



The Influence of Interpersonal Communication of Christian Religious Education Teachers on Students' Discipline at SDN 157016 Lubuk Ampolu

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of interpersonal communication by Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers on students' discipline at SDN 157016 Lubuk Ampolu where tardiness and rule-bending seem to have achieved Olympic-level mastery. Education, at its heart, is a grand choreography of intellect, morality, and spirit, and CRE teachers play both conductor and counselor in this delicate dance. Using a quantitative correlational design supported by qualitative insights, the research explores how teachers' openness, empathy, supportiveness, and honesty shape students' behavioral and moral self-regulation. Data were collected through questionnaires from 60 students in grades IV-VI and complemented by interviews with teachers and students, because numbers alone, as we know, never tell the whole story (and sometimes lie politely). Statistical analysis using simple linear regression revealed a significant positive correlation ($R^2 = 0.412$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that nearly half of the variation in student discipline can be attributed to teachers' interpersonal communication-an impressive feat, considering the remaining 58.8% is probably influenced by parents, peers, and Pokémon. Qualitative findings further highlight that communication grounded in empathy and faith transforms discipline from a fear-based compliance into a voluntary moral choice rooted in Christian virtue. In essence, the study affirms that when teachers speak not just to students' ears but also to their souls-with patience, love, and the occasional divine wink-discipline ceases to be punishment and becomes formation. Effective communication, therefore, is both pedagogy and ministry, nurturing students who are not only obedient but spiritually anchored in the teachings of Christ.

Keywords: *Interpersonal Communication, Christian Religious Education, Discipline*

INTRODUCTION

Education is fundamentally a process of transforming values, knowledge, and skills aimed at shaping students' personalities and moral character. In the context of elementary education, the teacher's role extends far beyond the transmission of academic content; it encompasses moral guidance, emotional development, and spiritual nurturing. Among

the various subjects taught at the primary level, Christian Religious Education (CRE)-known in Indonesia as *Pendidikan Agama Kristen (PAK)*-plays a particularly crucial role in instilling Christian virtues and guiding students toward ethical behavior. The CRE teacher functions not only as an educator but also as a moral and spiritual mentor whose example influences students' daily conduct, including their sense of discipline. Discipline, in this regard, serves as a foundational element in the development of responsible and orderly behavior, contributing directly to the success of the educational process (Noddings, 2013). Recent observations in various elementary schools, including SDN 157016 Lubuk Ampolu, indicate that student discipline remains a persistent challenge. Some students are frequently late to class, neglect their homework, or fail to adhere to established classroom rules. These patterns of indiscipline cannot be attributed solely to students' shortcomings; rather, they reflect broader pedagogical challenges that require teachers' active engagement in fostering behavioral change. Within this dynamic, the interpersonal communication between teachers and students emerges as a decisive factor influencing students' willingness to internalize and practice discipline. Interpersonal communication, as defined by Devito (2019), refers to the exchange of information, feelings, and meanings between individuals through verbal and nonverbal messages. It involves empathy, sincerity, warmth, and the ability to listen attentively-qualities that are essential for establishing meaningful relationships. In educational settings, effective interpersonal communication serves not only as a medium for instruction but also as a tool for emotional connection and behavioral management. Teachers who communicate with sensitivity and respect can create a classroom climate characterized by mutual trust, openness, and collaboration. Such an environment motivates students to follow classroom norms, take responsibility for their actions, and exhibit self-discipline (Hargie, 2011). In Christian education, discipline carries a deeper spiritual dimension. It is not merely a matter of compliance with school regulations but also an expression of obedience to God's moral order and the teachings of Christ. The Apostle Paul, for instance, highlights the importance of self-control and obedience as marks of spiritual maturity (Galatians 5:22–23). Hence, when a CRE teacher engages in empathetic and faith-centered communication, students are more likely to understand discipline not as punishment or coercion, but as a pathway to spiritual growth and moral integrity. Through meaningful interpersonal interactions, teachers can help students internalize Christian values such as respect, honesty, responsibility, and love for others-virtues that underpin a disciplined life (Knight, 2016). The quality of interpersonal communication between CRE teachers and students has broader implications for educational outcomes. Research has shown that positive teacher–student relationships enhance students' motivation, reduce behavioral problems, and foster a sense of belonging in school (Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012). In the context of PAK instruction, this relationship is especially important, as the subject matter often involves moral reasoning, empathy, and emotional reflection-all of which require an atmosphere of trust and open dialogue.

