



Social Competence in Christian Religious Education: Teaching the Value of God's Love in Genesis 49:18 at SMP Negeri 2 Kapuas Hulu

Ubing Arnita

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: ubingarnita363@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of social competence in Christian Religious Education (CRE) in teaching the value of God's love as expressed in Genesis 49:18 at SMP Negeri 2 Kapuas Hulu, Kapuas. In a public junior high school context where 24 Christian students are guided by one CRE teacher, relational interaction becomes a crucial factor in shaping students' theological understanding and spiritual formation. Genesis 49:18, which expresses hope in God's salvation within Jacob's blessing, provides a biblical foundation for exploring divine love as covenantal faithfulness and redemptive expectation. The study aims to analyze how the teacher's social competence influences students' comprehension and internalization of this theological value. This research employed a quantitative descriptive method with a correlational approach. Total sampling was applied, involving all 24 Christian students as respondents. Data were collected through a validated Likert-scale questionnaire measuring two variables: the teacher's social competence (including communication clarity, empathy, openness to dialogue, and respect for diversity) and students' understanding of the value of God's love in Genesis 49:18 (including cognitive comprehension, affective appreciation, and behavioral intention). The findings indicate that the teacher's social competence is perceived at a high level and that students' understanding of God's love is likewise high. Statistical results reveal a positive and significant relationship between social competence and students' theological understanding. Regression analysis confirms that social competence significantly predicts students' comprehension and internalization of divine love. The study concludes that social competence is a vital pedagogical and theological dimension in CRE, as relationally responsive teaching effectively bridges biblical instruction and lived spiritual experience within a pluralistic school environment.

Keywords: Social Competence, Christian Religious Education, God's Love

INTRODUCTION

Social competence is a crucial dimension of teacher professionalism, particularly in religious education contexts where communication, relational sensitivity, and

intercultural awareness significantly influence students' spiritual and moral development. In Christian Religious Education (CRE), social competence involves the ability to interact effectively with students, colleagues, and the broader school community while embodying Christian values in dialogue and practice. According to Indonesian Law No. 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, social competence includes the ability to communicate and interact productively with learners and society. Within CRE, this competence carries theological weight, as teachers not only convey doctrinal knowledge but also model the relational character of God's love. The teaching of Genesis 49:18, "I wait for your salvation, O Lord" provides a profound opportunity to explore the value of God's love manifested in divine blessing and salvation. This verse appears within Jacob's blessing over his sons, specifically in the oracle concerning Dan. The sudden prayer-like expression reflects dependence on God's redemptive intervention amid uncertainty. Scholars note that this verse interrupts the tribal pronouncements with a personal confession of hope, underscoring covenantal trust in God's faithful love (Wenham, 1994). Gordon J. Wenham in *Genesis 16-50* interprets Genesis 49:18 as a theological pause that shifts attention from human agency to divine salvation, highlighting God's steadfast commitment to His covenant promises. John H. Walton in *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* explains that the term "salvation" (*yeshu'ah*) in the Old Testament context often refers to deliverance rooted in covenant faithfulness rather than merely political rescue. Within Christian theology, this anticipatory hope finds fulfillment in Christ, demonstrating that divine blessing flows from God's enduring love. Thus, Genesis 49:18 serves as a theological bridge connecting patriarchal promise with redemptive expectation.

In junior high school settings, where students experience identity formation, emotional development, and social negotiation, teaching about God's love requires more than doctrinal explanation. It demands relational engagement and empathetic communication. Thomas Lickona in *Educating for Character* emphasizes that moral and spiritual values are effectively transmitted when teachers create caring communities characterized by respect and dialogue. Social competence therefore becomes essential for CRE teachers who aim to explain theological concepts such as divine love and salvation in ways that resonate with adolescents' lived experiences. Christian educational philosophy underscores the relational nature of teaching. George R. Knight in *Philosophy and Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective* argues that Christian teaching reflects the character of a relational God and should foster environments where grace, truth, and mutual respect are practiced. Explaining God's love in Genesis 49:18, therefore, requires a teacher who not only understands the exegetical content but also demonstrates social competence through compassionate communication, cultural sensitivity, and openness to dialogue. SMP Negeri 2 Kapuas Hulu, located in Kapuas Regency, provides a significant context for examining this issue. In this public junior high school, there are 24 Christian students served by one Christian Religious Education teacher. As a minority group within a broader pluralistic environment, Christian students may require sensitive and supportive relational guidance when discussing themes of salvation and divine love. The teacher's social competence plays a decisive role in ensuring that biblical teaching promotes confidence in faith while maintaining respect for diversity within the school community. Educational research consistently highlights that teacher-student relationships strongly influence learning outcomes and moral formation.

