



The Pedagogy of Relationship: Matthean Perspectives on Social Competence in Christian Education - A Study at SD Negeri 2 Petak Bahandang

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of teacher social competence, informed by Matthean relational principles, in shaping students' socio-spiritual development at SD Negeri 2 Petak Bahandang, Gunung Mas. Grounded in the relational ethics of the Gospel of Matthew, particularly teachings on love of neighbor, humility, reconciliation, and the Golden Rule, the research explores how biblical perspectives contribute to professional social competence in Christian Religious Education (CRE). The study involved 61 Christian students and was conducted within a school community supported by eight Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher. Using a quantitative descriptive design with a correlational approach, data were collected through a validated Likert-scale questionnaire measuring two primary variables: teacher social competence and students' socio-spiritual development. Statistical analysis included descriptive statistics, Pearson Product-Moment correlation, and simple linear regression at a 0.05 significance level. The findings indicate that teacher social competence is perceived at a high level, particularly in areas of empathetic communication, fairness, inclusive interaction, and restorative conflict resolution. Regression results further demonstrate that teacher relational competence significantly predicts students' empathy, cooperation, and willingness to practice forgiveness. The study concludes that the pedagogy of relationship reflected in Matthew provides a meaningful theological and practical framework for strengthening social competence in Christian elementary education. By embodying humility, reconciliation, and reciprocal love, educators contribute significantly to the formation of compassionate and community-oriented learners.

Keywords: Pedagogy, Christian Religious Education, Social Competence

INTRODUCTION

Social competence is widely recognized as an essential dimension of teacher professionalism. In the Indonesian educational framework, teacher competence

encompasses pedagogical, professional, personal, and social domains, with social competence referring to the ability to communicate effectively, interact inclusively, and collaborate constructively with students, colleagues, and the wider community. Within Christian Religious Education (CRE), social competence carries additional theological weight, because Christian teaching is fundamentally relational. The calling to love God and neighbor, to forgive, and to pursue reconciliation forms the ethical core of Christian discipleship. Consequently, social competence in Christian education is not merely a professional requirement but a theological expression of faith in practice. The relational nature of Christian teaching is particularly visible in the Gospel of Matthew, which presents Jesus as a teacher whose pedagogy is deeply embedded in communal ethics. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus articulates a radical vision of relational righteousness, urging reconciliation before worship (Matthew 5:23-24), love for enemies (Matthew 5:44), and integrity in speech (Matthew 5:37). The so-called Golden Rule in Matthew 7:12 encapsulates relational responsibility in reciprocal empathy: "In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you." Later, Matthew 18 provides guidance for conflict resolution within the community, outlining a restorative process aimed at regaining fellowship rather than enforcing exclusion. These Matthean teachings suggest that relational formation is central to discipleship and therefore central to Christian education. Educational research consistently demonstrates that teacher-student relationships significantly influence academic engagement, socio-emotional development, and moral growth. Teachers who communicate warmth, fairness, and respect tend to foster positive classroom climates that enhance learning outcomes. In elementary contexts, relational modeling is especially critical because children are developing foundational patterns of empathy, cooperation, and self-regulation. A socially competent teacher functions not only as an instructor but also as a relational exemplar whose interactions shape students' understanding of justice, forgiveness, and mutual respect.

SD Negeri 2 Petak Bahandang, located in Gunung Mas Regency, provides a meaningful setting to explore how Matthean relational ethics inform teacher social competence in practice. The school serves 61 Christian students and is supported by eight Christian teachers, including the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher. In such a context, where a significant proportion of the school community shares Christian identity, the integration of biblical relational values into daily educational practice becomes both possible and observable. The presence of multiple Christian educators also offers a collaborative environment in which relational modeling can be reinforced across subjects and activities. Relatively few empirical studies have directly connected specific biblical frameworks, particularly Matthean theology, with measurable aspects of teacher social competence in Indonesian elementary schools. Many studies address general character formation, but fewer investigate how particular scriptural perspectives shape teacher-student interaction patterns. This study seeks to bridge that gap by examining how relational principles derived from Matthew's Gospel contribute to social competence in Christian education at SD Negeri 2 Petak Bahandang. The research is guided by two primary questions: How do students perceive the social competence of their Christian Religious Education teacher in light of Matthean relational principles? and To what extent does teacher social competence influence students' socio-spiritual development, including empathy, cooperation, and conflict resolution skills? By integrating biblical

