



The Social Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Fostering Students' Sense of Responsibility in Social Relationships at SD Negeri 064981 Medan Helvetia

Sumiati Hutagalung

Student, Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: sumiatihutagalung7@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examines the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in developing students' sense of responsibility within social relationships at SD Negeri 064981 Medan Helvetia. Social competence encompasses teachers' abilities to communicate effectively, collaborate with various stakeholders, and serve as moral exemplars in educational settings. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach with data collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers and students, and document analysis. Participants included four CRE teachers and 32 fifth and sixth-grade students selected through purposive sampling. Data analysis utilized the Miles and Huberman model, incorporating data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. Findings reveal that CRE teachers demonstrate strong social competence through three primary mechanisms: modeling responsible behavior in daily interactions, implementing collaborative learning activities that emphasize mutual accountability, and establishing supportive communication patterns that encourage students to reflect on their social obligations. Teachers effectively integrate Christian values such as love, respect, and service into pedagogical practices, creating learning environments where students develop empathy and recognize their responsibilities toward peers, family, and community. However, challenges persist, including limited parental involvement and inconsistent reinforcement of values across different school contexts. The study concludes that teachers' social competence significantly influences students' development of social responsibility, suggesting that continuous professional development focusing on interpersonal skills and character education strategies is essential for maximizing educational outcomes in religious education contexts.

Keywords: Social competence, responsibility, social relationships

INTRODUCTION

Education serves not merely as a medium for cognitive development but also as a fundamental institution for character formation and social competence development among young learners. In the Indonesian educational context, religious education plays a

pivotal role in shaping students' moral frameworks and social behaviors, particularly in elementary schools where foundational values are established. Christian Religious Education (CRE) specifically aims to integrate spiritual teachings with practical life skills, emphasizing values such as love, responsibility, honesty, and respect for others. The role of teachers extends beyond content delivery to encompass modeling appropriate social behaviors and fostering environments conducive to character development. Teacher social competence, defined as the ability to communicate effectively, build relationships with diverse stakeholders, and demonstrate cultural sensitivity, emerges as a critical factor influencing educational outcomes. According to Indonesian Government Regulation No. 74 of 2008 concerning teachers, social competence constitutes one of four essential competencies teachers must possess, alongside pedagogical, professional, and personality competencies. At SD Negeri 064981 Medan Helvetia, a public elementary school serving a diverse student population in the Helvetia district of Medan, North Sumatra, CRE teachers face the unique challenge of developing students' sense of responsibility within increasingly complex social environments. Contemporary social challenges, including digital media influence, shifting family structures, and diminished community cohesion, necessitate intentional educational interventions that strengthen students' understanding of their social obligations and interpersonal responsibilities. Preliminary observations at the school revealed varying levels of students' social responsibility, manifested in behaviors such as classroom cooperation, respect for authority, conflict resolution approaches, and participation in communal activities. These variations raised questions regarding the influence of teachers' social competence on students' development of responsible social behaviors. Understanding this relationship bears significant implications for teacher professional development, curriculum design, and broader character education initiatives within Indonesian elementary schools. Despite the acknowledged importance of social competence in teaching, limited empirical research examines how CRE teachers' social competencies specifically influence elementary students' development of social responsibility. This gap is particularly pronounced in Indonesian contexts where religious education intersects with diverse cultural values and contemporary social challenges. Furthermore, existing studies often focus on secondary or higher education settings, leaving elementary school contexts underexplored despite their foundational importance in character formation. This research contributes theoretically to understanding the relationship between teacher social competence and character education outcomes in religious education contexts. Practically, findings provide evidence-based insights for teacher professional development programs, school administrators developing character education initiatives, and policymakers seeking to enhance religious education quality in Indonesian elementary schools.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore and describe the social competence of CRE teachers and its influence on students' sense of responsibility. The qualitative approach was selected for its capacity to capture the complexity of social interactions, pedagogical practices, and value transmission processes within authentic educational settings. The research was conducted at SD Negeri 064981 Medan Helvetia,