According to Hattie (2009), positive teacher-student relationships are among the most powerful influences on student achievement. In CRE contexts, such relationships are not merely pedagogical tools but expressions of theological embodiment, reflecting the love being taught. When explaining Genesis 49:18, the teacher's ability to foster trust, encourage participation, and address students' existential questions determines whether the concept of God's love becomes abstract theology or transformative belief. This study seeks to analyze the social competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in teaching the value of God's love in Genesis 49:18 at SMP Negeri 2 Kapuas Hulu, Kapuas. By exploring students' perceptions and examining the relational dynamics of instruction, this research aims to contribute to the development of socially responsive, theologically grounded, and contextually sensitive Christian Religious Education in Indonesia.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative descriptive method with a correlational approach to examine the relationship between the social competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher and students' understanding of the value of God's love in Genesis 49:18 at SMP Negeri 2 Kapuas Hulu, Kapuas. The research was conducted during the 2025 academic year and focused on Christian students enrolled in junior high school. Given the relatively small number of Christian learners in the school, total sampling was applied. All 24 Christian students participated as respondents, while the single CRE teacher served as the contextual focus of analysis. The use of total sampling ensured that the entire accessible population was represented, thereby increasing the internal validity of the findings within this locus. The research variables consisted of one independent variable and one dependent variable. The independent variable was the teacher's social competence, defined operationally as the ability to communicate effectively, demonstrate empathy, foster inclusive classroom interaction, and build respectful relationships within a pluralistic school environment. The dependent variable was students' understanding and internalization of the value of God's love as expressed in Genesis 49:18, particularly in relation to hope, trust in divine salvation, and appreciation of blessing as an expression of covenantal love. Both variables were measured using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher based on established theoretical indicators of teacher social competence and Christian character education. The instrument utilized a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Indicators of social competence included clarity of communication, responsiveness to students' questions, openness to dialogue, fairness in interaction, and sensitivity to diversity. Indicators of students' understanding of God's love included cognitive comprehension of Genesis 49:18, affective appreciation of divine salvation, and behavioral intention to practice love and hope in daily life. Prior to data collection, the instrument underwent content validation through expert judgment by two Christian education lecturers to ensure theological accuracy and pedagogical relevance. Construct validity was examined using Pearson Product-Moment correlation, while reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to confirm internal consistency. Data collection was carried out directly in the classroom setting after obtaining permission from the school administration and informed consent from participants. Students completed the questionnaire anonymously to encourage honest responses. The collected

data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine mean scores, standard deviations, and percentage distributions for each variable. Assumption testing included normality analysis using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test to confirm parametric eligibility. Hypothesis testing was conducted using Pearson correlation analysis to examine the relationship between social competence and students' understanding of God's love, followed by simple linear regression analysis to determine the predictive contribution of social competence toward the dependent variable. Statistical analysis was performed at a significance level of 0.05.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide empirical insight into the role of social competence in Christian Religious Education (CRE), particularly in teaching the theological value of God's love as expressed in Genesis 49:18 at SMP Negeri 2 Kapuas Hulu, Kapuas. The research involved all 24 Christian students enrolled in the school and focused on their perceptions of the CRE teacher's social competence as well as their understanding and internalization of the value of divine love within the framework of Jacob's blessing. The analysis integrates descriptive statistics, correlation testing, and regression modeling to explain how relational teaching dynamics influence theological comprehension among junior high school students. The descriptive analysis revealed that the social competence of the CRE teacher was perceived at a high level by the majority of students. The overall mean score of the social competence variable was situated within the upper range of the Likert scale, indicating that students consistently experienced positive interpersonal engagement in the classroom. Specifically, indicators related to clarity of communication, openness to dialogue, fairness in treatment, responsiveness to questions, and sensitivity toward students' backgrounds all received strong agreement responses. Students reported that the teacher explained biblical passages in language that was accessible and relevant to their daily experiences, encouraged them to express opinions without fear of judgment, and created a respectful environment even within the pluralistic context of a public junior high school. This result is particularly significant considering that SMP Negeri 2 Kapuas Hulu is a public institution where Christian students form a minority group. The presence of only one CRE teacher serving 24 Christian students places considerable relational responsibility on that teacher. The high perception of social competence suggests that the teacher successfully fosters a sense of belonging and emotional security among students. In religious education, especially when discussing themes such as salvation and divine love, relational trust is indispensable. Students must feel safe to ask existential questions and to articulate doubts or uncertainties regarding faith. The findings indicate that such a relational climate has been effectively cultivated.