reflection with quantitative analysis, this study aims to demonstrate that the pedagogy of relationship in Matthew provides a robust theological and educational framework for strengthening social competence within Christian elementary education.

METHODS

A quantitative descriptive design with a correlational approach was chosen to examine the relationship between teacher social competence and students' socio-spiritual development at SD Negeri 2 Petak Bahandang, Gunung Mas. The research was conducted during the 2025 academic year and focused specifically on the 61 Christian students enrolled at the school. Given the relatively small and accessible population, total sampling was applied, meaning that all 61 Christian students participated as respondents. This approach ensured comprehensive representation of student perceptions and strengthened the internal validity of the findings. Although the school has eight Christian teachers, including the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher, the primary unit of analysis was students' evaluation of the CRE teacher's social competence in classroom interaction. The study consisted of two main variables. The independent variable was teacher social competence, operationally defined as the teacher's ability to communicate effectively, demonstrate empathy, maintain inclusive relationships, resolve conflicts constructively, and model respect in accordance with relational teachings in the Gospel of Matthew. Indicators included clarity and politeness in communication, fairness in treating students, willingness to listen, encouragement of cooperation, and facilitation of reconciliation when conflicts occurred. The dependent variable was students' socio-spiritual development, which referred to observable and self-reported behaviors such as empathy toward peers, cooperative participation, respect for differences, willingness to forgive, and responsible interaction within the classroom community. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher based on social competence theory and biblical relational principles drawn from the Gospel of Matthew. The instrument utilized a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Prior to distribution, the questionnaire underwent content validation through expert judgment by two scholars in Christian education to ensure theological consistency and conceptual clarity. Construct validity was tested using Pearson Product-Moment correlation analysis to confirm the appropriateness of each item, and reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to determine internal consistency. The reliability results indicated acceptable consistency across both variables. Data collection was carried out with formal approval from school leadership, and students participated voluntarily with assurances of anonymity and confidentiality. The data analysis process began with descriptive statistical analysis to calculate mean scores, standard deviations, and percentage distributions for each variable. Normality testing was conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to determine the suitability of parametric analysis. Hypothesis testing was performed using Pearson Product-Moment correlation to examine the relationship between teacher social competence and students' socio-spiritual development. Additionally, simple linear regression analysis was employed to determine the extent to which teacher social competence predicts students' socio-spiritual outcomes. All statistical analyses were conducted at a significance level of 0.05. Through this methodological framework, the study aimed to generate empirical evidence

regarding the contribution of Matthean relational pedagogy to social competence in Christian elementary education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal significant insights into how the pedagogy of relationship, grounded in Matthean perspectives, contributes to teacher social competence and students' socio-spiritual development at SD Negeri 2 Petak Bahandang, Gunung Mas. Based on data collected from 61 Christian students through a structured questionnaire, the results are presented through descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression modeling, followed by an integrative discussion connecting empirical findings with relational teachings in the Gospel of Matthew. Overall, the data indicate that teacher social competence is perceived at a high level and demonstrates a positive and statistically significant relationship with students' socio-spiritual development. Descriptive statistical analysis shows that the overall mean score for teacher social competence falls within the high category on the five-point Likert scale. Students consistently reported that their Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher communicates politely, listens attentively to student concerns, and treats all students fairly regardless of academic performance or personal background. Indicators related to respectful communication and empathy received particularly strong agreement responses. Students indicated that the teacher explains biblical teachings in a calm and encouraging manner, avoids humiliating language, and creates space for questions and discussion. This perception suggests that the classroom climate is characterized by relational safety, which educational research identifies as foundational for effective learning and moral development. The fairness indicator also demonstrated high descriptive values. Students reported that the teacher does not show favoritism and applies classroom rules consistently. In practical terms, when conflicts arise between classmates, the teacher reportedly listens to both sides before drawing conclusions. Such practices reflect the restorative spirit found in Matthew 18:15–17, where reconciliation is pursued through direct communication and careful discernment rather than impulsive judgment. The data suggest that students recognize and appreciate this relational consistency, which contributes to a sense of justice and trust within the classroom environment.

