



The Teacher's Role in Fostering Social Harmony Based on Matthew 7:12: A Case Study at SD Negeri 173178 Bonan Dolok

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the teacher's role in fostering social harmony through the application of Matthew 7:12-the Golden Rule-within the elementary school context of SD Negeri 173178 Bonan Dolok. Drawing on a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of 37 high-relevance sources, the research integrates biblical exegesis with contemporary educational theory to articulate how the ethic of "treating others as you would have them treat you" can be translated into pedagogical practice. Exegetical insights highlight that the Greek imperative poieite ("do") denotes deliberate and continuous moral action, while the phrase "in everything" underscores the universality of this ethic. These theological dimensions reveal the Golden Rule as a comprehensive moral framework for shaping interpersonal relationships, empathy, and communal responsibility. The SLR findings further show that teachers serve as ethical models and relational leaders whose attitudes, behaviors, and instructional choices significantly influence students' social development. Educational literature demonstrates that classrooms characterized by respect, emotional safety, and positive social interactions-qualities aligned with Matthew 7:12-promote enhanced motivation, cooperation, and conflict resolution skills. Contextual analysis of SD Negeri 173178 Bonan Dolok confirms that socio-economic diversity and emotional challenges among students necessitate pedagogical approaches grounded in fairness, compassion, and reciprocity. The study concludes that the Golden Rule offers a biblically grounded yet universally relevant pedagogical framework capable of shaping harmonious classroom cultures. By embodying and intentionally applying this ethic, Christian Religious Education teachers can cultivate relationally healthy learning environments, strengthen character formation, and contribute to the development of socially cohesive school communities. The findings provide a foundation for integrating biblical ethics with contemporary educational practice in pluralistic Indonesian classrooms.

Keywords: Social Harmony, Christian Religious Education, Teaching Model

INTRODUCTION

Education in pluralistic societies requires teachers to function not merely as transmitters of knowledge but also as moral and social architects who guide students toward harmonious coexistence. In Indonesia-one of the world's most religiously and ethnically diverse nations-schools serve as microcosms of this diversity, where social harmony must be intentionally cultivated through pedagogical practices grounded in ethical and spiritual values. The responsibility to nurture harmonious relationships becomes especially essential in public elementary schools such as SD Negeri 173178 Bonan Dolok, where students come from varied social backgrounds and experience daily interactions that shape their worldview. Within this context, Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers are called to embody biblical ethics in ways that positively shape interpersonal relationships and classroom culture. One of the most powerful scriptural foundations for guiding such ethical formation is found in the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 7:12, commonly known as the Golden Rule: *"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you."* This ethical directive presents a holistic framework for nurturing mutual respect, empathy, and social cohesion-values central to the mission of contemporary education (Stott, 2006). Matthew 7:12 stands as the climactic summary of Jesus' ethical instructions within the Sermon on the Mount. The verse encapsulates the fundamental moral principle that human relationships ought to be governed by reciprocity, empathy, and active goodwill. Scholars note that the Greek verb for "do" (*poieite*) indicates continuous and intentional action, implying that ethical conduct is an ongoing commitment rather than a passive stance (Keener, 1999). The phrase "in everything" (*en pasin*) broadens the command to encompass all dimensions of life-social, emotional, and spiritual-thus positioning the Golden Rule as a comprehensive norm for interpersonal relationships (Hagner, 1993). Moreover, Matthew's addition, "for this sums up the Law and the Prophets," underscores the centrality of this ethic within the overarching biblical narrative, revealing that social harmony is not peripheral but intrinsic to God's moral vision for humanity (Wright, 2012). Such exegetical insights affirm that teachers, as moral exemplars, are tasked with translating this biblical ethic into concrete educational practices that shape students' character and communal behavior. In the contemporary educational landscape, social harmony is increasingly recognized as an indispensable component of effective learning environments. Research shows that classrooms characterized by mutual respect, emotional safety, and positive social relations significantly enhance student engagement, motivation, and overall well-being (Hattie, 2012). Teachers thus play a formative role not only in establishing rules but also in cultivating habits of empathy, cooperation, and conflict resolution among learners (Day, 2017). Within Christian education, this responsibility is further deepened by theological commitments that emphasize the dignity of every human being and the moral imperative to love one's neighbor. In this sense, Matthew 7:12 functions as both an ethical compass and a pedagogical strategy for shaping character and community behavior. The Golden Rule encourages teachers to foster classroom interactions rooted in fairness, compassion, and respect-qualities indispensable for navigating diversity in schools.

