



Instructional Skills of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Shaping Students' Social Identity: Insights from Exodus 2:11 - A Study at SD Negeri 074053 Duria Hilisebua

Hayati Mendrofa

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

* correspondence: hayati.mendrofa5@guru.sd.belajar.id

ABSTRACT

This study explores the instructional skills of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in shaping students' social identity through the theological reflection of Book of Exodus 2:11 at SD Negeri 074053 Duria Hilisebua, Nias. The school context consists of 182 Christian students and two Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher, providing a communal faith environment that requires intentional pedagogical cultivation to foster mature social identity. Exodus 2:11, which narrates Moses' identification with his oppressed people, serves as a biblical foundation for understanding identity as relational belonging and social responsibility. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The findings indicate that instructional competence is demonstrated through contextual biblical interpretation, narrative pedagogy, dialogical engagement, empathetic modeling, collaborative learning strategies, and reflective activities. These instructional practices enabled students to connect the biblical narrative with their own experiences of community life, fostering empathy, solidarity, and a sense of shared responsibility. The study concludes that instructional skills in Christian education function as transformative tools in social identity formation. When theological insight is integrated with participatory and relational pedagogy, students are guided not only to understand Scripture cognitively but also to internalize and embody its social implications in their daily interactions.

Keywords: *Instructional Skills, Christian Religious Education, Social Identity*

INTRODUCTION

The formation of social identity is a central developmental task in childhood, particularly within school environments where values, relationships, and worldviews are shaped through structured interaction. In Christian Religious Education (CRE), the teacher's

instructional skills play a decisive role in guiding students to understand who they are in relation to God, others, and society. Social identity, understood as an individual's sense of self derived from perceived membership in social groups, influences moral reasoning, belonging, and ethical behavior (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Within a Christian framework, this identity is further grounded in theological narratives that shape communal consciousness and moral responsibility. One biblical narrative that provides significant insight into social identity formation is found in Book of Exodus 2:11. The verse recounts how Moses "went out to his people and looked on their burdens," revealing a pivotal moment of identification with the oppressed Hebrews. Scholars interpret this action as a decisive step in Moses' self-understanding, moving from an Egyptian royal context toward solidarity with his covenant community (Childs, 1974; Fretheim, 1991). Moses' choice to "go out" and "see" reflects both awareness and empathy, key components in the formation of socially responsible identity. In educational terms, this passage highlights the importance of helping learners recognize their belonging and responsibility within their community. Christian education literature emphasizes that identity formation is not accidental but cultivated through intentional pedagogy. Groome (2011) argues that faith formation involves participation in the story and vision of the Christian community, enabling learners to interpret their lives through the biblical narrative. Similarly, Pazmiño (2008) stresses that Christian teachers must integrate biblical theology with contextual understanding so that students can relate Scripture to their social realities. Instructional skills, therefore, extend beyond content delivery; they include the capacity to contextualize Scripture, facilitate dialogue, model empathy, and create participatory learning environments. CRE teachers are entrusted not only with transmitting doctrinal knowledge but also with nurturing moral and social character. Research in educational psychology suggests that teacher effectiveness significantly influences students' identity development and moral engagement (Yount, 2010). Classroom practices such as collaborative learning, reflective discussion, and narrative engagement contribute to students' ability to internalize values and perceive themselves as active members of a community. Thus, instructional competence becomes a vehicle for shaping both cognitive understanding and relational awareness.

At SD Negeri 074053 Duria Hilisebua, Nias, there are 182 Christian students and two Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher. In this setting, where the majority of students share a common faith background, the classroom becomes a formative space for cultivating collective identity rooted in biblical teaching. However, shared religious affiliation does not automatically produce mature social identity. Without intentional instructional design, biblical narratives may remain abstract and disconnected from students' lived experiences. Therefore, examining how CRE teachers utilize instructional skills to interpret Exodus 2:11 and relate it to students' communal life is both pedagogically and theologically significant. This study seeks to analyze how the instructional skills of Christian Religious Education teachers contribute to shaping students' social identity through the narrative of Moses in Exodus 2:11. By exploring classroom strategies, interpretative approaches, and relational dynamics, the research aims to demonstrate that effective instruction can foster empathy, solidarity, and a sense of belonging rooted in biblical understanding. Ultimately, this study contributes to

broader discussions on how Christian pedagogy can meaningfully integrate theological insight with social identity formation in elementary education.