Another significant descriptive finding concerns inclusive interaction. Students reported that the teacher encourages cooperation during group activities and fosters mutual respect during discussions. In CRE lessons, collaborative tasks often involve reflecting on biblical narratives and identifying practical applications for school and family life. By structuring group work intentionally, the teacher promotes active listening and shared responsibility. Students indicated that they feel encouraged to express opinions respectfully and to consider differing perspectives. This pattern aligns with the relational ethic summarized in Matthew 7:12, the principle of treating others as one wishes to be treated. When students perceive that such reciprocity is modeled by the teacher, they are more likely to internalize and replicate it in peer interaction. Turning to the dependent variable, socio-spiritual development also received high descriptive scores. Students reported that they attempt to practice empathy, forgive classmates after disagreements,

and cooperate during classroom activities. The highest mean scores were found in items related to willingness to help peers and readiness to reconcile after conflict. Students indicated that they understand forgiveness not merely as a religious concept but as a practical action in daily life. This suggests that relational teaching is not confined to theoretical explanation but is translated into behavioral intention. The presence of eight Christian teachers at the school, including the CRE teacher, may reinforce this relational culture across different subjects, creating consistency between religious instruction and general classroom practice. The Pearson Product-Moment correlation analysis demonstrates a positive and statistically significant relationship between teacher social competence and students' socio-spiritual development. The correlation coefficient falls within the moderate range, indicating that higher perceptions of teacher relational competence correspond with stronger socio-spiritual outcomes among students. The significance value is below 0.05, confirming that the relationship is not due to chance. This statistical evidence supports the hypothesis that relational modeling by teachers plays a measurable role in shaping students' empathy, cooperation, and conflict resolution skills. Regression analysis further clarifies the predictive power of teacher social competence. The regression coefficient indicates that improvements in teacher relational competence are associated with measurable increases in socio-spiritual development scores. Although teacher social competence does not account for all variance, since family influence, church participation, and peer dynamics also affect behavior, it explains a substantial portion within the school setting. This finding underscores the educational importance of relational consistency in elementary Christian contexts. Even in a relatively small population of 61 students, relational quality demonstrates a meaningful and observable impact.

These findings affirm the pedagogical significance of Matthew's Gospel as a framework for relational formation. The Matthean portrayal of Jesus emphasizes not only doctrinal instruction but communal transformation. For example, in Matthew 5:9, peacemakers are called blessed, highlighting reconciliation as a defining characteristic of the kingdom of heaven. In Matthew 22:39, love for neighbor is presented as inseparable from love for God. When teachers embody these principles through respectful communication and restorative conflict resolution, they extend the pedagogy of Jesus into contemporary classroom practice. Social competence thus becomes a form of lived theology. The results also suggest that modeling humility significantly influences classroom climate. Students reported that the teacher is willing to admit mistakes and apologize if misunderstandings occur. Such behavior reflects the humility emphasized in Matthew 23:11-12, where greatness is defined by servanthood. In elementary education, the modeling of humility may be particularly formative because children are highly responsive to adult behavior. When authority figures demonstrate vulnerability and fairness, students learn that power can be exercised with compassion rather than domination. This modeling strengthens mutual respect and reduces fear-based compliance. An important aspect of the discussion concerns the developmental stage of elementary students. Children in upper elementary grades are forming stable social identities and learning complex emotional regulation skills. The high descriptive scores in empathy and forgiveness suggest that relational instruction is being internalized at a formative stage. The teacher's consistent practice of listening and guiding reconciliation provides a structured environment in which students

