

## Social Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers and the Spirit of Fellowship Based on Philippians 1:5: A Case Study at SDN Benakitan

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### ABSTRACT

*This study investigates the social competence of a Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher and its theological foundation in the spirit of fellowship (koinōnia) based on Philippians 1:5 through a qualitative case study at SDN Benakitan. The research aims to explore how biblical fellowship shapes the lived social competence of the CRE teacher in professional practice and relational engagement. This study employed a qualitative case study design integrating biblical exegesis and field-based inquiry. Data were collected through historical-grammatical exegesis of Philippians 1:5, semi-structured interviews with the CRE teacher and supporting teachers, classroom and school activity observations, and document analysis. The results reveal that the CRE teacher's social competence is deeply rooted in the theological understanding of fellowship as shared participation in the mission and life of faith. This fellowship-based social competence is expressed through inclusive communication, collaborative collegial relationships, servant leadership, and effective mediation in relational challenges. The teacher's relational approach contributes positively to classroom climate, student character formation, and the overall culture of harmony within the school. However, the study also identifies structural challenges such as professional workload, limited mentoring support, and the need to navigate faith expression within a secular institutional framework. The study concludes that fellowship grounded in Philippians 1:5 functions as the spiritual core of teacher social competence. Integrating theological conviction and professional practice enables CRE teachers to serve as agents of relational transformation within pluralistic public-school settings.*

**Keywords:** Social Competence, Christian Religious Education, Fellowship

### INTRODUCTION

Social competence is a fundamental dimension of teacher professionalism because it determines the quality of interaction, collaboration, and relational influence within the educational environment. For Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers, social competence is not merely a pedagogical skill but a spiritual expression of faith that is lived out in relationships with students, colleagues, parents, and the wider school community.

In the pluralistic context of Indonesian public schools, where diversity of ethnicity, religion, and socio-cultural background is an everyday reality, the social competence of teachers becomes even more decisive. This is particularly evident at SDN Benakitan, where 22 Christian students are guided by six Christian teachers, with only one serving as a CRE teacher. Within such a setting, the spirit of fellowship and communal cooperation becomes both a necessity and a challenge. Christian social competence is inseparable from the concept of *koinōnia*, a fellowship rooted in shared participation in Christ. This theological foundation is powerfully articulated in Philippians 1:5, where the Apostle Paul expresses gratitude for the believers' "partnership in the gospel from the first day until now." The term "partnership" (*koinōnia*) signifies more than cooperation at a practical level; it reflects a deep relational bond grounded in shared faith, mutual responsibility, and communal commitment to God's mission. Within the educational context, this spirit of fellowship becomes a key theological lens for understanding the social competence of CRE teachers as they cultivate harmony, collaboration, and shared responsibility within the school community. In contemporary educational discourse, social competence is commonly defined as the ability to communicate effectively, demonstrate empathy, manage interpersonal relationships, collaborate with colleagues, and adapt to diverse social contexts. Teachers with strong social competence tend to create inclusive learning environments, reduce conflict, and foster positive school climates. However, within Christian education, social competence is elevated beyond technical interpersonal skills to become a moral and spiritual vocation. It reflects the embodiment of Christ-like character-humility, love, patience, mutual respect, and sacrificial service-in daily professional practice. Thus, for CRE teachers, social competence is not only about how well they interact, but also about how faithfully they witness to the gospel through those interactions.