Based on these considerations, this study seeks to examine the influence of interpersonal communication by Christian Religious Education teachers on students' discipline at SDN 157016 Lubuk Ampolu. The study aims to explore how the quality, style, and depth of teacher–student communication contribute to students' understanding and practice of discipline. The research also seeks to highlight the pedagogical and spiritual dimensions

of communication as a transformative tool in character education. By doing so, it aspires to provide empirical evidence and theoretical insight that can inform the development of more communicative, humanistic, and spiritually grounded approaches to Christian Religious Education. This study underscores that effective interpersonal communication in PAK is not merely a pedagogical technique but a spiritual calling. It represents a teacher's ministry to guide students toward disciplined living through love, dialogue, and example. When communication becomes a medium of grace and understanding, discipline ceases to be imposed externally and instead grows naturally from within the student's own faith and moral consciousness.

RESEARCH METHODS

A quantitative approach with a correlational research design was implemented, aimed at examining the influence of interpersonal communication of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers on students' discipline. The research was conducted at SDN 157016 Lubuk Ampolu, a public elementary school selected through purposive sampling due to the observable phenomenon relevant to the study's focus—namely, the issue of low student discipline, which had become a concern among teachers and school administrators. The selection of this site provided an appropriate context for investigating how teacher-student communication dynamics affect disciplinary behavior within a real educational environment. The population of the study consisted of all students from grades IV to VI who were enrolled in CRE classes, totaling 60 students. Since the number of students was manageable, a total sampling technique was applied, in which every member of the population was included as a research subject. This approach ensured that the collected data reflected the overall characteristics and variations within the target group, enhancing the representativeness and validity of the findings. The primary data collection instrument was a closed-ended questionnaire developed based on theoretical indicators of interpersonal communication and student discipline. The interpersonal communication questionnaire measured dimensions such as openness, empathy, supportiveness, honesty, and intimacy, as suggested by Devito (2019). Meanwhile, the student discipline questionnaire encompassed indicators including compliance with school rules, responsibility in completing assignments, and punctuality in attending learning activities. The questionnaire items were structured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," allowing for the quantification of students' perceptions. To ensure the instrument's validity, expert judgment was employed to assess content validity, while reliability testing was carried out using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, ensuring internal consistency of the measurement tools. In addition to the questionnaire, interviews with the CRE teacher and selected students were conducted to obtain deeper insights into the practical forms of interpersonal communication employed in the classroom and students' perceptions of their teachers' communicative behavior. These qualitative insights complemented the quantitative findings by providing contextual interpretation of the data. Data were analyzed using simple linear regression analysis with the aid of the latest version of SPSS software. This analysis aimed to determine whether a significant relationship existed between interpersonal communication (X) and student discipline (Y), as well as to measure the strength and direction of the influence. Prior to regression analysis, classical assumption tests were