The descriptive findings for the dependent variable, students' understanding and internalization of the value of God's love in Genesis 49:18, also demonstrated a high category. Students showed strong cognitive comprehension of the biblical text, including awareness that the verse expresses hope in God's salvation and trust in divine intervention. Moreover, affective indicators reflected appreciation of God's steadfast love as the foundation of blessing. Behavioral intention items, such as willingness to practice love, patience, and hope in daily life, also received positive responses. This suggests that

the teaching of Genesis 49:18 was not limited to intellectual interpretation but extended into moral and spiritual application. The correlation analysis using Pearson Product-Moment revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between the teacher's social competence and students' understanding of God's love. The correlation coefficient indicated a moderate-to-strong association, demonstrating that higher perceptions of social competence corresponded with deeper comprehension and internalization of theological meaning. The significance value was below the established threshold of 0.05, confirming that the relationship was unlikely due to chance. These findings empirically support the theoretical claim that relational competence enhances religious instruction outcomes.

Further analysis through simple linear regression demonstrated that social competence significantly predicts students' understanding of the value of God's love. The regression coefficient indicated that increases in perceived social competence were associated with measurable increases in the dependent variable. Although social competence does not account for all variance in students' theological understanding, since factors such as family background, church involvement, and personal spirituality also contribute, it nonetheless represents a substantial explanatory factor within the classroom context. This predictive capacity underscores the instructional importance of relational skills in CRE. These findings align with broader educational research emphasizing the power of teacher-student relationships. When teachers demonstrate empathy, fairness, and openness, students are more motivated and engaged in learning processes. In the specific case of Genesis 49:18, which reads, "I wait for your salvation, O Lord," the teacher's social competence appears to facilitate meaningful interpretation of the text. Rather than presenting the verse as a distant historical statement within Jacob's oracle, the teacher contextualizes it as a living expression of hope applicable to adolescent struggles, uncertainty about the future, and identity formation. Genesis 49:18 represents a moment of personal confession embedded within tribal blessing. Scholars such as Gordon J. Wenham interpret this verse as a theological pause that redirects attention from human agency to divine deliverance. The teacher's ability to communicate this nuance relationally appears to influence students' understanding significantly. When theological explanation is conveyed through dialogue rather than monologue, students can internalize the idea that God's love is not abstract but relational and responsive. Social competence thus becomes a conduit through which theological truth is personalized.

In the classroom observations accompanying this quantitative analysis, although not formally coded as qualitative data, anecdotal reflections indicated that students frequently engaged in question-and-answer interactions. They asked how waiting for God's salvation applies to academic pressure, friendship conflicts, and family challenges. The teacher reportedly responded by connecting biblical hope with perseverance and trust. Such interaction demonstrates how social competence transforms biblical exegesis into lived spirituality. Students are not merely memorizing a verse; they are interpreting their lives through it. The minority status of Christian students within the broader school context also amplifies the importance of social competence. In pluralistic educational settings, religious instruction must avoid exclusivism while remaining faithful to doctrinal integrity. The findings suggest that the CRE teacher maintains respectful interaction with

the wider school community, modeling coexistence and mutual respect. This relational posture likely reinforces students' confidence in their faith identity without fostering isolation or defensiveness. Social competence thus functions not only within the classroom but also within interreligious social dynamics.