located in the Helvetia district of Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia. The school serves approximately 420 students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, with Christian students constituting approximately 35% of the student population. The school implements the national curriculum with religious education provided according to students' respective faiths. Participants were selected through purposive sampling and included: Four CRE teachers (two male, two female) with teaching experience ranging from 8 to 22 years, 32 students from fifth and sixth grades (ages 10-12 years) representing different academic achievement levels and social backgrounds, and two school administrators (principal and vice-principal for curriculum) to provide institutional perspectives. Research trustworthiness was established through: prolonged engagement at the research site, triangulation of data sources, methods, and investigators, member checking whereby participants reviewed and validated findings, peer debriefing with colleagues not directly involved in the research, and maintaining an audit trail documenting research decisions and processes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Analysis revealed that CRE teachers at SD Negeri 064981 Medan Helvetia demonstrated social competence through four interconnected dimensions: effective communication, collaborative relationships, cultural responsiveness, and moral modeling. All four teachers exhibited strong communication skills characterized by clarity, empathy, and adaptability. Teachers employed age-appropriate language, used concrete examples from students' daily experiences, and frequently checked for understanding through questions and discussions. One teacher, Mrs. Sari (pseudonym), explained: "I always try to speak in ways children can understand, using stories from their lives-about playing with friends, helping at home, things they know." Observations confirmed that teachers listened attentively to students, validated their contributions, and created safe spaces for expressing thoughts and questions. Nonverbal communication, including warm facial expressions, appropriate physical proximity, and encouraging gestures, reinforced verbal messages and established rapport with students. Teachers actively built relationships with multiple stakeholders to support students' holistic development. They maintained regular communication with parents through meetings, messaging groups, and informal conversations, although parental engagement varied considerably. Teachers also collaborated with colleagues to ensure consistency in behavioral expectations and coordinated with school counselors when students faced particular challenges. Within classrooms, teachers fostered collaborative peer relationships by organizing group activities, peer mentoring programs, and collective projects requiring shared responsibility. Mr. David (pseudonym) stated: "When students work together on service projects, they learn that everyone's contribution matters. They begin to understand that they're responsible not just for themselves but for the group." Teachers demonstrated awareness of students' diverse backgrounds and adapted their approaches accordingly. They acknowledged different family structures, socioeconomic circumstances, and learning needs while maintaining high expectations for all students. Teachers incorporated local cultural values and used examples relevant to students' Medan context, creating bridges between Christian teachings and students' lived experiences. However, teachers occasionally struggled to address tensions between traditional

religious teachings and contemporary social realities that students encountered, such as digital media influences and changing gender norms. Teachers consistently modeled behaviors aligned with Christian values and social responsibility. They demonstrated punctuality, kept promises, treated all students with respect regardless of academic performance, and publicly acknowledged their own mistakes. Students repeatedly mentioned teachers' examples as influential: "Teacher always helps students who have problems. She shows us how to care for others" (sixth-grade student). Teachers intentionally used daily interactions as teaching moments, explicitly connecting their behaviors to responsibility concepts. When resolving conflicts between students, teachers modeled fair listening, empathetic responses, and problem-solving approaches they hoped students would internalize.

Strategies for Fostering Students' Sense of Responsibility

Teachers employed diverse strategies to develop students' understanding and practice of social responsibility, which were categorized into three primary approaches: experiential learning activities, reflective practices, and integration of biblical narratives. Teachers created structured opportunities for students to practice responsible behaviors in authentic contexts. Service-learning projects, such as visiting elderly community members, collecting donations for disaster victims, and organizing classroom cleaning schedules, enabled students to experience the impact of responsible actions directly. These activities were consistently followed by reflection sessions where students discussed their experiences and lessons learned. Classroom responsibilities, including material distribution, attendance taking, and peer assistance roles, rotated among students to ensure all experienced being accountable for collective welfare. Teachers provided scaffolding and feedback to help students succeed in these roles, gradually increasing autonomy as students demonstrated competence. Teachers facilitated regular reflection on social relationships and responsibilities through various methods. Guided discussions following stories or scenarios helped students consider consequences of actions, identify responsible choices, and explore alternative behaviors. Journaling exercises encouraged students to document their responsible actions, challenges faced, and feelings associated with helping others. Mrs. Ruth (*pseudonym*) described her approach: "After we discuss a biblical story about helping others, I ask students to think about times they helped someone or should have helped but didn't. This personal reflection helps them see responsibility isn't just abstract—it's about their daily choices." Role-playing activities allowed students to practice responding to social dilemmas, receive peer feedback, and develop empathy by experiencing situations from different perspectives. Teachers skillfully connected biblical teachings to contemporary social responsibilities. Stories of Jesus serving others, parables about the Good Samaritan and faithful stewards, and teachings about loving neighbors were explicitly linked to students' relationships with family, peers, and community members. Teachers helped students identify principles from these narratives—such as compassion, accountability, and service—and consider practical applications in their lives. Mr. Peter (*pseudonym*) explained: "The Bible gives us clear examples of responsibility—caring for others, being trustworthy, using our abilities to help. I show students these aren't just ancient stories but guides for how we should live now."