METHODS

A qualitative case study design was implemented to explore how the instructional skills of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers shape students' social identity through the interpretation and teaching of Book of Exodus 2:11 at SD Negeri 074053 Duria Hilisebua, Nias. A qualitative approach was selected because the research sought to understand lived experiences, instructional practices, and relational dynamics within their natural educational setting. The case study design allowed for an in-depth and context-sensitive examination of one school community consisting of 182 Christian students and two Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher, thereby enabling a focused analysis of pedagogical processes rather than statistical generalization. Participants were selected purposively, including the CRE teacher as the primary informant and the second Christian teacher as a supporting informant to provide triangulated perspectives on instructional implementation and student development. Several students from upper elementary grades were also involved as complementary informants to capture their perceptions of classroom learning and its influence on their understanding of identity and community. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom observations, and document analysis. Interviews explored teachers' lesson planning, interpretative approaches to Exodus 2:11, instructional strategies, and reflections on students' social development. Classroom observations focused on teacher-student interaction, narrative explanation, questioning techniques, group activities, and the integration of biblical themes into social contexts. Document analysis included lesson plans, teaching materials, reflective notes, and student assignments to identify the alignment between planned objectives and actual instructional practice. Data collection was conducted over several instructional sessions to ensure depth and consistency. Triangulation was applied by comparing findings from interviews, observations, and documents to enhance credibility. Member checking was carried out by sharing preliminary interpretations with participants to confirm accuracy. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, beginning with open coding to identify recurring patterns related to instructional skills, biblical interpretation, student participation, and social identity formation. These codes were then organized into broader categories and interpreted in light of Christian educational theory and biblical theology. Ethical considerations were observed by obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring confidentiality, and using pseudonyms where necessary. Through this methodological framework, the study aimed to present a reliable and contextually grounded understanding of how instructional competence contributes to shaping students' social identity within Christian elementary education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the instructional skills of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher at SD Negeri 074053 Duria Hilisebua, Nias, play a significant and

multifaceted role in shaping students' social identity through the narrative of Moses in Book of Exodus 2:11. The results are organized around several interconnected themes that emerged from interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis: contextual biblical interpretation, narrative pedagogy, dialogical engagement, modeling of empathy, collaborative learning structures, and reflective internalization of communal belonging. Together, these elements demonstrate that instructional competence extends beyond technical teaching ability and becomes a formative process through which students learn to perceive themselves as members of a caring, responsible, and faith-shaped community. The teacher demonstrated strong interpretative clarity in presenting Exodus 2:11 as a narrative of identity awakening. Rather than focusing solely on Moses' act of defending a Hebrew slave, the teacher emphasized the phrase "went out to his people and looked on their burdens" as a pivotal moment of self-identification. In classroom observation, the teacher explained that Moses' action was not impulsive heroism but a conscious recognition of belonging. By highlighting this interpretive nuance, the teacher guided students to see identity as relational rather than individualistic. Interview data confirmed that the teacher intentionally framed Moses' story as an example of recognizing "who we belong to" and "whom we are responsible for." This theological framing was translated into age-appropriate language, enabling elementary students to grasp complex identity concepts in concrete terms such as family, classmates, and village community. This demonstrates how interpretive skill is foundational to instructional effectiveness; accurate biblical understanding becomes the basis for pedagogical application. The use of narrative pedagogy significantly contributed to students' engagement and identity formation. Rather than lecturing in abstract theological categories, the teacher retold the Moses narrative with expressive storytelling techniques, incorporating dialogue, dramatic pauses, and contextual background. Students were invited to imagine Moses observing the suffering of his people and to reflect on how it might feel to witness injustice. Classroom observation indicated that students were attentive and emotionally responsive, often expressing empathy toward the oppressed Hebrews. The narrative approach allowed students to enter the biblical world imaginatively, creating emotional connection alongside cognitive comprehension. This aligns with the understanding that stories shape moral imagination and social awareness. In this context, instructional skill involved not merely telling a story but facilitating imaginative participation in it.

