffering. The findings reveal that the CRE teacher's personality competence-expressed through emotional stability, spiritual integrity, empathy, patience, self-control, and consistent moral example-plays a decisive role in shaping students' understanding of suffering through a faith-based perspective. The narrative of Joseph in Genesis 40:14 provides a theological framework that enables students to interpret hardship not as abandonment by God but as a space for hope, trust, and perseverance. This study contributes theoretically by integrating Old Testament theology of suffering with contemporary discourse on teacher personality competence, and practically by offering insights for CRE teachers serving in minority-Christian and resource-limited contexts. It affirms that personality competence is a central formative instrument in nurturing resilient, faith-grounded Christian students.

Keywords: *Personality Competence, Christian Religious Education, Suffering*

INTRODUCTION

Education in the Christian tradition has never been limited to cognitive transmission of knowledge but has always emphasized the formation of faith, character, and spiritual resilience. In contemporary educational contexts, especially in remote and minority-Christian settings, the role of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher becomes even more decisive. Students are not only challenged intellectually but are also

confronted with various forms of suffering, such as family hardship, economic limitation, emotional struggles, and social vulnerability. Within this reality, the personality competence of CRE teachers emerges as a crucial factor in shaping how students understand and respond to suffering with faith rather than despair (Palmer, 2007; Knight, 2006). Personality competence refers to the stability, maturity, integrity, and moral example demonstrated by teachers in their daily interactions with students. In Christian education, this competence is inseparable from spiritual authenticity, emotional self-control, empathy, humility, and trust in God. Unlike pedagogical or professional competence, which primarily concerns instructional skills and subject mastery, personality competence directly touches the inner formation and moral direction of students through imitation and relational modeling (Groome, 2011). Numerous studies affirm that students often learn faith not merely from what teachers explain, but from how teachers live and endure life's challenges (Slavin, 2018). The context of elementary education intensifies this reality. At the primary school level, students are in a formative phase of moral and spiritual development where emotional security and relational trust play a dominant role. In settings where the number of Christian students is small, as is the case at SD Eka Tjipta Sungai Nusa with only four Christian learners among the school population, the presence of CRE teachers with strong personality competence becomes a vital source of spiritual reinforcement. With three Christian teachers, including one CRE teacher, the school provides a unique micro-context for examining how faith is nurtured through example in a minority environment.

Biblical pedagogy strongly supports the centrality of personality in faith formation. Genesis 40:14 provides an important theological foundation for understanding faith in the midst of suffering. In this verse, Joseph, while imprisoned unjustly, says to the cupbearer: "But remember me when it is well with you, and please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this house." This statement reflects a complex interplay between human vulnerability, hope for deliverance, trust in God's providence, and perseverance amid suffering. Joseph does not surrender to despair, nor does he abandon faith, even though his situation is deeply unjust (Wenham, 2008). Genesis 40:14 reveals that Joseph's faith is not passive resignation but active hope expressed through ethical appeal and trust in God's future intervention. The Hebrew narrative emphasizes Joseph's continued integrity and relational kindness even while he is imprisoned. This theological portrait provides a powerful paradigm for Christian educators who are called to model faith not in ideal conditions, but precisely in suffering situations. In the classroom context, this text invites CRE teachers to demonstrate faith through patience, emotional resilience, honesty, and compassionate engagement with students who face their own struggles (Osborne, 2010). From an educational perspective, suffering is not merely a negative condition to be avoided but can become a formative space where faith is tested, refined, and strengthened (Fee & Stuart, 2014). Without proper guidance, suffering may lead to discouragement, withdrawal, or even loss of faith. Therefore, the presence of CRE teachers with strong personality competence becomes decisive in helping students interpret suffering through the lens of God's faithfulness rather than through fear or resentment. Previous studies on Christian educator competence have largely focused on pedagogical and professional dimensions, while the personality dimension remains underexplored, especially in relation to teaching faith

