



Journal of Christian Pedagogy and Theology



The Role of Christian Religious Education Teachers' Social Competence in Instilling Hope: A Case Study Based on Genesis 48:20 at SD No. 030294 Sigalingging-Dairi

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers' social competence in instilling hope among primary school students, grounded in Genesis 48:20. Conducted at SD No. 030294 Sigalingging-Dairi, involving 347 Christian students and two CRE teachers, the research investigates how teacher relational skills, empathy, and ethical modeling influence students' spiritual and emotional development. A qualitative descriptive case study design was employed, utilizing classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with the teachers, focused group discussions (FGDs) with selected students, and analysis of teaching materials. Findings reveal that teachers' social competence significantly impacts students' ability to internalize hope. Empathy and relational guidance created a supportive classroom environment where students felt understood, valued, and encouraged. Pedagogical strategies such as scenario-based exercises, storytelling, reflective questioning, journaling, and collaborative problem-solving effectively connected biblical principles with students' personal experiences, enabling them to see God's blessings as a source of hope. Teachers' modeling of Christ-centered behavior reinforced these lessons, demonstrating practical ways to embody optimism, resilience, and trust in God's providence. Students reported increased awareness of hope, perceiving it as both a spiritual principle and a practical guide for navigating daily challenges. Adaptive strategies, including small-group discussions and peer mentoring, helped manage large classroom dynamics while maintaining personalized attention. This study highlights that fostering hope in primary Christian education requires intentional teacher competence, integrating social, pedagogical, and theological dimensions. The findings offer a model for faith-based education in which relational guidance, ethical modeling, and scripture-centered instruction collectively promote holistic development, resilience, and a hope-filled mindset in young learners.

Keywords: Social Competence, Christian Religious Education, Hope

INTRODUCTION

Hope is a fundamental aspect of human development, shaping individuals' attitudes, resilience, and motivation to face life's challenges. In the context of primary education, cultivating hope in children is a critical responsibility that extends beyond cognitive development, encompassing social, emotional, and spiritual growth. Christian Religious Education (CRE) provides a unique platform for nurturing hope, particularly when grounded in biblical narratives that model God's promises and guidance. Genesis 48:20, where Jacob blesses Ephraim and Manasseh, serves as a poignant example of how divine favor and prophetic blessing can inspire hope for the future. The verse emphasizes continuity, blessing, and God's providential guidance, offering a theological foundation for CRE teachers to instill hope in students. At SD No. 030294 Sigalingging-Dairi, there are 347 Christian students and two CRE teachers responsible for guiding their spiritual formation. Within this large classroom context, the teachers' social competence becomes a vital factor in influencing students' internalization of hope. Social competence encompasses empathy, effective communication, relational sensitivity, and the ability to foster positive peer interactions, all of which are essential for creating a supportive and motivating classroom environment. Teachers with strong social competence can model hope-filled behavior, respond to students' emotional and spiritual needs, and facilitate experiences that help children connect biblical teachings with their own lives. Previous research highlights that teacher social competence significantly affects student engagement, motivation, and the internalization of values (Goleman, 2006; Noddings, 2013). In Christian education, social competence is not merely about interpersonal effectiveness but also about guiding students to embody spiritual principles in everyday life. For instance, a CRE teacher's empathetic response to students' fears, challenges, or uncertainties can reinforce the biblical message that God's guidance and blessing are constant, as reflected in Jacob's declaration in Genesis 48:20. By integrating relational skills with spiritual instruction, teachers can create a learning environment where students feel supported, valued, and encouraged to envision a hopeful future. The challenges of instilling hope are particularly pronounced in large classroom settings, where individual attention may be limited. With 347 students, CRE teachers at SD No. 030294 must balance group instruction with personal guidance, ensuring that each child experiences relational support and spiritual encouragement. Observational and anecdotal evidence suggests that students in classrooms led by socially competent teachers exhibit greater emotional resilience, higher engagement in spiritual activities, and a more positive outlook on the future. Social competence also enables teachers to manage classroom dynamics effectively, mediate peer conflicts, and cultivate collaborative learning experiences that reinforce hope and mutual encouragement.

Empirical studies examining how CRE teachers specifically instill hope in primary school students are limited. Most literature focuses on moral and cognitive development, with less attention to the interplay between relational skills and spiritual formation. This study addresses this gap by exploring how CRE teachers at SD No. 030294 Sigalingging-Dairi employ their social competence to nurture hope, using Genesis 48:20 as a theological anchor. The research aims to provide insights into effective pedagogical practices that integrate relational guidance, biblical principles, and experiential learning to foster hope