Dialogical engagement emerged as a central instructional strategy. After presenting the narrative, the teacher posed open-ended questions such as, "Who are your people?" and "What burdens do you see around you?" Students responded by referring to classmates who struggle academically, neighbors facing economic hardship, and family members who work hard. These responses demonstrate that students were beginning to translate biblical narrative into contemporary social awareness. The teacher did not immediately correct or finalize responses but instead encouraged further reflection, allowing students to articulate and refine their understanding collectively. This dialogical method created a participatory environment where identity was constructed through conversation rather than imposed from authority. The presence of 182 Christian students in the school creates a communal religious atmosphere, yet the teacher's dialogical approach ensured that faith identity was not assumed but actively explored. Modeling empathy functioned as a

powerful dimension of instructional competence. Observations revealed that the teacher consistently demonstrated attentive listening, gentle correction, and respectful acknowledgment of student contributions. When students shared personal stories about helping friends, the teacher affirmed these experiences as reflections of Moses' solidarity. Such responses reinforced the connection between biblical identity and lived practice. The second Christian teacher interviewed also noted that the CRE teacher's relational approach influenced the broader school culture, as students often referenced lessons about "standing with our people" in other subjects. This suggests that instructional skill includes embodied example; the teacher's relational posture becomes part of the curriculum itself. Social identity formation, therefore, occurs not only through content but also through interpersonal experience. Collaborative learning structures further supported identity development. The teacher frequently organized small group discussions where students analyzed short scenarios of everyday school situations, such as witnessing bullying or observing a friend being excluded. Students were asked to identify what "going out to our people" might look like in each scenario. This practical application allowed students to experiment with identity in concrete contexts. Observational data showed that students engaged seriously with these scenarios, often proposing actions such as offering help, speaking kindly, or informing teachers. These discussions transformed identity from abstract concept into actionable responsibility. The teacher's skill in structuring collaborative tasks ensured that learning remained interactive and socially embedded. Reflective internalization emerged as a concluding component of each lesson. The teacher invited students to write brief reflections or prayers about how they might show solidarity with others during the week. Document analysis of these reflections revealed recurring themes of empathy, belonging, and responsibility. Several students wrote statements such as, "I want to help my friend when he is sad" or "I want to stand with my class like Moses stood with his people." These written reflections indicate that the narrative had been internalized at a personal level. Instructional competence thus facilitated a movement from biblical text to communal awareness to personal commitment. The discussion of these findings highlights several implications for Christian education. First, instructional skill in CRE must integrate theological depth with contextual relevance. The teacher's careful exegesis of Exodus 2:11 prevented oversimplification while still making the narrative accessible. This balance between faithfulness to Scripture and sensitivity to developmental stage is a hallmark of professional instructional competence. Second, the relational dimension of teaching cannot be separated from content delivery. Identity is learned relationally; therefore, the teacher's empathetic interaction reinforces the message of solidarity conveyed by the biblical narrative. Third, the findings underscore that social identity formation within a predominantly Christian student body still requires intentional cultivation. Shared religious background provides a foundation, but without guided reflection, students may not consciously connect biblical stories to their social responsibilities.