amid suffering in elementary education contexts. This gap becomes more critical in remote areas such as Pulau Sungai Nusa, where educational resources are limited and the teacher's personal witness often becomes the most visible expression of Christian faith for students (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The lived example of teachers in such settings often functions as a "living curriculum" that shapes students' understanding of God, suffering, and hope. Based on these considerations, this study seeks to explore how the personality competence of CRE teachers enables students to confront suffering with faith through the theological lens of Genesis 40:14. By employing a qualitative case study approach, this research aims to describe the forms of personality competence manifested by teachers, the pedagogical processes through which faith amid suffering is cultivated, and the spiritual responses of students within their concrete life contexts. This study is expected to contribute both theoretically to Christian education scholarship and practically to the formation of CRE teachers who serve in challenging and marginalized educational environments.

METHODS

This study adopted a qualitative case study design integrated with a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to investigate how the personality competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers contributes to nurturing faith in the context of suffering based on Genesis 40:14. The research was conducted at SD Eka Tjipta Sungai Nusa, involving four Christian students and three Christian teachers, including one CRE teacher, as the core participants. A qualitative approach was chosen to enable an in-depth exploration of lived experiences, teacher personality expression, and the processes of faith formation in a small and minority Christian educational context. Data collection was carried out through two main strategies: a simple interview-based field study and a structured SLR. For the field study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the CRE teacher as the primary informant to explore manifestations of personality competence such as emotional maturity, spiritual integrity, patience, empathy, self-control, and faithfulness in the face of personal and professional challenges. Additional short interviews were conducted with the two other Christian teachers and the four Christian students to gain supporting perspectives on how the teacher's personality influenced students' understanding of suffering and faith. Interview questions focused on daily interactions, responses to student difficulties, teacher modeling of faith during adversity, and students' spiritual reflections on suffering. All interviews were conducted in an informal yet systematic manner, recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Simultaneously, a Systematic Literature Review was undertaken to construct a strong theoretical foundation for the empirical findings. The SLR followed four stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and synthesis. Academic sources published primarily between 2000 and 2024 were retrieved from peer-reviewed journals, books, and reputable publishers in the fields of Christian education, teacher competence, biblical theology of suffering, and faith formation. Keywords such as "teacher personality competence," "Christian education," "faith and suffering," "Genesis theology," and "spiritual formation" were used to filter relevant literature. Selected studies were critically reviewed to identify key concepts, models, and empirical trends that informed the analytical framework of this research. Data analysis employed thematic analysis using an inductive approach, where interview transcripts were coded to generate categories

related to teacher personality competence, expressions of faith in suffering, relational influence, and student spiritual response. The SLR findings were then dialogically integrated with the field data to strengthen interpretation and theoretical validity. The study sought to produce a contextual, biblically grounded, and empirically supported understanding of how CRE teacher personality competence shapes students' faith in the midst of suffering.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that the personality competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher at SD Eka Tjipta Sungai Nusa is most strongly manifested through lived spiritual integrity. Interviews with the CRE teacher reveal that teaching is perceived not merely as a professional obligation but as a personal calling grounded in faith. The teacher consistently exhibits emotional stability, humility, patience, and a strong trust in God, particularly when encountering classroom challenges, limited facilities, and the emotional struggles of students. This internal spiritual maturity becomes a powerful pedagogical resource that transcends formal lesson delivery. The other two Christian teachers confirmed that the CRE teacher's demeanor is characterized by calmness in difficult situations, consistent moral behavior, and a sincere pastoral concern for students. These traits reflect core dimensions of personality competence as described in Christian educational literature, namely integrity, self-control, empathy, and faithfulness (Palmer, 2007; Groome, 2011). The teacher's personality thus functions as a "living text" through which students experience Christian values in concrete form. In the context of Genesis 40:14, Joseph's character emerges as a biblical paradigm of personality competence amid suffering. Even as a prisoner treated unjustly, Joseph remains emotionally regulated, relationally sensitive, and spiritually hopeful. The teacher deliberately draws parallels between Joseph's identity and the Christian educator's calling, emphasizing that faith is not only declared in times of blessing but must be embodied during adversity. This exegetical grounding shapes how personality competence is interpreted not merely as psychological strength but as theological faithfulness in action.