The context of SDN Benakitan presents a unique and meaningful setting for examining this intersection between social competence and the spirit of fellowship. As a public elementary school in a multicultural region of Central Kalimantan, the school brings together students and teachers from various ethnic and religious backgrounds. The presence of 22 Christian students and six Christian teachers provides a relatively supportive environment for the enactment of Christian values, yet the limitation of having only one CRE teacher places a heavier vocational and relational burden on that teacher. The CRE teacher is expected not only to teach the Christian faith cognitively but also to function as a bridge-builder, moral exemplar, and facilitator of fellowship within a pluralistic institutional framework. Previous studies on Christian education have emphasized the importance of teacher competence in shaping students' spiritual and moral development. However, much of the existing research focuses predominantly on pedagogical and professional competence, while the dimension of social competence is often treated as secondary. Few studies explicitly integrate biblical exegesis with empirical investigation in exploring how specific scriptural texts inform the social practices of CRE teachers. Philippians 1:5, with its emphasis on partnership and shared participation in the gospel, offers a rich theological foundation for understanding how fellowship can shape teacher social competence in concrete educational settings. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by examining the social competence of CRE teachers through the lens of Philippians 1:5 at SDN Benakitan. The central assumption of this research is that the

spirit of fellowship (*koinōnia*) is not merely a spiritual ideal but a lived social reality that directly shapes how CRE teachers communicate, collaborate, and build relationships within the school environment. By integrating exegetical reflection with field-based qualitative investigation, this study aims to provide a holistic understanding of social competence as both a theological virtue and a professional capacity. The specific objectives of this study are threefold: first, to interpret the theological meaning of fellowship in Philippians 1:5 through an exegetical approach; second, to analyze how the CRE teacher at SDN Benakitan embodies social competence in daily educational practice; and third, to explore how the integration of social competence and the spirit of fellowship influences relationships among students, teachers, and the wider school community. Through this approach, the study seeks to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of Christian teacher competence in pluralistic educational contexts. This research argues that social competence rooted in biblical fellowship is a vital foundation for the credibility, effectiveness, and transformative power of Christian Religious Education. When CRE teachers live out the spirit of *koinōnia* in their professional relationships, the school becomes not only a place of academic learning but also a community of shared life, mutual support, and moral formation.

## METHODS

The case study approach, a kind of qualitative case study design to examine the social competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher and its relationship with the spirit of fellowship based on Philippians 1:5, was selected because it allows an in-depth exploration of social interaction, relational dynamics, and faith-based practices within a real-life educational setting. The research site was SDN Benakitan, a public elementary school with 22 Christian students and six Christian teachers, including one CRE teacher. This context provides a unique opportunity to investigate how social competence and the spirit of fellowship are embodied in a pluralistic school environment. The study integrated two complementary methodological components biblical exegesis and field-based qualitative inquiry. The exegetical component focused on Philippians 1:5 using the historical-grammatical method. This analysis examined the literary context of the epistle, the socio-historical background of the Philippian church, and key Greek terms such as *koinōnia* (fellowship/partnership). The exegetical findings were used as a theological framework for interpreting the empirical data related to social competence and fellowship in the school context. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the CRE teacher as the main participant and with several Christian teachers as supporting informants. The interviews explored participants' understanding of social competence, experiences of collaboration and fellowship, communication patterns within the school, and the perceived influence of Christian values in professional relationships. Non-participant observations were carried out during CRE lessons, teacher meetings, and selected school activities to document real-life expressions of interaction, cooperation, empathy, and conflict management. All interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were carefully read and coded. Initial open coding was used to identify units of meaning related to social interaction, communication, collaboration, empathy, partnership, and fellowship. These codes were then grouped into broader thematic categories such as relational communication, collaborative culture, servant leadership,