The results suggest that instructional competence includes the capacity to create continuity between classroom learning and everyday life. Students were able to articulate examples of solidarity within their immediate environment, demonstrating transfer of learning. This transfer was facilitated by the teacher's strategic questioning and contextual application. The case study also reveals that limited staffing—only two

Christian teachers in a school of 182 Christian students—does not necessarily hinder effective identity formation when instructional quality is strong. Rather, focused and intentional pedagogy can exert significant influence even within modest institutional structures. Another important discussion point concerns the developmental appropriateness of social identity themes in elementary education. Some might assume that concepts such as communal belonging and social responsibility are too abstract for young learners. However, the findings show that when grounded in narrative and concrete examples, children readily grasp and apply these themes. Instructional skill lies in translating theological insight into accessible language and practical scenarios. Moses' act of "going out" becomes analogous to stepping outside one's comfort zone to assist a classmate. Thus, biblical narrative serves as a bridge between sacred text and social practice. The study indicates that instructional skills operate within a broader ecosystem of school culture. The collaborative reinforcement between the CRE teacher and the second Christian teacher suggests that identity formation is strengthened when educators share common values. Although the research focused primarily on CRE instruction, its influence extended into general classroom interactions. This demonstrates that effective Christian pedagogy has integrative impact beyond the religious subject itself. The results affirm that the instructional skills of Christian Religious Education teachers significantly contribute to shaping students' social identity when grounded in thoughtful biblical interpretation, narrative engagement, dialogical participation, empathetic modeling, collaborative application, and reflective internalization. Through these pedagogical practices, the narrative of Exodus 2:11 becomes more than historical account; it becomes a formative lens through which students learn to perceive themselves as members of a compassionate and responsible community. Instructional competence, therefore, is not merely technical proficiency but a transformative capacity to guide learners toward socially conscious faith identity.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the instructional skills of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SD Negeri 074053 Duria Hilisebua, Nias, play a decisive role in shaping students' social identity through the theological and pedagogical exploration of Book of Exodus 2:11. The narrative of Moses "going out to his people" provides a powerful framework for understanding identity as relational belonging and social responsibility. When interpreted thoughtfully and communicated pedagogically, this biblical text becomes a formative resource for elementary students learning to understand who they are within their community. The findings demonstrate that effective instructional competence includes accurate biblical interpretation, narrative-based teaching, dialogical engagement, empathetic modeling, collaborative learning strategies, and structured reflection. These dimensions work together to transform Scripture from abstract historical account into lived moral orientation. Students not only learned about Moses' identification with his people but also began to articulate their own sense of belonging and responsibility toward classmates, family members, and their wider community. This indicates that instructional skill in Christian education is not limited to knowledge transmission but extends to identity formation and character development. The study

highlights that even within a predominantly Christian school context, intentional pedagogy is necessary to cultivate mature social identity. Shared faith background alone does not guarantee conscious solidarity or empathy. Through strategic teaching practices, the CRE teacher facilitated a learning environment where biblical narrative shaped moral imagination and communal awareness. Instructional competence in Christian Religious Education functions as a transformative instrument in shaping socially responsible faith identity. By integrating theological insight with relational and participatory pedagogy, teachers enable students to internalize biblical values and embody them within their daily social interactions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Childs, B. S. (1974). *The book of Exodus: A critical, theological commentary*. Westminster Press.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. W. W. Norton.
- Fretheim, T. E. (1991). *Exodus* (Interpretation: A Bible commentary for teaching and preaching). John Knox Press.
- Groome, T. H. (2011). *Will there be faith? A new vision for educating and growing disciples*. HarperOne.
- Knight, G. R. (2006). *Philosophy & education: An introduction in Christian perspective* (4th ed.). Andrews University Press.
- Pazmiño, R. W. (2008). *Foundational issues in Christian education: An introduction in evangelical perspective* (3rd ed.). Baker Academic.
- Richards, L. O. (1998). *Creative Bible teaching*. Moody Press.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47). Brooks/Cole.
- Westerhoff, J. H. (2000). *Will our children have faith?* Morehouse Publishing.
- Wright, C. J. H. (2006). *The mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's grand narrative*. IVP Academic.
- Yount, W. R. (2010). *Created to learn: A Christian teacher's introduction to educational psychology* (2nd ed.). B&H Academic.