One of the most significant findings is that students' understanding of faith amid suffering is shaped more by teacher modeling than by verbal instruction alone. All four Christian students reported that they frequently observe how their CRE teacher responds to daily difficulties such as student misbehavior, administrative burdens, and infrastructural limitations. Instead of reacting with anger or frustration, the teacher consistently responds with patience, prayer, and gentle guidance. This daily embodiment of faith becomes the primary medium through which students learn how to face hardship with trust in God. From a pedagogical perspective, this aligns with the theory of social learning, which emphasizes that students acquire values and behaviors by observing significant figures in their environment (Slavin, 2018). In Christian education, this observational learning is deeply theological: faith is transmitted not only cognitively but relationally. The CRE teacher's habitual practice of beginning difficult lessons with prayer, speaking words of hope during conflict, and encouraging students during moments of failure becomes a sustained formative process. The link to Genesis 40:14 deepens this dynamic. Joseph's plea to the cupbearer reflects not desperation but active hope grounded in God's

providence. The teacher uses this narrative to show that faith does not eliminate suffering but enables believers to act with dignity and hope within it. Students reported that this interpretation helped them understand that asking for help, while trusting in God, is not a sign of weak faith. This exegetical-pedagogical integration strengthens the students' perception that faith is realistic, not idealistic.

Interviews with the four Christian students revealed diverse forms of suffering experienced at the elementary level, including family economic hardship, parental separation, academic failure, and social isolation. Despite their young age, these students already possess emotional and spiritual vulnerabilities. Before receiving consistent CRE guidance, several students understood suffering merely as punishment or misfortune without spiritual meaning. After sustained interaction with the CRE teacher, students gradually developed a more faith-oriented interpretation of suffering. They expressed an increased sense of emotional security, believing that God is present even in difficult situations. One student stated that when experiencing fear or sadness, they now tend to pray first before complaining or withdrawing. Another student reported learning not to retaliate when bullied but to seek help and trust God's justice. These changes illustrate the affective and behavioral dimensions of faith formation. Faith is not only comprehended as biblical knowledge but internalized as a coping framework for real-life struggles. This confirms theological perspectives that suffering becomes a formative arena for spiritual growth when guided by faithful mentorship (Fee & Stuart, 2014; Wright, 2012). The students' ability to reinterpret suffering through faith reflects the successful internalization of the values modeled by the teacher.

A unique contextual finding of this study is the impact of relational proximity due to the very small number of Christian students. With only four Christian students and three Christian teachers, including one CRE teacher, the learning environment becomes highly relational and intensely personal. This proximity allows for individualized pastoral attention that would be difficult to achieve in larger schools. Daily interactions extend beyond classroom instruction into informal mentoring, personal counseling, and spontaneous spiritual conversations. The CRE teacher often engages students during breaks, after school, and even through informal home visits. This relational accessibility strengthens the emotional bond between teacher and students, enabling deeper trust. Trust, in turn, becomes the foundation for effective faith transmission. Secure relational attachment significantly enhances moral and spiritual learning. In Christian pedagogy, this attachment mirrors the pastoral relationship between shepherd and flock. The results support Groome's (2011) assertion that faith education is inherently relational before it is instructional. The students' willingness to share personal struggles demonstrates that the teacher's personality competence generates a safe spiritual environment for faith exploration. The CRE teacher intentionally integrates the theme of suffering into the curriculum rather than treating it as an abstract theological concept. Genesis 40:14 is not taught merely as a historical narrative but as a theological mirror for students' lived experiences. Lessons are designed to encourage students to identify moments of disappointment, injustice, and fear from their own lives and connect them with Joseph's story. This contextualization process reflects sound hermeneutical practice where biblical meaning is faithfully interpreted and pedagogically contextualized (Osborne, 2010; Wenham, 2008). The teacher emphasizes that Joseph's faith did not negate his suffering

