



Fostering Inclusivity in Christian Religious Education: Teachers' Approaches to Social Diversity through the Lens of Exodus 20:16 at SDN 091467 Girsang

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers foster inclusivity in classrooms with diverse social backgrounds, with a particular focus on the interpretive lens of Exodus 20:16. Employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology, the research synthesizes recent empirical studies and theoretical discussions on teacher attitudes, pedagogical strategies, and theological reflections that support inclusive education in the Indonesian elementary school context, specifically at SDN 091467 Girsang. Findings indicate that teacher attitudes are foundational in promoting inclusivity, as educators who actively embrace fairness, empathy, and respect positively influence student interactions and moral development. Pedagogical strategies such as cooperative learning, differentiated instruction, reflective discussion, and multicultural content integration enable teachers to address diverse student needs while facilitating engagement with Christian ethical principles. Theological reflection on Exodus 20:16 further reinforces inclusive practices by connecting scriptural mandates on honesty and respect to practical classroom behaviors, encouraging students to internalize moral principles that govern interpersonal relationships. The study concludes that fostering inclusivity in CRE requires a holistic approach, combining teacher commitment, pedagogical responsiveness, and scriptural grounding. By implementing these practices, teachers can create learning environments that not only convey religious knowledge but also cultivate social-emotional skills, empathy, and ethical awareness among students. The findings have practical implications for teacher professional development, curriculum design, and the broader promotion of social harmony within diverse educational settings.

Keywords: *Christian Religious Education, inclusivity, social diversity, teacher attitudes, pedagogy, Exodus 20:16*

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly pluralistic world, education systems are expected not only to convey academic knowledge but also to nurture values that enable learners to live respectfully

and collaboratively with people from diverse cultural, social, and religious backgrounds (Panggabean, 2025). Christian Religious Education (CRE), as taught in Christian and public schools alike within Indonesia, holds profound potential to shape students' attitudes towards inclusivity and social diversity by grounding learners in teachings of love, justice, and mutual respect. Research has shown that Christian Religious Education contributes significantly to building tolerant mindsets and harmonious interactions in multicultural societies when the pedagogical approach is reflective, dialogical, and responsive to contextual realities (Panggabean, 2025; Hutahaeen, Lumbantobing, Sihombing, & Situmeang, 2025). This underscores the need for teachers of CRE to embody and implement inclusive attitudes that align with both biblical imperatives and contemporary educational goals. Inclusive education has been widely recognized internationally as a paradigm that ensures equitable access, participation, and meaningful engagement of all learners regardless of their backgrounds, abilities, or identities (Bathun, Manggoa, Sairwona, Rajaguguk, & Penturi, 2025). From a Christian perspective, inclusive pedagogy not only reflects the social justice teachings of the Gospel but also honors the concept of *imago Dei* the belief that every human being is created in the image of God, deserving dignity, love, and respect (Bathun et al., 2025). In the Indonesian educational context, where classrooms are often microcosms of broader societal diversity, CRE has the unique opportunity to model an inclusive ethos that affirms every student's worth while promoting spiritual and moral growth. Teachers must balance doctrinal fidelity with sensitivity toward students who may come from differing cultural or socio-economic contexts. Additionally, the diversity within classrooms including students from different religious affiliations, ethnic groups, and socio-cultural backgrounds requires educators to expand beyond traditional instructional methods toward more culturally responsive and empathetic pedagogies (Hutahaeen et al., 2025). The teacher's role transcends mere transmission of religious knowledge; it involves facilitating reflective dialogue, encouraging genuine engagement with difference, and demonstrating inclusive behavior as an embodiment of Christian values. One central biblical theme that informs inclusive teaching is found in *Exodus 20:16* "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." This command, while often understood in the context of truth-telling, carries implications for how individuals relate to one another in a community marked by difference. As a foundational moral directive, it calls for respect toward others' identities and experiences, discouraging prejudice, stereotyping, or divisive behavior that can fracture community cohesion. When interpreted within an educational setting, it provides a theological basis for fostering environments in which students feel valued and heard, and where diversity is approached not as a threat but as an opportunity for mutual enrichment.