Development of Students' Sense of Responsibility

Evidence from observations, interviews, and documents indicated positive development in students' sense of responsibility across three domains: responsibility to self, responsibility to others, and responsibility to community. Students demonstrated increased self-management behaviors, including completing assignments independently, organizing personal materials, and following through on commitments. Teachers reported that students showed greater persistence when facing difficulties and more frequently sought help appropriately rather than avoiding challenging tasks. Students articulated understanding that responsible behavior began with managing oneself effectively. A fifth-grade student stated: "If I want others to trust me, I need to do what I promise. That means finishing my work and being honest about what I can do." Observations revealed numerous instances of students helping classmates, sharing resources, showing concern for peers' wellbeing, and attempting to resolve conflicts peacefully. Students increasingly recognized the impact of their actions on others and considered others' feelings when making decisions. Peer relationships showed improvement in quality, with reduced incidents of bullying or exclusion reported by teachers and students. Students participated more actively in collaborative activities, with better distribution of tasks and greater mutual support. Focus group participants acknowledged learning to "think about how my actions affect my friends" and "be someone others can count on." Students engaged more consistently in school community activities, including maintaining classroom cleanliness, participating in school events, and contributing to communal projects. Several students initiated or joined extracurricular service activities, demonstrating internalization of responsibility beyond required tasks. Teachers noted students' growing awareness of broader community needs and increased empathy for those facing difficulties. Students demonstrated this through fundraising initiatives, environmental care activities, and respectful interactions with school staff across all levels. The school administration actively supported character education initiatives, integrating responsibility development across subjects and school activities. This institutional commitment reinforced CRE teachers' efforts and created consistent expectations for students. Regular meetings among CRE teachers and with colleagues teaching other subjects facilitated sharing of strategies, coordination of approaches, and mutual encouragement. This professional community strengthened teachers' capacity to address challenges collectively. The warm, respectful relationships teachers established with students created foundations for effective character education. Students' trust in and affection for teachers increased their receptivity to responsibility values and willingness to emulate teachers' examples. The CRE curriculum's explicit emphasis on practical Christian living, including social responsibilities, provided clear frameworks for teachers to address responsibility development systematically.

Social Competence as Foundation for Character Education

The strong social competence demonstrated by participating teachers aligns with theoretical frameworks emphasizing teachers' multifaceted roles in character education. Teachers' effective communication, collaborative relationship-building, cultural responsiveness, and moral modeling created conditions enabling responsibility development. This finding resonates with research by Berkowitz and Bier (2021)

indicating that character education effectiveness depends significantly on educators' interpersonal competencies and ability to create caring learning communities. The study extends existing research by documenting how social competence manifests specifically in Indonesian Christian education contexts. Teachers' integration of faith-based values with culturally responsive practices illustrates the contextual nature of social competence, suggesting that effective character education requires teachers to navigate multiple cultural, religious, and developmental considerations simultaneously.

Mechanisms of Influence

Three primary mechanisms through which teachers' social competence fostered students' responsibility emerged from this research: modeling, structured experiences, and reflective dialogue. These mechanisms operated synergistically rather than independently, with modeling providing inspiration, structured experiences offering practice opportunities, and reflective dialogue facilitating internalization. The prominence of moral modeling confirms social cognitive theory's emphasis on observational learning in moral development. Bandura's work (2016) suggests that children learn social behaviors primarily by observing and imitating significant adults. Teachers' consistent demonstration of responsible behaviors provided concrete examples that made abstract concepts tangible and achievable for students. Structured experiential learning activities, particularly service-learning projects, proved especially powerful for developing responsibility. These findings align with Dewey's experiential learning theory and contemporary research on service-learning effectiveness. When students engaged in authentic helping activities, they experienced the emotional rewards of contributing positively to others' lives, potentially motivating continued responsible behavior. The integration of biblical narratives as teaching tools represents a distinctive feature of Christian education contexts. Teachers effectively used these stories not merely for religious instruction but as frameworks for discussing contemporary social responsibilities. This approach demonstrates how religious education can bridge traditional wisdom with current life challenges, providing students with both moral guidance and practical application strategies. Students' development across three responsibility domains—self, others, and community—reflects comprehensive character growth rather than narrow behavioral compliance. This holistic development suggests that when responsibility is framed within relational and communal contexts, rather than solely as individual duty, students develop more integrated moral understanding. The progression from self-responsibility to responsibility toward others and community mirrors developmental theories suggesting that moral growth involves expanding circles of concern and increasing capacity for perspective-taking. Elementary-age students, according to Kohlberg's moral development framework and Selman's perspective-taking stages, are developing abilities to consider others' viewpoints and recognize social obligations. Teachers' strategies appeared developmentally appropriate, providing scaffolding that supported students at their current levels while encouraging advancement. Notably, students developed not only behavioral competencies (helping actions, conflict resolution skills) but also cognitive-affective capacities, including empathy, moral reasoning, and commitment to responsibility as a core value. This multidimensional development suggests that effective character education addresses head, heart, and hands—thinking, feeling, and acting responsibly. The challenges