but sustained him through it. By doing so, suffering is reframed as a potential arena for God's faithfulness rather than as evidence of divine absence. Students reported that this integration made the Bible feel relevant and meaningful. They no longer perceived Scripture as distant from their struggles but as a source of guidance for real problems. This illustrates that the teacher's personality competence is inseparable from interpretive competence. The credibility of the biblical message is reinforced by the teacher's own lived consistency with the message proclaimed.

A key aspect of personality competence observed in the CRE teacher is emotional regulation. During moments of student conflict, academic underperformance, or disciplinary challenges, the teacher demonstrates restraint rather than reactive anger. Students and fellow teachers alike noted that the teacher rarely raises their voice and instead seeks to understand the emotional background behind student behavior. This emotional stability is directly connected to faith transmission. When students witness calm responses under pressure, they learn that faith functions as an emotional anchor. This experiential learning reinforces the theological implication of Genesis 40:14: even in confinement, Joseph retains emotional composure and relational sensitivity. The teacher uses this narrative to emphasize that emotional self-control is an expression of trust in God's sovereignty. Emotional regulation in teachers contributes to a positive classroom climate, which in turn facilitates deeper learning (Slavin, 2018). Theologically, it reflects the fruit of the Spirit in Christian character. The results show that personality competence mediates between theological teaching and emotional learning, enabling students to embody faith rather than merely articulate it.

An important discussion point emerging from this study is the relationship between faith and vulnerability. Genesis 40:14 portrays Joseph as both faithful and vulnerable. He openly expresses his desire for deliverance while trusting in God's timing. The CRE teacher deliberately highlights this duality to students, teaching that faith does not suppress human longing or emotional pain. This perspective counters a common misconception among students that strong faith means never feeling sad or afraid. Through guided discussion, the teacher helps students recognize that expressing sorrow, asking for help, and seeking justice are compatible with trusting God. Students reported feeling relieved when they learned that feeling afraid does not mean they lack faith. This aligns with a biblical anthropology that affirms both human weakness and divine sovereignty. Pedagogically, it cultivates emotional honesty and spiritual maturity. The CRE teacher's own willingness to share personal struggles in age-appropriate ways further strengthens this message. Such transparency enhances authenticity and trust, core components of personality competence (Palmer, 2007). The minority status of Christian students in the school community further intensifies the significance of teacher personality competence. Students sometimes experience social marginalization or misunderstanding due to religious differences. In such contexts, the CRE teacher becomes a vital source of affirmation and spiritual identity formation. Interviews reveal that the teacher frequently affirms students' worth, encourages them to respect others, and reminds them that being a Christian does not mean being superior but being faithful. This balanced identity formation is crucial to prevent either withdrawal or religious defensiveness. Joseph's experience as a marginalized Hebrew prisoner in a foreign land becomes a powerful

narrative parallel for students living as a minority. The findings support literature that emphasizes the protective role of teacher character in sustaining faith in minority contexts (Knight, 2006). The CRE teacher's personality competence functions not only as instructional support but as spiritual shielding that helps students remain confident without becoming exclusive or defensive. The study also identifies significant challenges. The CRE teacher faces limited institutional support, time constraints, and the emotional burden of mentoring vulnerable students with minimal professional counseling resources. The small number of Christian students, while relationally advantageous, also limits peer spiritual interaction. Students' family environments often do not consistently reinforce the faith values taught at school. Some students return to homes marked by economic hardship, parental conflict, or limited religious practice. These external factors sometimes slow the internalization of faith amid suffering. The teacher's personality competence mitigates these structural limitations. Through consistency, patience, and prayerful reliance on God, the teacher sustains the faith formation process. This confirms that while institutional support is important, the personal integrity of the teacher remains a decisive factor in Christian education effectiveness.