in young learners. This study is guided by three primary questions: How do CRE teachers demonstrate social competence in their interactions with students? How do students perceive and internalize lessons about hope in relation to biblical teachings? What strategies effectively connect teacher relational skills with the development of hope in students? By addressing these questions, the study contributes to understanding the role of social competence in faith-based pedagogy, emphasizing its significance for holistic child development. Ultimately, the research seeks to provide a model for nurturing hope in primary Christian education, ensuring that students develop both spiritually and socially in alignment with God's promises.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive case study design to explore how Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers utilize their social competence to instill hope in primary school students, grounded in Genesis 48:20. A qualitative descriptive approach is appropriate for capturing the depth and complexity of teacher-student interactions, pedagogical strategies, and the integration of biblical principles in real classroom settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study focused on the teachers' social competence-including empathy, relational skills, communication, and conflict mediation-and its impact on students' perception and internalization of hope. The participants consisted of 347 Christian students aged 7-12 and two CRE teachers responsible for their religious education. To obtain in-depth insights, purposive sampling was applied to select a representative subset of 40 students for focused group discussions (FGDs), ensuring diversity across grade levels, gender, and engagement levels. Both CRE teachers participated in semi-structured interviews, providing detailed perspectives on pedagogical strategies, challenges, and approaches to fostering hope in large classroom settings. Classroom observations were conducted over a period of four weeks, focusing on teacher-student interactions, demonstration of empathy, encouragement of hope-filled thinking, and relational strategies that foster supportive peer dynamics. Observational notes recorded examples of teacher interventions, collaborative activities, and moments where biblical teachings were applied to students' personal experiences. Semi-structured interviews with both CRE teachers explored how they employ social competence in guiding students to internalize hope. Interview questions focused on strategies for addressing emotional or spiritual needs, connecting biblical teachings with everyday challenges, and facilitating student engagement in hope-oriented activities. Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes. FGDs with the selected student groups allowed participants to share their experiences of receiving guidance from teachers, understanding of hope based on Genesis 48:20, and reflections on classroom practices that supported emotional and spiritual growth. The FGDs encouraged open dialogue, peer interaction, and critical reflection on the ways hope was modeled and reinforced in the classroom. This included analyzing how teachers structured collaborative exercises, reflection sessions, and narrative activities that connected biblical blessings with students' daily experiences. Transcripts from FGDs and observation notes were coded to identify patterns related to teacher social competence, student understanding of hope, relational pedagogy, and application of Genesis 48:20. Codes were clustered into categories, and themes were interpreted to explain the relationships between teacher relational skills and students' hope development. Triangulation across

multiple data sources enhanced credibility, and reflective memos were used to document interpretations, potential biases, and emerging insights. Findings were reported in aggregate form to protect confidentiality. This methodological framework allowed for a comprehensive examination of how CRE teachers' social competence facilitates the development of hope in primary school students, ensuring both ethical integrity and scholarly rigor.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers plays a critical role in instilling hope among primary school students. Data from classroom observations, teacher interviews, focused group discussions (FGDs) with students, and analysis of teaching materials revealed several interconnected themes: relational guidance and empathy, pedagogical strategies for nurturing hope, modeling Christ-centered behavior, student engagement and perception, integration of Genesis 48:20 into classroom practice, challenges in large classroom management, and adaptive strategies employed by teachers. Classroom observations and interviews highlighted that relational guidance and empathy were foundational to the teachers' ability to instill hope. Both CRE teachers actively listened to students' concerns, fears, and uncertainties, responding in ways that encouraged positive emotional and spiritual development. During a lesson on future aspirations, several students expressed anxiety about personal challenges, such as academic performance or family difficulties. The teachers addressed these concerns by referencing Genesis 48:20, emphasizing God's blessings and guidance for each student's life. One teacher remarked: *"I remind students that just as Jacob blessed Ephraim and Manasseh, God has plans for each of them. Even when things are difficult, His guidance and favor give us hope for the future."* Students' responses during observations indicated that empathetic interactions created a sense of security and trust. Those who felt understood were more willing to participate in reflective activities and express their hopes openly. Empathy thus served as a critical channel through which teachers conveyed biblical messages in ways that students could internalize and relate to their personal experiences.

Pedagogical Strategies for Nurturing Hope

The CRE teachers employed diverse pedagogical strategies to cultivate hope. Scenario-based exercises, storytelling, reflective questioning, and collaborative problem-solving were frequently used. For example, students were asked to envision a challenge they might face and discuss how faith, guidance, and perseverance could help them overcome it. Teachers facilitated discussions by linking students' responses to the biblical narrative of Genesis 48:20, highlighting themes of blessing, favor, and future promise. Reflective activities, such as journaling about personal hopes and sharing them with peers, were observed to promote introspection and reinforce a hopeful mindset. Group exercises encouraged peer support and allowed students to recognize that hope is both a personal and communal experience. FGDs revealed that students understood the connection between the teachers' guidance and the scriptural message, noting that hope was not merely an abstract concept but a practical resource in daily life. Both CRE teachers

