



Cultivating a Culture of Peace in Schools: A Biblical Reflection on Matthew 5:9 in the Context of SMA Negeri 1 Leuser

Riris Nainggolan

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: ririsnainggolan19@guru.sma.belajar.id

ABSTRACT

This study explores the cultivation of a culture of peace in the educational context of Christian Religious Education through a biblical reflection on Gospel of Matthew 5:9. The purpose of this research is to analyze how peace-oriented values inspired by Matthew 5:9 are implemented in Christian Religious Education learning activities at SMA Negeri 1 Leuser. This study employed a quantitative descriptive research approach. The participants consisted of 45 Christian students who actively participated in Christian Religious Education classes. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale designed to measure students' perceptions of peace-oriented teaching practices and dialogue-based learning in the classroom. The research instrument included several indicators such as respectful communication, encouragement of dialogue, teacher guidance in resolving conflicts peacefully, and the integration of biblical values related to peacemaking. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques to determine the level of implementation of peace-based educational practices. The findings indicate that students generally perceive the Christian Religious Education learning environment as supportive of peaceful interaction and constructive dialogue. These practices help create a classroom atmosphere characterized by cooperation, empathy, and mutual respect. In conclusion, the integration of biblical teachings about peacemaking with pedagogical practices contributes positively to the development of a culture of peace in schools. By promoting dialogue and modeling peaceful behavior, teachers can foster students' moral, social, and spiritual development while preparing them to become individuals who contribute to harmony within their communities.

Keywords: Culture, Christian Religious Education, Peace, Competence

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a vital role in shaping not only the intellectual capacity of students but also their moral character and social attitudes. Schools are environments where young people learn how to interact with others, resolve conflicts, and develop values that

influence their future roles in society. In increasingly diverse societies, educational institutions are expected to cultivate attitudes of tolerance, dialogue, and peaceful coexistence among students from different backgrounds. Consequently, the concept of peace education has become an important area of discussion in contemporary educational discourse. Peace education aims to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to promote harmony, respect, and constructive conflict resolution in social life (Harris & Morrison, 2013). Teachers serve as key agents who model peaceful behavior and guide students in developing values that support social harmony. The cultivation of a culture of peace in schools is particularly relevant in the context of religious education. Christian Religious Education (CRE), for example, does not only seek to provide doctrinal knowledge but also aims to nurture ethical and spiritual values that shape students' behavior in their relationships with others. Among the many biblical teachings that address peace and reconciliation, the teaching of Jesus in Gospel of Matthew 5:9 holds special significance. In this passage, Jesus declares, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." This statement, which appears in the Beatitudes within the Sermon on the Mount, highlights peacemaking as a defining characteristic of those who follow God's will. Biblical scholars interpret this verse not merely as a call to avoid conflict but as an active invitation to promote reconciliation, justice, and harmony in human relationships (Hagner, 1993). Therefore, the message of Matthew 5:9 provides a strong theological foundation for integrating peace values into educational practice. The concept of peacemaking can be translated into attitudes and practices that encourage dialogue, empathy, and mutual respect among students. Teachers who emphasize peaceful communication and constructive dialogue help students develop the social competencies needed to manage differences in opinion and cultural background. Research in educational psychology indicates that classroom environments characterized by respectful dialogue and supportive teacher-student relationships contribute significantly to students' social development and emotional well-being (Wentzel & Miele, 2016). When teachers intentionally cultivate such environments, they create opportunities for students to practice peaceful interaction and conflict resolution.

The role of teachers in cultivating a culture of peace extends beyond classroom instruction. Teachers function as role models whose attitudes and behaviors influence how students perceive and respond to social conflicts. Educational theorists argue that students often learn ethical values through observation of teachers' actions and interpersonal relationships rather than through formal instruction alone (Palmer, 1998). In Christian Religious Education, this role becomes even more significant because teachers are expected to embody the moral and spiritual values presented in biblical teachings. By demonstrating patience, empathy, and fairness in their interactions with students, teachers can illustrate the practical meaning of peacemaking in everyday life. Another important aspect of cultivating peace in education is the development of dialogue as a pedagogical practice. Dialogue-based learning encourages students to listen to diverse perspectives, express their opinions respectfully, and seek mutual understanding. Such practices are essential in developing democratic attitudes and fostering a sense of community within the classroom. Scholars emphasize that dialogue-oriented education not only enhances cognitive learning but also strengthens social cohesion by promoting cooperation and trust among students (Freire, 2000). When

integrated with Christian teachings about reconciliation and love for others, dialogue-based learning can become a powerful tool for nurturing a culture of peace. This study is conducted in the context of Christian Religious Education at SMA Negeri 1 Leuser, where students come from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. Within this environment, the presence of Christian students and teachers provides an opportunity to explore how biblical teachings about peace can be applied in educational practice. The integration of scriptural principles with classroom learning activities may help students develop a deeper understanding of the Christian call to be peacemakers in their communities. The purpose of this study is to examine how the message of Matthew 5:9 can inspire the cultivation of a culture of peace in the educational context of Christian Religious Education. By exploring the relationship between biblical teaching, pedagogical practice, and student experience, this research seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of how religious education can promote dialogue, harmony, and peaceful relationships within the school environment. The findings are expected to provide insights for educators seeking to integrate peace values into teaching practices and to strengthen the role of schools as spaces for the formation of responsible and peace-oriented citizens.