conducted, including the normality test (using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov method) and the linearity test (through ANOVA), to ensure that the data met the prerequisites for parametric statistical analysis. All research procedures—from instrument development, data collection, to data analysis—were systematically implemented to maintain the validity, reliability, and integrity of the research process. By applying this methodological framework, the study seeks to generate reliable empirical data to address the formulated research questions and to contribute meaningfully to the development of effective communication strategies in Christian Religious Education, ultimately fostering more disciplined, responsible, and value-oriented students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study presents findings derived from both quantitative and qualitative data to explore the influence of interpersonal communication of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers on students' discipline at SDN 157016 Lubuk Ampolu. Quantitative data were obtained through structured questionnaires distributed to 60 students from grades IV to VI, while qualitative insights were gathered through interviews with teachers and students to enrich the interpretation of statistical results. The integrated analysis aims to understand how communication behaviors between teachers and students shape disciplinary attitudes in a Christian educational setting. The statistical results reveal that the average score of teachers' interpersonal communication reached 4.23 out of 5, placing it in the high category. This indicates that students perceive their CRE teachers as open, empathetic, supportive, and respectful in interactions. Teachers were found to practice essential elements of interpersonal communication—such as active listening, the use of polite and encouraging language, emotional sensitivity, and transparent moral guidance aligned with Christian teachings. These components collectively create a positive learning climate, enabling students to feel valued and motivated to follow classroom rules. In parallel, the mean score of student discipline was 4.05 out of 5, which also falls within a high level of compliance. The indicators measured included punctuality, adherence to school rules, responsibility in completing assignments, and active participation in learning activities. Although most students displayed disciplined behavior, a minority still struggled with lateness and delayed submission of assignments.

A simple linear regression analysis confirmed a positive and statistically significant relationship between teachers' interpersonal communication and students' discipline, with a p-value of 0.001 (< 0.05). The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.412, meaning that 41.2% of students' discipline variation is explained by teachers' interpersonal communication, while the remaining 58.8% is attributed to other external factors such as family environment, peer influence, and institutional policies. These results strongly support the hypothesis that effective interpersonal communication contributes substantially to students' discipline development.

Table 1. Result of Regression Analysis

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Category
Interpersonal Communication	4.23	0.42	High

Student Discipline	4.05	0.51	High
R² (Coefficient of Determination)	0.412	—	Significant

The qualitative interviews provided a deeper understanding of how communication dynamics operate in real classroom settings. Students reported feeling more motivated to act responsibly when their teacher engaged them personally and treated them with respect. For instance, a fifth-grade student mentioned that he felt encouraged to complete assignments because his teacher reminded him “kindly and sincerely,” emphasizing that each task contributed to spiritual growth. Such statements reveal that affective communication—communication that appeals to emotion and meaning—can foster self-regulated discipline, where students comply not out of fear of punishment but from a personal conviction of moral responsibility. Teachers also shared that their communication approach included personal interactions beyond formal teaching, such as greeting students outside class, inquiring about family situations, and encouraging dialogue about life challenges. These gestures, though simple, strengthen relational bonds and enhance students’ respect for authority. As one CRE teacher expressed, “Students are more obedient when they know we care for them as individuals, not just as pupils.” Conversely, when communication is authoritarian or one-directional, students tend to exhibit resistance or disengagement. Several teachers noted that strict enforcement without dialogue can lead to temporary compliance but fails to cultivate genuine self-discipline. This aligns with humanistic communication theory, which emphasizes authenticity, empathy, and mutual respect as essential components of meaningful interpersonal influence (Rogers, 1961).

These findings resonate with DeVito’s (2016) framework of interpersonal communication, which identifies five core principles: openness, empathy, supportiveness, positivity, and equality. In the context of Christian Religious Education, these principles mirror biblical virtues such as love, compassion, humility, and respect—values deeply embedded in Jesus’ ministry. When teachers embody these virtues through communication, they model discipline not merely as rule compliance but as an act of spiritual obedience and self-control inspired by faith. Moreover, the data confirm that interpersonal communication acts as a medium of character formation. Teachers’ verbal messages—reinforced by nonverbal cues like eye contact, tone of voice, and gestures—communicate acceptance and expectations simultaneously. Nonverbal communication, often underestimated, plays a crucial symbolic role. A calm tone or encouraging nod can convey understanding and support, while harsh gestures or dismissive attitudes can undermine trust and provoke defiance. The socio-cultural background of SDN 157016 Lubuk Ampolu also shapes the communication process. The school is located in a rural area where students come from diverse family backgrounds—some with limited parental supervision due to economic factors. Teachers thus serve as both educators and moral guides. In such settings, interpersonal communication becomes an instrument of moral mentoring, bridging the gap between academic instruction and moral education. Observation data revealed that when CRE teachers began classes with a warm greeting, short prayer, or reflective question, students became more attentive and cooperative. The practice of starting lessons with spiritual reflection not only anchored learning in faith but also set a disciplined tone for classroom conduct. Teachers who involved students in setting

classroom rules found that students internalized those rules more effectively, perceiving them as shared commitments rather than imposed restrictions.