consistently modeled Christ-centered behaviors, demonstrating patience, optimism, and ethical conduct. During lessons addressing student challenges, the teachers exemplified how to respond with faith, resilience, and trust in God's providence. By observing the teachers' behavior, students were able to internalize principles of hope and divine blessing. One FGD participant noted: *"When the teachers talk about God's plan and show patience and encouragement, I feel that I can trust God and keep trying even when I feel worried."* This modeling was crucial, as students often emulate adult behavior in learning environments. The teachers' consistent demonstration of hope-filled responses reinforced the practical application of biblical teachings and connected spiritual formation with everyday actions. Student engagement was high, reflecting the effectiveness of teachers' social competence in fostering hope. Observations showed that students actively participated in discussions, group reflections, and scenario-based exercises. FGDs revealed that students perceived the teachers as supportive mentors who not only provided knowledge but also nurtured emotional and spiritual resilience. One student shared: *"I used to feel nervous about my future, but now I think about what the teacher said and remember God's blessing. It helps me feel hopeful and motivated."* Students demonstrated improved understanding of hope as both a spiritual principle and a practical guide for personal behavior, showing that social competence directly influenced their ability to internalize and apply biblical teachings.

Integration of Genesis 48:20 into Classroom Practice

Genesis 48:20 served as a central theological reference throughout classroom activities. Teachers linked the narrative of Jacob blessing his grandchildren to students' personal experiences, emphasizing God's ongoing guidance and favor. Lessons were designed to help students recognize that divine blessings provide hope, even in the face of challenges. For instance, during reflective exercises, students connected the concept of blessing to daily actions such as helping peers, persevering in schoolwork, and trusting God during difficulties. The integration of scripture into classroom practice provided a framework through which hope was both taught and experienced. Managing a large classroom of 347 students posed challenges for both teachers. Individual attention was limited, and varying levels of student readiness required differentiated approaches. To address these challenges, teachers employed adaptive strategies including small-group discussions, peer mentoring, scaffolded reflection exercises, and rotating leadership roles within activities. These strategies ensured that students remained engaged and could experience hope in ways that were personally meaningful and developmentally appropriate. The study underscores the importance of developing CRE teachers' social competence as an integral component of faith-based pedagogy. Empathy, relational guidance, ethical modeling, and reflective practices not only enhance spiritual formation but also promote resilience, motivation, and a hopeful mindset in students. Integrating biblical teachings such as Genesis 48:20 into classroom practice allows students to connect faith with daily life, fostering both personal and communal development. Training programs for CRE teachers should emphasize social competence alongside pedagogical skills, equipping educators to guide large groups effectively while attending to individual spiritual and emotional needs.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers is a decisive factor in instilling hope among primary school students. At SD No. 030294 Sigalingging-Dairi, the two CRE teachers were observed to employ empathy, relational guidance, effective communication, and ethical modeling to nurture hope in 347 Christian students, using Genesis 48:20 as a theological foundation. The findings indicate that teacher social competence not only facilitates academic and spiritual learning but also strengthens students' emotional resilience, self-confidence, and ability to envision a positive future. Empathy emerged as a critical component, allowing teachers to address students' fears, anxieties, and uncertainties with sensitivity and understanding. Students who experienced such relational support reported feeling more secure and motivated, demonstrating that hope can be cultivated through attentive, responsive, and caring interactions. Pedagogical strategies—including scenario-based exercises, reflective questioning, storytelling, journaling, and collaborative problem-solving—proved effective in translating abstract biblical principles into meaningful, experiential learning. These approaches enabled students to connect the blessings described in Genesis 48:20 with their personal lives, reinforcing the idea that divine guidance and favor provide a foundation for hope. Teachers' modeling of Christ-centered behavior reinforced the practical application of hope. By demonstrating patience, optimism, and trust in God's providence, teachers provided students with concrete examples of how to embody faith and resilience in daily life. Students internalized these behaviors and reported an increased sense of motivation, moral awareness, and spiritual understanding. The integration of scripture into classroom activities ensured that hope was not presented merely as a concept but as a lived experience, linking faith, ethical behavior, and personal development. The teachers' use of adaptive strategies such as small-group discussions, peer mentoring, and scaffolded reflection maintained individualized attention and engagement. These methods allowed all students to experience relational support and internalize lessons about hope, demonstrating the practical importance of social competence in managing complex educational contexts. The implications of this study are multifaceted. CRE teachers must cultivate social competence alongside pedagogical skills to effectively guide students in spiritual and emotional development. Integrating Genesis 48:20 into instruction reinforces that hope is grounded in God's promises and blessings. Strategies that blend relational guidance, experiential learning, and scriptural reflection can foster holistic development, enabling students to grow academically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. The study highlights that fostering hope in primary school students requires intentional teacher competence that combines relational skills, ethical modeling, and biblical instruction. By leveraging social competence, CRE teachers can cultivate a classroom environment where students are spiritually encouraged, emotionally supported, and equipped to face life with hope. These findings offer a model for faith-based education that bridges pedagogy, relational dynamics, and theological principles, ensuring that students develop as resilient, morally aware, and hope-filled individuals.

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