identified, particularly limited parental involvement and competing external influences, reflect broader tensions in contemporary Indonesian society between traditional communal values and increasingly individualistic orientations. These challenges are not unique to this school but represent systemic issues requiring coordinated responses across family, school, religious, and community institutions. The time constraint challenge highlights a persistent dilemma in character education: developing virtues requires sustained, intensive engagement, yet educational systems prioritize academic content coverage. This tension necessitates creative approaches to character education integration across curricula and school activities, rather than confining it to limited religious education time. Findings suggest several implications for educational practice. First, teacher preparation and professional development programs should prioritize social competence development, including communication skills, relationship-building capacities, and cultural responsiveness, alongside content knowledge and pedagogical techniques. Given social competence's influence on character education effectiveness, investing in teachers' interpersonal capabilities represents a strategic priority. Second, schools should create structures supporting teacher-parent collaboration in character education. Parent education programs, regular communication about character development goals and strategies, and involvement of parents in service-learning activities could enhance consistency between home and school environments. Third, curriculum developers should ensure adequate time allocation for religious education and support experiential, reflective pedagogies that facilitate character development. Providing high-quality teaching resources, including scenarios, service-learning activity guides, and reflection protocols, would enhance teachers' capacity to implement effective character education. Finally, school leaders should cultivate institutional cultures that value and systematically support character education across all aspects of school life. When responsibility development is integrated into school policies, practices, and relationships rather than isolated in religious education classes, students receive consistent messages reinforcing these values. This study's limitations should be acknowledged. First, the research focused on a single school, limiting generalizability to other contexts. Schools with different demographics, resources, or leadership may experience different dynamics between teacher social competence and student character development. Second, the four-month data collection period, while sufficient for identifying patterns, provided limited evidence of long-term sustainability of students' responsibility development. Longitudinal research tracking students over multiple years would illuminate whether observed changes persist and influence later life outcomes. Third, data relied primarily on self-reports and researcher observations, which may be subject to social desirability biases or observer effects. While triangulation enhanced credibility, incorporating additional measures such as peer ratings or behavioral assessments in naturalistic settings outside school would strengthen findings. Finally, this study examined teachers' influence while controlling less systematically for other factors affecting students' responsibility development, including family influences, peer relationships, media exposure, and individual personality characteristics. Future research employing more complex research designs could better isolate teachers' unique contributions relative to these other influences.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Christian Religious Education teachers' social competence significantly influences elementary students' development of social responsibility at SD Negeri 064981 Medan Helvetia. Teachers exhibiting strong communication skills, collaborative relationships, cultural responsiveness, and moral modeling created learning environments conducive to responsibility development. Through strategic approaches including experiential learning, reflective practices, and integration of biblical narratives, teachers fostered students' growth in self-responsibility, responsibility toward others, and community responsibility. The findings underscore that effective character education in religious education contexts depends not solely on curriculum content but fundamentally on teachers' interpersonal competencies and ability to create authentic, caring relationships with students. Teachers' social competence enables them to serve as both instructors and moral exemplars, providing knowledge, skills, inspiration, and support that facilitate students' character development. Despite challenges including limited parental involvement, time constraints, and competing external influences, participating teachers demonstrated remarkable dedication and creativity in fulfilling their character education responsibilities. Their efforts, supported by collaborative school cultures and relevant curricula, yielded measurable improvements in students' responsible behaviors and attitudes across multiple domains. Moving forward, educational stakeholders should prioritize social competence development in teacher preparation and professional development, create structures supporting school-family collaboration in character education, ensure adequate resources and time for experiential religious education approaches, and cultivate school cultures systematically valuing character development. By strengthening teachers' social competencies and providing supportive conditions for their character education work, schools can more effectively fulfill their mission of developing not only knowledgeable but also morally responsible citizens. Future research should explore these dynamics across diverse school contexts, examine long-term outcomes of elementary character education, investigate specific pedagogical strategies' relative effectiveness, and consider how teacher social competence intersects with other factors influencing character development. Such research would provide deeper understanding of pathways through which education contributes to students' moral growth and social responsibility, informing more effective policies and practices supporting this vital educational goal.

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