The locus of this study, SD Negeri 173178 Bonan Dolok, presents a compelling context for examining how the Golden Rule informs the teacher's role in building social harmony. The school community is characterized by varied socio-economic backgrounds-some students

come from stable family environments, while others face emotional or social pressures linked to economic limitations or fragmented family structures. Such diversity can lead to interpersonal conflicts, peer exclusion, or communication barriers. Consequently, the CRE teacher is challenged to become a mediator, role model, and facilitator who integrates moral teaching with daily classroom practices. This task includes guiding students in understanding differences, resolving conflicts constructively, and practicing empathy in real-life interactions. The biblical ethic of Matthew 7:12 thus serves as a transformative resource for nurturing a culture where students treat one another with dignity and kindness. Existing studies often discuss moral education in general terms without grounding it firmly in biblical exegesis or examining its implementation in specific educational contexts (Pazmiño, 2010). Therefore, this study aims to bridge that gap by integrating exegetical insights from Matthew 7:12 with practical observations from SD Negeri 173178 Bonan Dolok. The goal is to articulate how teachers can operationalize biblical ethics to create environments conducive to social harmony. This research seeks to: analyze the theological and exegetical dimensions of Matthew 7:12 as a foundation for social harmony, explore how CRE teachers at SD Negeri 173178 Bonan Dolok apply the Golden Rule in their pedagogical practices, and propose a model of teacher engagement that synthesizes biblical ethics with contemporary educational theory. Through this integration, the study aspires to contribute to both Christian educational scholarship and the development of harmonious school communities.

METHODS

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to investigate the teacher's role in fostering social harmony based on the ethical principles of Matthew 7:12, with specific attention to its relevance for educational practice at SD Negeri 173178 Bonan Dolok. The SLR was chosen to ensure a rigorous, transparent, and replicable process for synthesizing previous research on biblical ethics, teacher competence, social harmony, and Christian Religious Education (CRE). The review process followed three principal stages: planning, conducting, and reporting. In the planning stage, the research problem was clearly defined, focusing on how the Golden Rule can be operationalized pedagogically to build harmonious classroom environments. A protocol was developed to guide the search, inclusion criteria, and synthesis procedures, aligning with established guidelines for systematic reviews in educational and theological research. During the conducting stage, comprehensive searches were carried out across multiple academic databases using combinations of keywords. To ensure relevance and depth, the inclusion criteria required that selected literature addressed biblical interpretation of Matthew 7:12, discussed moral or character education frameworks, explored teacher roles in promoting social harmony, or analyzed CRE practices in primary school contexts. Publications between 2000 and 2024 were included to capture both classical and contemporary perspectives on ethics and education. Exclusion criteria eliminated sources that were purely devotional, lacked methodological grounding, or did not explicitly link ethics with educational practice. After removing duplicates, 142 articles and books were initially identified, of which 63 met the preliminary criteria. A further screening based on full-text relevance resulted in 37 sources included for final synthesis. Each selected text was analyzed using thematic coding procedures, enabling the identification of recurring

themes such as biblical reciprocity, empathy-based pedagogy, conflict resolution, teacher modeling, and classroom relational dynamics. Special attention was given to exegetical works on Matthew 7:12 to ensure that interpretations used in this study were grounded in credible scholarship. Data extraction matrices were used to compare findings across studies, evaluate conceptual overlaps, and highlight the relationship between biblical ethics and pedagogical strategies. The synthesized findings were then contextualized to the realities of SD Negeri 173178 Bonan Dolok, using a contextualization framework that aligns theological principles with socio-cultural and educational environments. This method allowed the study to construct a theoretically sound, biblically grounded, and practically relevant understanding of how teachers can foster social harmony through the application of Matthew 7:12. Finally, the reporting stage ensured that the SLR adhered to standards of transparency, presenting the search process, selection logic, and thematic synthesis clearly to allow for replication and critical evaluation. Through this systematic approach, the study integrates theological exegesis with educational research, offering a robust foundation for analyzing the teacher's role in cultivating harmonious classroom communities.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study, derived from a comprehensive Systematic Literature Review (SLR), reveal that the application of Matthew 7:12-the Golden Rule-provides a robust ethical and pedagogical framework for fostering social harmony within the context of elementary education, particularly at SD Negeri 173178 Bonan Dolok. Through synthesis of 37 high-relevance sources, several interrelated themes emerged: the theological foundation and exegetical meaning of Matthew 7:12, the teacher's ethical and relational role in promoting harmonious interactions, the pedagogical implications of the Golden Rule for character formation, conflict resolution, and classroom culture, and the contextual relevance of these insights for CRE teachers in Indonesian public schools. These themes collectively demonstrate that the Golden Rule is both an ancient biblical ethic and a contemporary pedagogical resource capable of shaping learning environments that are emotionally safe, relationally constructive, and morally transformative. The first major theme concerns the exegetical and theological interpretation of Matthew 7:12. The literature consistently emphasizes that this verse serves as a summative principle within Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, encapsulating the essence of the Law and the Prophets. Scholars highlight that the Greek imperative *poieite* ("do") reflects deliberate, continuous ethical action, underscoring that moral responsibility is not passive but requires intentionality and practice (Hagner, 1993; Keener, 1999). Furthermore, the phrase "in everything" indicates that the Golden Rule is universal, not restricted to specific situations but applicable to all interpersonal contexts. The theological emphasis on reciprocity-treating others as one wishes to be treated-positions this principle as a cornerstone of Christian ethics and a foundation for community life (Stott, 2006). This exegetical foundation suggests that social harmony in schools must begin with ethical awareness, empathy, and active moral responsibility, values central to Christian discipleship and educational praxis. In educational contexts, this means that teachers must both model and teach an ethic that transcends rule-following and fosters internalized moral reasoning (Wright, 2012). The SLR strongly supports the conclusion that the biblical ethic articulated in Matthew 7:12 provides a theologically grounded moral compass for guiding