can practice relational skills safely. Rather than relying solely on disciplinary punishment, the emphasis on dialogue and restoration encourages moral reflection. Another dimension worth highlighting is the collective influence of eight Christian teachers within the school. While the CRE teacher was the primary focus of measurement, the broader presence of Christian educators may contribute to a unified relational ethos. When multiple teachers model similar values of respect and cooperation, students experience coherence between religious teaching and general academic instruction. Such coherence strengthens credibility and reinforces socio-spiritual norms. However, regression analysis indicates that the specific perception of the CRE teacher's social competence remains a distinct predictor, suggesting that targeted relational practice in religious education carries unique formative weight.

The findings also resonate with broader educational theory emphasizing the importance of teacher-student relationships for socio-emotional learning. Positive relational climates reduce anxiety, enhance engagement, and increase prosocial behavior. In this study, students who rated their teacher highly in empathy and fairness also reported stronger commitment to helping peers and resolving conflict peacefully. This pattern supports the argument that social competence in teachers directly influences student behavior patterns. Certain limitations must be acknowledged. The study relies on self-reported data, which may be influenced by social desirability bias. Students in religious settings may feel inclined to respond positively about forgiveness and empathy. Additionally, the correlational design does not establish causation with absolute certainty. Longitudinal research or observational studies could provide deeper insight into behavioral consistency over time. Despite these limitations, the statistical significance and consistent patterns across indicators suggest that the observed relationships are meaningful. The results and discussion confirm that teacher social competence, informed by Matthean relational principles, significantly contributes to socio-spiritual development among students at SD Negeri 2 Petak Bahandang. High levels of perceived empathy, fairness, and inclusive communication correspond with strong student outcomes in cooperation, forgiveness, and mutual respect. The moderate but significant correlation and predictive regression findings demonstrate that relational pedagogy is not merely aspirational but empirically influential. By embodying humility, reconciliation, and reciprocal love, teachers participate in the pedagogical legacy of Matthew's Gospel, fostering classroom communities that reflect the relational character of the kingdom of heaven.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that teacher social competence, grounded in the relational teachings of the Gospel of Matthew, plays a significant role in shaping students' socio-spiritual development at SD Negeri 2 Petak Bahandang, Gunung Mas. The empirical findings demonstrate that students perceive their Christian Religious Education teacher as exhibiting high levels of empathy, fairness, respectful communication, and constructive conflict resolution. These relational qualities are not merely interpersonal skills but reflect core Matthean principles such as reciprocal love, humility, reconciliation, and servant leadership. The positive and statistically significant correlation between teacher social competence and students' socio-spiritual outcomes indicates that relational modeling

meaningfully influences student behavior. When teachers consistently demonstrate attentive listening, impartial judgment, and restorative approaches to conflict, students are more likely to internalize and practice empathy, cooperation, and forgiveness in their daily interactions. The regression analysis further confirms that teacher social competence contributes predictively to students' socio-spiritual growth, even when acknowledging the influence of external factors such as family and church environments. The presence of 61 Christian students and eight Christian teachers within the school context provides a supportive environment for reinforcing relational values across academic and spiritual domains. However, the findings highlight that the Christian Religious Education teacher's relational example remains a distinctive and influential factor in nurturing classroom culture. Social competence in this setting becomes a lived expression of theological conviction, translating biblical instruction into observable patterns of interaction. The pedagogy of relationship presented in Matthew offers a substantive framework for strengthening social competence in Christian education. By embodying humility, reconciliation, and love of neighbor, educators cultivate classrooms that reflect the relational character of the gospel. Strengthening teacher social competence is therefore not only a professional imperative but also a theological calling that contributes to the formation of compassionate, responsible, and community-oriented learners.

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