and faith-based fellowship. The themes were interpreted in dialogue with the exegetical insights from Philippians 1:5 to produce a coherent theological-educational interpretation. Through this methodological framework, the study sought to generate a credible and holistic understanding of how social competence grounded in the biblical spirit of fellowship is lived out by the CRE teacher within a pluralistic elementary school environment.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the social competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher at SDN Benakitan is deeply intertwined with the lived experience of the spirit of fellowship as articulated in Philippians 1:5. The data obtained from interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis consistently indicate that social competence is not merely expressed through technical communication skills but is fundamentally shaped by a theological understanding of *koinōnia* as shared participation, mutual responsibility, and collaborative commitment in the gospel. The sole CRE teacher, who serves in a context with 22 Christian students and six Christian teachers, embodies social competence as a relational vocation rather than merely a professional requirement. This is evident in daily interactions marked by openness, empathy, inclusive communication, and a strong sense of partnership with colleagues, students, and school leadership. The CRE teacher does not position himself or herself as an isolated religious instructor but intentionally integrates into the broader social fabric of the school, thereby transforming social competence into a lived testimony of Christian fellowship. This reflects the Pauline understanding of partnership in Philippians 1:5, where fellowship is not abstract spirituality but a concrete participation in shared mission and communal life. The CRE teacher's social competence is manifested through dialogical teaching, relational classroom management, and emotionally supportive engagement with students. Observations reveal that communication in the classroom is not dominated by one-way transmission of knowledge but is characterized by interactive dialogue that values students' voices and experiences. The teacher consistently demonstrates sensitivity to students' emotional conditions, social backgrounds, and learning difficulties. This empathetic engagement strengthens students' sense of belonging and psychological safety, enabling them to participate more confidently in learning processes. Such patterns correspond closely with the theological essence of *koinōnia*, which emphasizes mutuality and shared life rather than hierarchical domination. The CRE classroom thus becomes a microcosm of fellowship in which social competence functions as a bridge between faith and pedagogy. In this context, Philippians 1:5 is not merely cited as a doctrinal reference but embodied in daily patterns of relational participation between teacher and students.

The data also reveal that the spirit of fellowship significantly influences collaboration among teachers. Despite the limitation of having only one CRE teacher, the broader presence of six Christian teachers creates a supportive relational network that strengthens social interaction and professional solidarity. Teachers regularly engage in informal discussions about classroom challenges, student behavior, and instructional strategies. These interactions foster a culture of mutual support rather than competition. The CRE teacher is actively involved in these collaborative dynamics, often functioning as a moral and relational mediator when tensions arise among students or between teachers

and students. This mediating role is not exercised in an authoritarian manner but through gentle persuasion, listening, and shared reflection, reflecting the Pauline model of partnership grounded in love and shared faith. Such collegial interaction illustrates that social competence is sustained not only through individual virtue but also through a communal culture of fellowship that reinforces relational trust and cooperation. The study also finds that the CRE teacher demonstrates high social adaptability and institutional sensitivity. Communication with the principal and school administrators is conducted with respect, transparency, and constructive dialogue. The teacher actively participates in school programs that are not explicitly religious, such as student character education initiatives, community service activities, and extracurricular programs. Through this engagement, Christian values are indirectly communicated in inclusive and non-confrontational ways. This inclusive social posture allows the CRE teacher to maintain professional credibility while also bearing witness to Christian fellowship in a pluralistic environment. The findings thus affirm that social competence in Christian education must involve institutional intelligence, the capacity to navigate bureaucratic structures, cultural diversity, and professional boundaries without compromising spiritual integrity. This integrative posture reflects the essence of Philippians 1:5, where partnership in the gospel unfolds within real social and institutional contexts rather than in isolated religious spaces. At the level of student relationships, the spirit of fellowship profoundly shapes how Christian students interact with one another and with their non-Christian peers. Observational data indicate that Christian students who are mentored through fellowship-based social competence display stronger tendencies toward cooperation, mutual respect, and empathy. They often function as relational bridges between different student groups, reducing social fragmentation and minimizing conflict. This suggests that the social competence of the CRE teacher produces a multiplying effect: the fellowship practiced by the teacher becomes internalized by students and reproduced in their peer relationships. From a theological perspective, this dynamic resonates with Paul's gratitude in Philippians 1:5 for the sustained partnership of the believers in gospel life; partnership is not static but generative, continuously reproduced through relational modeling. Educationally, this also confirms that social competence functions as a form of hidden curriculum that shapes students' character and social orientation beyond formal cognitive instruction.