interpersonal relationships in the classroom. The second theme emerging from the literature is the critical role of teachers as ethical models and relational leaders. Numerous studies underscore that a teacher's personal conduct significantly influences the moral development and social behavior of students (Day, 2017; Hattie, 2012). Teachers who embody empathy, fairness, patience, and respect create relational climates that encourage students to emulate similar behaviors. This aligns with the ethic of reciprocity in Matthew 7:12, which requires individuals to anticipate the experiences of others and act with integrity. In the context of SD Negeri 173178 Bonan Dolok, where students come from diverse socio-economic and emotional backgrounds, the teacher's relational posture becomes especially important. The literature indicates that students in such environments often look to teachers for emotional stability, guidance, and affirmation. As such, the teacher becomes a moral exemplar whose actions shape students' perceptions of right relationships. The Golden Rule requires teachers to be consistent in their behavior, equitable in discipline, sensitive to student needs, and proactive in conflict mitigation. This aligns with the findings of educational theorists who argue that the teacher's relational qualities—such as warmth, cultural sensitivity, and empathetic communication—are decisive factors in building socially cohesive classrooms (Goleman, 2006; Anderson, 2001). Therefore, the SLR affirms that teachers must embody the ethical dimensions of Matthew 7:12 in their everyday interactions, serving as living demonstrations of the principles they teach. The third thematic finding pertains to the pedagogical implications of the Golden Rule for classroom management, character formation, and cooperative learning. The literature reveals that classrooms grounded in reciprocal respect and ethical awareness experience higher levels of student engagement, lower incidences of conflict, and stronger peer relationships (Hattie, 2012; Day, 2017). Several educational models—such as social-emotional learning (SEL), character education, and restorative practices—demonstrate striking conceptual resonance with the biblical principle of Matthew 7:12. For example, SEL emphasizes self-awareness, relationship skills, empathy, and responsible decision-making, all of which are embedded in the Golden Rule's call for ethical reciprocity. Character education frameworks similarly prioritize moral virtues such as respect, kindness, responsibility, and fairness, which echo the teachings of Jesus on treating others as one desires to be treated. Restorative approaches to discipline emphasize dialogue, empathy, and mutual understanding—again closely aligned with the biblical ethic. These parallels suggest that Matthew 7:12 offers a theological foundation for educational practices already proven effective in contemporary pedagogy. In practical terms, this means that the Golden Rule can inform specific strategies such as cooperative learning activities, peer mentoring, dialogical conflict resolution, moral reflection sessions, and service-learning projects. The SLR also reveals that integrating biblical ethics with pedagogical methods strengthens students' moral reasoning and internal motivation for prosocial behavior (Pazmiño, 2010). Thus, the Golden Rule is not merely a moral ideal but a pedagogical tool capable of shaping instructional design and classroom dynamics. A fourth major finding concerns the contextual application of Matthew 7:12 in Indonesian public schools, particularly SD Negeri 173178 Bonan Dolok. The school's social environment is marked by heterogeneous student experiences: some learners come from stable families, while others face emotional strain, economic limitations, or a lack of parental attention. Such variance creates relational challenges that can manifest as peer conflict, exclusion, bullying, or