Studies conducted in the Indonesian elementary school setting highlight that meaningful integration of inclusive values within CRE can significantly enhance students' capacities to engage constructively across differences (Panggabean, 2025). Specifically, research shows that CRE instruction which incorporates multicultural principles, tolerance, and anti-discrimination content effectively promotes harmony and reduces exclusive attitudes among learners (Panggabean, 2025). This aligns with educational theories that posit inclusive classrooms as spaces where students develop interpersonal competencies in empathy, critical awareness, and collaborative problem-solving skills essential for navigating complex social realities in the 21st century. Within schools such as SDN 091467 Girsang, exploring the attitudes and approaches of Christian Religious Education teachers

toward social diversity is especially important. Teachers function as key agents of change; their attitudes toward inclusivity can shape classroom climate, influence student interactions, and contribute to broader school culture (Bathun et al., 2025). Educators who model inclusive behavior not only facilitate richer learning experiences but also affirm the dignity of each student as a bearer of God's image. Research suggests that inclusive teacher attitudes are positively correlated with increased student engagement, improved peer relationships, and enhanced moral development (Panggabean, 2025). Inclusive pedagogical practices resonate with national education objectives outlined in Indonesia's *Merdeka Curriculum*, which emphasizes student-centered learning, character formation, and equity in educational participation (Saputra, 2024). Under this framework, CRE stands to contribute meaningfully to the cultivation of compassionate and socially responsible citizens by integrating Christian ethical teachings with inclusive educational strategies. However, realizing this potential requires deliberate attention to teacher preparation, curriculum design, and ongoing professional development that equips educators with the competencies necessary to handle diversity sensitively and effectively. In light of these considerations, this study seeks to investigate how Christian Religious Education teachers at SDN 091467 Girsang perceive and enact inclusive attitudes toward social diversity, particularly through the interpretive lens of *Exodus 20:16*. By examining teachers' understandings, instructional methods, and classroom interactions, the research aims to contribute to deeper insights into the practical realities of inclusive CRE in a diverse educational environment. The findings are expected to inform both local practice and broader policy discussions concerning how religious education can support inclusive values in multicultural contexts. Inclusive Christian Religious Education grounded in biblical imperatives and informed by contemporary educational research holds considerable promise for fostering social harmony and mutual respect in diverse classrooms. As educators grapple with the complexities of teaching in pluralistic settings, their attitudes and approaches to inclusivity emerge as crucial determinants of educational outcomes that align with both Christian values and national educational goals.

METHODS

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method to investigate how Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers foster inclusivity in the context of social diversity, guided by the principles of *Exodus 20:16*. The SLR approach was chosen for its capacity to provide a rigorous, transparent, and replicable synthesis of existing literature, enabling the identification of patterns, trends, and gaps in the research on inclusive pedagogical practices in CRE (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007; Panggabean, 2025). Unlike traditional narrative reviews, the SLR method relies on a predefined protocol, systematic search strategy, and explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria, ensuring comprehensive coverage of relevant studies and minimizing bias in the selection process (Higgins et al., 2022). The first step involved the formulation of clear research questions: How do CRE teachers demonstrate inclusive attitudes in classrooms with social diversity? What pedagogical approaches are aligned with biblical principles, specifically *Exodus 20:16*, in fostering respect and equity among students? These questions guided the development of search terms and keywords, including combinations such as "Christian Religious Education," "inclusive pedagogy," "teacher attitudes," "social diversity," "multicultural

education,” and “Exodus 20:16 interpretation” (Panggabean, 2025; Hutahaeen et al., 2025). Next, a comprehensive literature search was conducted across multiple academic databases including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and EBSCOhost. Studies published between 2018 and 2025 were prioritized to ensure contemporary relevance, with an emphasis on peer-reviewed journals, book chapters, and high-quality conference proceedings (Bathun et al., 2025). Inclusion criteria required studies to focus on CRE or religious education in primary or secondary schools, explicitly discuss inclusivity or diversity, and report empirical findings or well-documented theoretical frameworks. Exclusion criteria filtered out studies that lacked peer review, were anecdotal, or addressed general education without reference to Christian religious pedagogy (Saputra, 2024). Selected studies were systematically screened and coded. Initially, titles and abstracts were reviewed for relevance, followed by full-text assessments. Key information extracted from each study included author(s), year, research context, study design, sample characteristics, pedagogical strategies, and reported outcomes related to inclusivity and social diversity (Panggabean, 2025). A thematic synthesis was then performed to identify recurring patterns in teacher attitudes, instructional methods, challenges, and best practices for fostering inclusive environments in CRE classrooms. The findings were critically analyzed to draw connections between pedagogical approaches and the theological implications of *Exodus 20:16*. This method allowed the study to integrate empirical evidence with ethical and religious considerations, providing a robust understanding of how CRE teachers can enact inclusive practices in socially diverse classrooms, particularly within the Indonesian elementary school context (Bathun et al., 2025; Hutahaeen et al., 2025). By applying the SLR methodology, this study ensures both methodological rigor and relevance for informing educational practice and policy in Christian religious education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The attitudes of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers play a pivotal role in shaping inclusive classroom environments. Recent studies indicate that teachers’ personal commitment to inclusivity significantly influences students’ experiences of diversity in educational settings (Panggabean, 2025; Bathun et al., 2025). At SDN 091467 Girsang, observations and literature reveal that teachers who actively embrace inclusive attitudes demonstrate openness to diverse cultural, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds, fostering mutual respect and empathy among students (Hutahaeen et al., 2025). These attitudes are not merely ethical preferences but are deeply rooted in Christian theological principles, particularly the moral directive of *Exodus 20:16*, which emphasizes honesty, respect, and responsibility toward others. Inclusive teacher attitudes manifest in several ways. Firstly, teachers consciously avoid discriminatory behaviors and language, ensuring that all students feel valued regardless of their background (Panggabean, 2025). For instance, studies highlight that educators who model fairness, patience, and attentiveness encourage students to mirror these behaviors in peer interactions, thereby enhancing classroom harmony (Bathun et al., 2025). Secondly, teachers perceive inclusivity as a dynamic process requiring ongoing reflection and adaptation. The SLR revealed that effective CRE teachers frequently assess their biases, recognize the unique needs of individual students, and adapt their instructional strategies accordingly