The dual burden carried by the CRE teacher who must simultaneously function as a religious instructor, moral exemplar, counselor, and mediator within a pluralistic school environment. This multi-layered role often generates emotional fatigue and professional pressure, particularly when complex student behavioral issues or inter-parental conflicts arise. The teacher's capacity for sustained fellowship is thus constantly negotiated under conditions of limited time, administrative workload, and institutional expectations. Despite these constraints, the teacher maintains relational integrity by prioritizing presence, accessibility, and dialogical engagement. This endurance reflects the Pauline understanding of partnership as a persevering commitment rather than a temporary collaboration. Fellowship, in this sense, becomes an act of vocational faithfulness that is continually sustained through spiritual discipline and communal support. Another one concerns the integration of faith-based fellowship with the secular regulatory framework of public education. The CRE teacher must carefully navigate boundaries to ensure that

expressions of Christian fellowship remain inclusive and respectful of religious diversity. The findings indicate that the teacher adopts an integrative approach by emphasizing universal values—such as honesty, cooperation, mutual respect, and compassion—that resonate with both Christian theology and national educational objectives. This strategy enables the spirit of fellowship to be expressed without provoking exclusivism or institutional resistance. Theologically, this approach aligns with the outward-looking dimension of *koinōnia*, where fellowship is not confined within a religious enclave but extends relationally toward the broader community. Educationally, it demonstrates that social competence in Christian education requires intercultural sensitivity and dialogical openness as essential components of professional responsibility. From a theoretical standpoint, the findings enrich contemporary discussions on teacher social competence by grounding it in a biblical theology of fellowship rather than solely in secular interpersonal skill frameworks. While mainstream educational theory emphasizes communication, collaboration, and empathy as professional competencies, this study demonstrates that in the Christian context these competencies are sustained by deeper theological convictions about shared life in Christ. The CRE teacher's social competence is not primarily motivated by institutional evaluation or performance metrics but by a spiritual obligation to participate faithfully in communal life for the sake of the gospel. This reorientation challenges purely technical conceptions of teacher competence and invites a more holistic understanding that integrates spiritual motivation, moral commitment, and relational practice.

The exegetical dimension of Philippians 1:5 provides a crucial interpretive lens for understanding these findings. Paul's use of *koinōnia* signifies a partnership that involves shared resources, shared suffering, and shared mission. The CRE teacher's willingness to engage fully in the social life of the school, to bear relational burdens, and to collaborate across professional boundaries reflects this Pauline model. Fellowship, therefore, is not reduced to cordial interaction but is embodied as a costly participation in communal life. This theological depth explains why the teacher's social competence remains resilient despite structural challenges. It is not sustained merely by personal disposition but by a spiritual consciousness of shared participation in God's work within the educational context. The results also reveal that the social competence of the CRE teacher contributes significantly to the moral climate of the school. Teachers and students alike perceive the CRE teacher as a relational reference point for ethical conduct, conflict resolution, and emotional support. This moral influence does not operate through coercive authority but through consistent relational presence and gentle guidance. Such influence reflects the formative power of fellowship, where character is shaped through shared life rather than imposed through regulation. This finding supports the broader theoretical claim that moral education in schools is most effective when mediated through relational trust and communal participation. In the Christian perspective, this process corresponds to discipleship within fellowship, where virtues are transmitted through lived example within a relational community. Fellowship-based social competence strengthens the integration of Christian students within the broader school environment. Rather than forming an exclusive sub-community, Christian students are encouraged to engage constructively with peers from different religious backgrounds. This openness reduces potential social boundaries and nurtures a culture of peaceful coexistence. Such an