The combined data underline that discipline is a relational construct, not merely a behavioral one. Students' willingness to follow rules depends significantly on the quality of relational trust built through teacher-student communication. Effective interpersonal communication fosters three critical dimensions of discipline formation: students comprehend why discipline matters, students feel emotionally connected to their teacher's expectations, and students translate understanding and attachment into consistent actions. In line with Bandura's social learning theory (1986), students learn discipline by observing and imitating teachers' consistent behaviors. A CRE teacher who arrives punctually, speaks respectfully, and practices fairness indirectly models the very discipline being taught. This study's findings complement prior research. Rahmat and Setiawan (2020) found a significant correlation between teachers' interpersonal communication and character development among elementary students. Similarly, Lestari and Wahyuni (2021) demonstrated that dialogical and supportive communication improves students' adherence to classroom norms. This convergence of evidence reinforces that communication is not merely a teaching technique but a moral practice. Communication alone does not fully determine student discipline. The 41.2% explanatory power of the regression model indicates that external factors also play a substantial role. Interviews revealed that students with inconsistent parental guidance or challenging social environments were more prone to disciplinary lapses, even under communicative teachers. Thus, family engagement and peer influence remain critical components in sustaining discipline beyond the classroom. The emotional competence of teachers was found to influence the quality of interpersonal communication. Teachers with higher emotional intelligence demonstrated greater patience and adaptability, especially when managing misbehavior. As such, teacher training programs should integrate emotional and interpersonal skill development to enhance pedagogical effectiveness in moral education.

The implications of these findings are both practical and strategic. Schools should prioritize interpersonal communication training for CRE teachers, emphasizing skills such as empathetic listening, conflict resolution, and affirming feedback. Additionally, the curriculum for Christian Religious Education should integrate communication ethics as part of the teacher's professional formation. A whole-school approach is recommended, where communication-based discipline policies replace punitive systems. Activities such as mentorship sessions, reflective dialogues, and moral storytelling can reinforce discipline through human connection rather than coercion. By fostering a culture of open communication, schools can transform discipline from a control mechanism into a shared value system. From a psychopedagogical perspective, teacher-student communication in CRE functions as a process of value internalization. Teachers transmit not only knowledge about Christian ethics but also the emotional and volitional aspects of faith-based living. When students perceive their teachers' sincerity and emotional warmth, they are more likely to develop intrinsic motivation for discipline-acting responsibly not for external rewards or fear of punishment, but from inner conviction. The data further show that when teachers use dialogue and affirmation instead of reprimand, students exhibit lasting