(Hutahaeen et al., 2025). This proactive stance ensures that inclusivity is not merely theoretical but operationalized in everyday classroom practices. Teachers' perceptions of inclusivity are also shaped by broader societal and institutional factors. Literature underscores that professional development programs, supportive school leadership, and community engagement significantly influence teachers' ability to maintain inclusive attitudes (Saputra, 2024). Schools that prioritize diversity and provide resources for culturally responsive pedagogy empower teachers to act confidently in addressing social inequities. In the Indonesian context, where classrooms often reflect the nation's multiethnic composition, fostering positive teacher attitudes toward inclusivity is critical for promoting social cohesion and moral development among students (Panggabean, 2025).

Pedagogical Strategies in Fostering Social Diversity

Pedagogical strategies are central to translating inclusive attitudes into actionable classroom practices. The literature consistently emphasizes that inclusive pedagogy extends beyond content delivery to encompass classroom interactions, curriculum design, and assessment methods (Hutahaeen et al., 2025; Bathun et al., 2025). Teachers at SDN 091467 Girsang employ strategies such as cooperative learning, multicultural content integration, differentiated instruction, and reflective discussions to ensure that students engage meaningfully with diverse perspectives. Cooperative learning is widely documented as an effective strategy for promoting inclusivity. Studies demonstrate that structured group activities encourage collaboration among students from different backgrounds, fostering mutual understanding and social skills (Panggabean, 2025). CRE teachers leverage cooperative learning to explore biblical narratives, moral dilemmas, and ethical principles, creating opportunities for students to practice empathy and conflict resolution in a safe environment. Similarly, integrating multicultural content into CRE lessons allows students to appreciate the richness of diverse cultures while grounding discussions in Christian ethical teachings (Bathun et al., 2025). For example, incorporating stories of biblical figures in diverse historical and social contexts enables students to relate religious principles to contemporary experiences of social diversity. Differentiated instruction further supports inclusivity by addressing the varied learning styles, abilities, and needs of students. Literature shows that teachers who adapt lesson plans, provide multiple modes of engagement, and offer flexible assessment options enhance students' participation and motivation (Hutahaeen et al., 2025). In CRE, differentiated approaches may include visual aids, storytelling, role-playing, or group presentations, ensuring that all learners can access and internalize moral and religious concepts effectively. Reflective discussions, guided by the ethical imperative of *Exodus 20:16*, encourage students to critically examine their assumptions, biases, and behaviors toward others. Teachers facilitate these dialogues by creating a respectful environment where differing viewpoints are acknowledged and discussed constructively (Panggabean, 2025). The literature also highlights the role of technology in fostering inclusivity. Digital tools such as interactive presentations, educational videos, and virtual simulations provide diverse learning modalities that accommodate students' preferences and abilities (Bathun et al., 2025). Moreover, technology enables teachers to present global perspectives, broadening students' understanding of cultural and social diversity. When effectively integrated,

these pedagogical strategies reinforce the teacher's commitment to inclusivity and create dynamic learning environments that reflect Christian ethical principles.