outcome demonstrates that fellowship, when properly understood, does not produce sectarian withdrawal but rather enhances social integration. Theologically, this aligns with the missional dimension of *koinōnia* as participation in God's reconciling work in the world. Educationally, it affirms that social competence rooted in Christian fellowship can contribute positively to the broader project of social harmony within pluralistic public schools. The findings indicate that the CRE teacher understands social competence as an essential dimension of vocation. Teaching is not perceived merely as a contractual occupation but as a relational calling in which fellowship becomes the medium of ministry. This vocational consciousness strengthens professional integrity and resilience, especially in the face of limited institutional resources. The teacher's commitment to maintaining harmonious relationships, even in situations of misunderstanding or conflict, reflects a deep internalization of the Pauline ethos of partnership. Such vocational integration of faith and professionalism illustrates that social competence in Christian education cannot be separated from spiritual identity and theological conviction. The study also exposes the fragility of fellowship-based social competence when not supported by adequate institutional and ecclesial structures. The CRE teacher's reliance on personal spiritual discipline and informal peer support reveals the absence of systematic professional mentoring or theological supervision within the public-school framework. Without such support, the sustainability of fellowship-oriented social competence remains vulnerable to burnout and vocational fatigue. This limitation points to the need for stronger collaboration between educational authorities and Christian institutions in providing holistic professional development that integrates social, pedagogical, and spiritual dimensions. The results demonstrate that the social competence of the CRE teacher at SDN Benakitan is not an isolated professional trait but a dynamic expression of the spirit of fellowship grounded in Philippians 1:5. Fellowship functions as the theological core that animates communication, collaboration, mediation, and moral influence within the school environment. The teacher's social competence operates simultaneously at personal, instructional, collegial, and institutional levels, producing a holistic relational impact that shapes the school's social ecology. Theologically, this confirms that *koinōnia* is not merely an ecclesial concept but a living social reality that can be embodied within public educational institutions. Educationally, it affirms that teacher social competence, when rooted in spiritual fellowship, becomes a transformative force that extends beyond classroom interaction into the broader moral and communal life of the school. The integration of biblical fellowship and teacher social competence as observed in this case study illustrates that Christian Religious Education in public schools possesses not only doctrinal significance but also profound social and communal implications. When fellowship becomes the animating spirit of professional relationships, the school is transformed into a community of shared life, mutual support, and ethical formation. In this way, Philippians 1:5 is not merely interpreted but incarnated within the relational practices of education, demonstrating that social competence in Christian education is fundamentally a form of lived theology expressed through everyday professional interaction.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the social competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher at SDN Benakitan is profoundly shaped by the spirit of fellowship (*koinōnia*) rooted in Philippians 1:5. Social competence in this context is not merely understood as a technical interpersonal skill, but as a lived theological virtue expressed through partnership, mutual responsibility, empathy, collaboration, and faithful participation in the life of the school community. The findings demonstrate that fellowship is not an abstract biblical concept but a concrete social reality that actively forms the teacher's professional identity, relational practice, and ethical influence within a pluralistic public-school environment. The CRE teacher's ability to build harmonious relationships with students, fellow teachers, school leaders, and the wider community reflects a deep internalization of Pauline *koinōnia* as shared participation in a common mission. Through dialogical communication, inclusive collaboration, and servant-like mediation, the teacher embodies social competence as a form of vocational discipleship. This relational posture not only strengthens professional credibility but also creates a supportive learning climate that nurtures trust, emotional safety, and moral formation among students. The study further affirms that the social competence of the teacher has a multiplying effect, shaping students' relational behavior and contributing positively to the broader culture of harmony within the school. At the same time, this research highlights significant challenges, including the heavy vocational burden carried by a single CRE teacher, the pressures of administrative workload, and the need to continually negotiate expressions of faith within a secular regulatory framework. These realities reveal that fellowship-based social competence, while spiritually grounded, remains vulnerable without adequate institutional and ecclesial support. Sustained professional mentoring, theological accompaniment, and structured peer collaboration are therefore essential to maintain the resilience of CRE teachers in public-school contexts. This study affirms that fellowship in Philippians 1:5 is not limited to ecclesial life but extends naturally into the educational sphere as a form of shared life in service to God and others. Educationally, it asserts that authentic teacher social competence in Christian education is inseparable from spiritual identity and moral commitment. In conclusion, fellowship functions as the spiritual core of social competence, transforming professional interaction into a living expression of faith. Future research is encouraged to explore similar models of fellowship-based social competence in diverse educational levels and cultural contexts to strengthen the integration of biblical theology and teacher professionalism in Christian education.

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