misunderstanding. The literature on Indonesian education highlights the importance of cultivating harmony in diverse learning environments, emphasizing that teachers must address social tensions through culturally sensitive and spiritually grounded practices (van der Walt, 2020). Within CRE classrooms, Matthew 7:12 provides a theological justification for promoting empathy, cooperation, and kindness as core learning objectives. Teachers at SD Negeri 173178 Bonan Dolok can apply the Golden Rule through daily routines-greeting students warmly, facilitating inclusive group work, encouraging students to express their feelings constructively, and guiding them to consider the perspectives of their peers. Moreover, the literature suggests that schools experiencing socio-economic diversity benefit from moral frameworks that emphasize dignity, mutual care, and shared responsibility (Richardson, 2018). The Golden Rule's universal moral appeal makes it exceptionally suitable for fostering unity in such contexts. Even in a pluralistic public-school setting, Matthew 7:12 offers principles that resonate with broader ethical traditions, enabling teachers to inspire harmonious behavior without imposing doctrinal boundaries. The SLR also reveals key challenges that may limit the effective application of the Golden Rule: inconsistent modeling by teachers, lack of structured character education programs, limited training in conflict resolution, and insufficient integration of biblical ethics with instructional strategies. In some cases, teachers focus primarily on cognitive instruction, neglecting the relational and moral dimensions of their role. Other studies note that teachers occasionally struggle to manage their own emotional responses, which can undermine their ability to teach empathy and respect effectively (Goleman, 2006). These challenges underscore the importance of ongoing teacher formation-spiritual, emotional, and pedagogical. CRE teachers, in particular, must cultivate spiritual sensitivity and professional competence to apply Matthew 7:12 consistently and authentically. The findings consistently demonstrate that teachers who intentionally integrate the Golden Rule into their pedagogy witness significant improvement in classroom relationships, student cooperation, and overall school climate. The ethical clarity of Matthew 7:12 provides teachers with a simple yet transformative principle: treat students with the same fairness, patience, and dignity that one hopes to receive. This principle, when embodied authentically, fosters an atmosphere of trust and belonging-key pillars of social harmony. The results highlight that Matthew 7:12 is not only a theological guideline but also a pedagogically relevant principle capable of shaping relational and moral dynamics in schools. By embodying and applying this ethic, teachers at SD Negeri 173178 Bonan Dolok can cultivate learning environments that reflect the values of respect, empathy, and mutual care-values essential to both Christian education and broader societal harmony.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study affirm that Matthew 7:12-the Golden Rule-provides a powerful theological and pedagogical foundation for fostering social harmony within the pluralistic educational environment of SD Negeri 173178 Bonan Dolok. Through a systematic synthesis of exegetical scholarship and contemporary educational literature, this study demonstrates that the ethical imperative "do to others what you would have them do to you" extends beyond a personal moral guideline; it is a transformative relational principle capable of shaping classroom culture, influencing student behavior, and strengthening communal life. In a diverse public-school context where students exhibit varied socio-

economic, emotional, and familial backgrounds, the Golden Rule functions as a universal ethic that bridges differences and nurtures empathy, respect, and cooperative interaction. The study highlights that teachers-particularly Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers-play a pivotal role as moral exemplars, relationship-builders, and facilitators of ethical awareness. The literature consistently shows that students' social development is deeply influenced by the relational qualities and behavioral consistency of their teachers. Therefore, the teacher's embodiment of Matthew 7:12 becomes essential for guiding students toward prosocial dispositions. By approaching students with fairness, patience, and compassion, teachers provide a living demonstration of reciprocity and dignity, modeling the very attitudes they expect students to adopt. Such modeling fosters emotional safety, mutual trust, and a climate where conflicts are less frequent and more constructively resolved. The integration of exegetical insights into pedagogical practice also reinforces the depth and relevance of the Golden Rule. The Greek imperative *poieite* emphasizes continuous, intentional ethical action, reminding teachers that social harmony is cultivated not through isolated interventions but through daily, consistent relational engagement. Likewise, the phrase "in everything" underscores the principle's comprehensive scope, guiding teachers to apply moral reciprocity across all instructional and interpersonal interactions. In this regard, the Golden Rule becomes not only a moral compass but also a holistic pedagogical framework that informs lesson planning, classroom management, conflict mediation, and character formation. The study illuminates how the Golden Rule aligns with contemporary educational approaches such as social-emotional learning (SEL), character education, and restorative practices-all of which prioritize empathy, responsibility, and relational understanding. This alignment demonstrates that biblical ethics can be meaningfully integrated with modern pedagogical strategies to strengthen social harmony without imposing religious doctrine. Such integration is especially relevant in Indonesian public schools where diversity demands approaches that are ethically robust yet culturally inclusive. The Golden Rule, with its universal moral resonance, offers precisely such a foundation. The study also identifies challenges that may hinder effective implementation, including inconsistent teacher modeling, limited training in moral pedagogy, and insufficient focus on relational competencies. These challenges highlight the need for ongoing teacher formation that integrates spiritual maturity with professional skill development. CRE teachers in particular must cultivate spiritual sensitivity grounded in Scripture while developing pedagogical competence that allows them to translate biblical ethics into daily practice. Matthew 7:12 emerges as a vital resource for cultivating harmonious classroom communities. When teachers embody and intentionally operationalize the Golden Rule, they contribute not only to improved student relationships but also to the broader mission of shaping morally grounded, empathetic, and socially responsible young citizens. The study thus affirms that the teacher's role in fostering social harmony is both a theological mandate and an educational necessity-one that holds profound relevance for the context of SD Negeri 173178 Bonan Dolok and for pluralistic educational settings more broadly.

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