The SLR supports and strengthens the empirical findings. Studies on teacher personality consistently identify integrity, emotional stability, empathy, and spiritual authenticity as critical predictors of moral and spiritual influence (Groome, 2011; Palmer, 2007). Research on faith formation emphasizes that students internalize spiritual values primarily through relational modeling rather than didactic instruction alone. The theology of suffering literature further affirms that biblical narratives such as Joseph's story function as formative theological resources when interpreted contextually (Fee & Stuart, 2014; Wenham, 2008). The convergence between field data and SLR findings validates the central argument of this study: that personality competence operates as a mediating force between biblical theology and student spiritual resilience. The results of this study carry several practical implications. CRE teacher development programs should place greater emphasis on personality formation alongside pedagogical and professional training. Emotional regulation, spiritual maturity, and ethical integrity should be evaluated as seriously as instructional competence. CRE curricula should intentionally integrate the theme of suffering as a legitimate theological and pedagogical subject rather than avoiding it. Biblical narratives such as Genesis 40:14 provide rich resources for helping students interpret hardship through faith. In minority Christian settings, teachers must consciously cultivate relational proximity and pastoral sensitivity as core dimensions of their vocation. This relational approach strengthens faith identity and emotional resilience among students.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the personality competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher plays a decisive role in shaping students' ability to confront suffering with faith, particularly within the unique minority-Christian context of SD Eka Tjipta Sungai Nusa. With only four Christian students and three Christian teachers, including one CRE teacher, the educational environment becomes highly relational, positioning the teacher's personal character as the primary medium through which faith is transmitted and internalized. The findings confirm that personality competence,

manifested through emotional stability, spiritual integrity, empathy, patience, self-control, and consistent moral example, is not a supplementary aspect of Christian education but its core formative force. Through the exegetical lens of Genesis 40:14, this study reveals that faith in the midst of suffering is not a passive resignation but an active, hopeful trust in God's providence, expressed through vulnerability, perseverance, and ethical relationality. Joseph's posture in imprisonment becomes a theological paradigm that the CRE teacher successfully embodies and pedagogically translates into the lived experiences of students. The teacher's calm responses to challenges, faithful endurance in limited conditions, and relational care for students function as a living testimony of the biblical message taught in the classroom. As a result, students gradually develop a faith-oriented interpretation of suffering, viewing hardship not merely as misfortune but as a space where God's presence and guidance may still be encountered. The study further confirms that faith formation at the elementary level is fundamentally relational and experiential. Students internalize faith not primarily through doctrinal explanation but through sustained observation of how their teacher lives, responds, and hopes amid difficulty. The CRE teacher's personality competence becomes a spiritual framework through which students learn emotional regulation, resilience, prayerful dependence on God, and trust amid uncertainty. This aligns with both Christian educational theory and biblical anthropology, which affirm that character is formed through imitation within nurtured relationships. The research also acknowledges existing challenges, including limited institutional resources, the emotional burden placed on teachers, and the inconsistency between school-based faith formation and students' home environments. The teacher's personality competence proves capable of mediating such constraints, reinforcing the conclusion that in remote and minority-Christian contexts, the personal integrity of the teacher often surpasses structural factors in shaping students' faith development. This study contributes to Christian education scholarship by strengthening the integration between Old Testament theology of suffering and contemporary teacher competence discourse. It affirms that personality competence functions as a theological-pedagogical bridge that connects biblical truth with daily educational practice. Practically, the findings underscore the urgent need for CRE teacher preparation programs to give greater attention to spiritual formation, emotional maturity, and ethical consistency alongside pedagogical and professional skill development. The personality competence of CRE teachers is a decisive instrument in equipping students to confront suffering with faith. When teachers embody trust in God amid adversity, they do not merely teach about faith—they incarnate it. Such embodiment transforms the classroom into a formative spiritual space where suffering is not denied but interpreted through hope, trust, and faithful perseverance in God's providential care.

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