Another important finding concerns students' affective responses. The high scores in affective appreciation indicate that students perceive God's love not simply as theological doctrine but as a source of emotional reassurance. Adolescence is marked by heightened emotional sensitivity, and spiritual narratives that emphasize divine love and salvation can provide psychological stability. The teacher's social competence likely contributes to this emotional resonance. When teachers communicate warmth and understanding, students more readily associate theological content with positive relational experience. The predictive strength of social competence also has implications for teacher training and professional development. Teacher certification frameworks often emphasize pedagogical and professional competencies, yet social competence sometimes receives less systematic attention. The results of this study suggest that for Christian Religious Education, social competence is not secondary but central. Explaining the value of God's love requires relational embodiment of that love. Students interpret theological meaning partly through the character and communication style of the teacher. Therefore, enhancing teachers' interpersonal skills may directly strengthen the impact of biblical instruction. The relatively small class size of 24 students may contribute to the effectiveness of relational teaching. Smaller groups allow more individualized attention and open discussion. However, small numbers alone do not guarantee relational quality. The data indicate that it is the intentional practice of social competence, listening actively, responding respectfully, and facilitating dialogue, that generates meaningful engagement. This finding implies that even in larger settings, deliberate cultivation of relational strategies could produce similar outcomes.

The regression analysis also highlights that while social competence significantly predicts students' understanding, it does not operate in isolation. The coefficient of determination suggests that other variables account for remaining variance. These may include prior biblical knowledge, church involvement, parental influence, and personal spiritual experience. Nonetheless, within the formal educational setting, the teacher's relational capacity remains a key modifiable factor. Schools and policymakers can support improved outcomes by prioritizing social competence development among CRE teachers. The discussion also raises theological reflections regarding the embodiment of divine love. Genesis 49:18 expresses patient expectation of God's salvation. When teachers demonstrate patience in listening and responding to students, they mirror the very attribute being taught. This congruence between message and method strengthens credibility. Students are more likely to accept theological claims when they observe consistency between biblical teaching and teacher behavior. Social competence thus bridges doctrine and practice. The empirical findings affirm that social competence in Christian Religious Education significantly enhances students' understanding of the value of God's love in Genesis 49:18. Through effective communication, empathetic engagement, and respectful interaction within a pluralistic school environment, the CRE teacher at SMP Negeri 2 Kapuas Hulu successfully fosters theological comprehension and

moral internalization among 24 Christian students. The integration of relational skill and biblical instruction demonstrates that teaching about divine love requires relational embodiment of that love. This study therefore contributes to the growing recognition that social competence is not merely an interpersonal skill but a theological and pedagogical necessity in Christian Religious Education.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that social competence plays a decisive role in the effectiveness of Christian Religious Education (CRE), particularly in teaching the value of God's love as expressed in Genesis 49:18 at SMP Negeri 2 Kapuas Hulu, Kapuas. The findings demonstrate that the CRE teacher's ability to communicate clearly, foster open dialogue, show empathy, and build respectful relationships significantly influences students' understanding and internalization of theological meaning. In a context where 24 Christian students are served by one CRE teacher within a pluralistic public-school environment, relational sensitivity and social engagement are not supplementary skills but essential components of instructional success. The statistical results confirm a positive and significant relationship between social competence and students' comprehension of God's love in the biblical text. Moreover, regression analysis indicates that social competence meaningfully predicts the depth of students' theological understanding and moral application. These findings affirm that when biblical teaching is delivered through relationally responsive interaction, students are more likely to grasp not only the cognitive content of Scripture but also its spiritual and ethical implications. Genesis 49:18, which expresses hope in God's salvation amid uncertainty, becomes pedagogically transformative when explained within a supportive relational climate. The teacher's embodiment of patience, respect, and care reinforces the theological message of divine love and faithful deliverance. Students do not merely learn about God's love as doctrine; they experience relational affirmation that mirrors the content being taught. In this way, social competence bridges theological exposition and lived faith. This research underscores that social competence in Christian Religious Education is integral to character formation and spiritual development. Strengthening teachers' relational skills through professional development and reflective practice can enhance the impact of biblical instruction, especially in minority or diverse educational settings. Future research may expand the scope by incorporating qualitative classroom observations or comparative studies across schools to further explore how relational dynamics shape theological learning outcomes.

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