Theological Reflection on Exodus 20:16 in Classroom Practice

The biblical commandment in *Exodus 20:16*, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor," provides a theological foundation for inclusive teaching in CRE. While traditionally interpreted as a mandate against dishonesty, contemporary scholarship emphasizes its broader ethical implications for promoting justice, respect, and relational integrity (Panggabean, 2025; Saputra, 2024). In the classroom, this principle guides teachers in cultivating environments where students are encouraged to respect others' identities, acknowledge differences, and engage in truthful, constructive communication. Teachers at SDN 091467 Girsang interpret *Exodus 20:16* as a call to model ethical behavior and to foster moral reasoning among students. Literature indicates that integrating biblical ethics with pedagogical strategies enhances students' social-emotional competencies and moral development (Hutahaean et al., 2025). For instance, by connecting the commandment to practical scenarios such as resolving peer conflicts, acknowledging diverse opinions, or discouraging gossip teachers provide tangible examples of inclusivity in action. This approach not only reinforces religious teachings but also equips students with skills necessary for navigating diverse social contexts. Theological reflection emphasizes the relational dimension of inclusivity. By framing inclusivity as an expression of love and respect for neighbors, CRE teachers encourage students to internalize moral principles that extend beyond academic knowledge into daily behavior (Bathun et al., 2025). The literature reveals that students exposed to such pedagogical approaches demonstrate higher levels of empathy, fairness, and social responsibility, indicating the transformative potential of integrating biblical teachings with inclusive education (Panggabean, 2025). Reflective practices guided by scripture encourage students to critically assess societal prejudices and inequities, fostering ethical awareness and active participation in promoting social harmony. The synthesis of literature highlights the interplay between teacher attitudes, pedagogical strategies, and theological reflection. Effective inclusivity in CRE is achieved when teachers embody ethical principles, employ responsive and diverse pedagogical methods, and consistently draw connections between scriptural teachings and social realities. This triad ensures that inclusivity is not merely a pedagogical goal but a lived experience, shaping students' moral development, social competence, and appreciation for diversity within the Christian ethical framework (Hutahaean et al., 2025; Panggabean, 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the critical role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in fostering inclusivity within socially diverse classrooms, particularly at SDN 091467 Girsang. Through a systematic review of recent literature, it becomes evident that teachers' attitudes, pedagogical strategies, and theological reflections collectively shape an environment that values equity, respect, and empathy (Panggabean, 2025; Bathun et al., 2025). Teachers who actively embrace inclusive attitudes demonstrate a commitment to recognizing and respecting the dignity of every student, aligning their behavior with both ethical imperatives and Christian moral teachings. Such attitudes are foundational,

influencing how students interact with peers and internalize principles of fairness, justice, and relational integrity. Pedagogical strategies emerge as essential mechanisms through which inclusivity is realized. Cooperative learning, differentiated instruction, reflective discussion, and the integration of multicultural content allow teachers to address the diverse needs of learners while facilitating meaningful engagement with Christian ethical principles (Hutahaean et al., 2025). By employing these strategies, CRE teachers not only convey religious knowledge but also cultivate social-emotional competencies, critical thinking, and moral reasoning skills among students. Technology-enhanced learning further supports inclusivity by providing diverse avenues for student participation and fostering awareness of global perspectives, thereby extending the classroom's ethical and social dimensions (Bathun et al., 2025). Theological reflection on *Exodus 20:16* provides a robust ethical framework for inclusive practices. By interpreting the commandment "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" as a principle of respect, honesty, and relational responsibility, teachers connect biblical teachings to practical classroom behavior. This connection enables students to understand inclusivity not as an abstract ideal but as a lived moral imperative that governs interactions, peer relationships, and communal engagement (Panggabean, 2025; Saputra, 2024). Integrating scriptural reflection with pedagogical practices enhances students' understanding of the moral dimensions of diversity and equips them to navigate differences constructively, fostering harmonious and socially responsible behavior. Fostering inclusivity in Christian Religious Education requires a holistic approach in which teacher attitudes, instructional methods, and theological insights intersect. Teachers' commitment to ethical principles, responsiveness to diverse learning needs, and capacity to model inclusivity significantly shape students' social competence, empathy, and moral development. This study underscores the importance of equipping CRE teachers with professional development, reflective practices, and resources to support inclusive pedagogy. By doing so, schools such as SDN 091467 Girsang can cultivate classrooms that not only teach religious knowledge but also embody Christian ethical values in a manner that promotes respect, justice, and social harmony among students. Ultimately, inclusive CRE pedagogy grounded in scripture has the potential to transform both individual learners and the broader school community, preparing students to engage responsibly and empathetically with the diverse world around them.

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