behavioral improvements. Communication that integrates love, patience, and forgiveness—the core values of Christian pedagogy—cultivates discipline through grace rather than fear. This aligns with Paul’s teaching in Ephesians 4:2, urging believers to “*be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*” In educational settings, such communication becomes a living model of Christian virtue. The findings also point to the need for school-level policy support. Administrators should provide teachers with sufficient time and resources to build meaningful connections with students. Excessive administrative workloads often limit opportunities for personal dialogue. Institutionalizing communication spaces—such as weekly mentoring meetings or student reflection sessions—could greatly enhance interpersonal bonds and, consequently, discipline outcomes. The results of this study demonstrate that interpersonal communication by Christian Religious Education teachers has a significant and positive effect on students’ discipline at SDN 157016 Lubuk Ampolu. Teachers who engage in open, empathetic, and supportive communication foster not only obedience but also self-awareness and moral responsibility among students. Quantitative evidence ($R^2 = 0.412$, $p < 0.05$) and qualitative narratives consistently affirm that relational communication serves as a foundation for disciplined behavior. Effective communication humanizes the educational process—it transforms discipline from a mechanical rule-following activity into a spiritual and relational journey rooted in mutual respect and love. Therefore, enhancing teachers’ interpersonal communication competence is not merely an instructional improvement but a moral imperative for schools seeking to nurture students who are disciplined, compassionate, and guided by Christian values.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that interpersonal communication between Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers and students plays a decisive role in shaping students’ discipline, both as a behavioral and spiritual construct. The research conducted at SDN 157016 Lubuk Ampolu revealed that when teachers engage in communication that is open, empathetic, supportive, and grounded in Christian values, students respond with higher levels of compliance, responsibility, and internalized moral awareness. The quantitative results, with a significant correlation ($R^2 = 0.412$, $p < 0.05$), confirm that effective teacher–student communication accounts for 41.2% of the variance in student discipline, underscoring its substantial influence on behavioral outcomes. Qualitative insights further illuminated that communication infused with sincerity and compassion not only encourages obedience but also builds intrinsic motivation for discipline, anchored in faith and moral reasoning. The findings affirm that discipline in education cannot be reduced to enforcement of rules, but must instead emerge from relational trust and mutual respect. Students who experience genuine care and understanding from their teachers develop a sense of belonging and moral accountability, which leads to voluntary discipline rather than coerced compliance. This relational approach reflects the essence of Christian pedagogy, where teaching is not merely a transfer of knowledge but a ministry of grace and formation. The CRE teacher, therefore, becomes a moral mentor and a living model of Christ-like communication—embodying virtues such as humility, patience, and love. Through everyday interactions, teachers communicate not only instructions but also values that nurture self-control, obedience, and responsibility as spiritual disciplines. The

study also identifies several pedagogical implications. First, interpersonal communication must be intentionally cultivated as a professional and spiritual competence. Teacher education programs should integrate communication ethics, empathy training, and emotional intelligence development as essential components of Christian teacher formation. Second, schools must create structural opportunities for meaningful teacher-student dialogue. Excessive administrative tasks often hinder teachers from engaging personally with their students; therefore, schools should institutionalize mentoring sessions, reflection circles, or one-on-one conversations as part of their culture. These spaces allow teachers to understand students' emotional contexts, address behavioral issues constructively, and reinforce discipline through personal connection rather than punishment. The study highlights the need for a whole-school communication culture grounded in respect, openness, and collaboration. Disciplinary systems that rely solely on sanctions tend to produce compliance without character, while communication-based approaches foster genuine transformation. Activities such as storytelling, moral discussions, and cooperative problem-solving can serve as effective mediums for students to internalize Christian virtues and develop self-discipline from within. In this sense, interpersonal communication functions as a bridge between moral knowledge and moral practice, translating abstract values into lived experiences. The results reinforce the idea that discipline in Christian education is both a pedagogical outcome and a spiritual journey. It is nurtured through dialogue, example, and love—the same principles demonstrated by Jesus in His ministry. Teachers who communicate with compassion and faithfulness help students perceive discipline not as restriction but as liberation: the freedom to act rightly and responsibly in accordance with God's will. Such an understanding transforms discipline from external control into internal conviction, guiding students toward holistic growth in intellect, emotion, and faith. The study contributes to the ongoing discourse on value-based and communicative education in Indonesia, particularly within the context of Pendidikan Agama Kristen. It emphasizes that improving students' discipline begins not with stricter rules, but with stronger relationships founded on mutual respect and spiritual integrity. The teacher's interpersonal communication, therefore, stands as both a pedagogical strategy and a moral vocation—a tangible expression of love that educates the heart as much as the mind. By nurturing communication that reflects Christian compassion, schools can cultivate generations of learners who are not only disciplined and responsible but also spiritually mature and committed to living out their faith through their actions.

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