METHODS

A quantitative descriptive research design was used to examine how the cultivation of a culture of peace inspired by the teaching of Gospel of Matthew 5:9 is implemented in the learning practices of Christian Religious Education at SMA Negeri 1 Leuser. A quantitative approach was selected because it enables the researcher to measure students' perceptions of peace-oriented teaching practices and dialogue-based learning in a systematic and objective manner through statistical analysis. The population of this study consisted of 45 Christian students who were actively enrolled in Christian Religious Education classes and six Christian teachers, including the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher. Considering the relatively small number of Christian students, the research applied a total sampling technique, in which all Christian students were included as respondents. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed with a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The instrument was designed to measure indicators related to the cultivation of peace in the classroom, including respectful dialogue between teacher and students, the promotion of mutual understanding, encouragement of cooperation among students, teacher guidance in resolving conflicts peacefully, and the integration of biblical values related to peacemaking. Prior to data collection, the questionnaire was reviewed to ensure clarity and relevance of each statement to the research variables. Data collection was conducted directly in the classroom during the academic semester. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequency distribution, percentage analysis, and mean score interpretation to determine the level of peace-oriented educational practices perceived by students. Through this methodological approach, the study aimed to provide an empirical description of how the biblical teaching on peacemaking is reflected in the educational practices of Christian Religious Education within the school context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the cultivation of a culture of peace within the context of Christian Religious Education plays an important role in shaping students' attitudes toward dialogue, cooperation, and social harmony at SMA Negeri 1 Leuser. Based on descriptive statistical analysis of questionnaire responses from 45 Christian students, the findings reveal that the majority of students perceive the learning environment in Christian Religious Education classes as supportive of peaceful interaction and respectful dialogue. Students generally reported that the teacher consistently encourages communication characterized by empathy, patience, and mutual respect. This pattern of interaction reflects the biblical teaching expressed in Gospel of Matthew 5:9, where Jesus proclaims, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." Within the educational context, this passage provides a theological framework for understanding how peace can be cultivated not merely as a theoretical concept but as a lived value practiced through daily interactions in the classroom. The study demonstrates that when teachers intentionally integrate peace-oriented values into their pedagogical practices, students become more aware of the importance of maintaining harmonious relationships with their peers and resolving conflicts constructively. One of the most notable findings concerns the role of the Christian Religious Education teacher in modeling peaceful attitudes and behaviors. Students indicated that the teacher consistently demonstrates patience, fairness, and openness during classroom interactions. Such behaviors serve as practical examples of the biblical concept of peacemaking. Educational scholars have long emphasized that teachers influence students not only through formal instruction but also through the implicit messages conveyed by their actions and interpersonal relationships. According to Palmer, teachers teach "who they are" as much as what they know, meaning that their personal character and relational approach significantly shape the learning environment. In the context of Christian Religious Education, the teacher's personal commitment to peace and reconciliation becomes a powerful pedagogical tool. By modeling respectful dialogue and constructive conflict resolution, the teacher helps students understand that Christian teachings about peace are not abstract moral ideals but practical guidelines for everyday behavior.

The descriptive results also show that dialogue-based learning is a central feature of the classroom environment. Students reported that the teacher often invites them to express their opinions, share personal experiences, and discuss biblical teachings in relation to contemporary social issues. This pedagogical approach encourages active participation and creates opportunities for students to practice respectful communication. Dialogue-based learning is particularly important in cultivating a culture of peace because it teaches students to listen attentively to different perspectives and to express their views without hostility. Scholars of critical pedagogy argue that dialogue fosters democratic learning environments where mutual respect and shared understanding can flourish. When students are encouraged to participate in meaningful dialogue, they develop the social competencies necessary for peaceful coexistence in diverse communities. In this study, the emphasis on dialogue allowed students to explore the meaning of peacemaking in

practical ways, such as discussing how to respond to disagreements among classmates or how to address misunderstandings within their social circles. Another important dimension revealed by the findings is the relationship between peace-oriented teaching practices and students' emotional comfort in the classroom. Many students reported feeling safe and respected during Christian Religious Education lessons, which allowed them to engage more openly in discussions. A supportive emotional climate is essential for effective learning because students are more likely to participate and share their thoughts when they feel that their voices are valued. Research in educational psychology indicates that positive teacher-student relationships contribute significantly to students' academic motivation and social development. In this study, the teacher's emphasis on empathy and mutual respect appeared to strengthen students' sense of belonging within the classroom community. As a result, the classroom became a space where students could explore sensitive issues related to conflict, forgiveness, and reconciliation without fear of judgment.

The integration of biblical teachings into classroom discussions also played a significant role in shaping students' understanding of peace. The teacher frequently referred to the teachings of Jesus in Gospel of Matthew, particularly the Beatitudes, to explain the moral and spiritual foundations of peacemaking. Students were encouraged to reflect on how the message of Matthew 5:9 applies to their relationships with friends, family members, and members of the wider community. Through these reflections, students began to recognize that peacemaking involves active efforts to promote reconciliation and cooperation rather than simply avoiding conflict. Biblical scholars interpret the term "peacemaker" in this passage as someone who actively works to restore harmony and justice in relationships. This interpretation aligns closely with the educational goal of fostering responsible and empathetic individuals who contribute positively to society. By connecting biblical teachings with real-life situations, the teacher helped students understand that peace is a value that must be practiced intentionally in daily interactions. The findings further suggest that the teacher's approach to conflict resolution in the classroom reinforces the principles of peace education. Students reported that when disagreements arise among classmates, the teacher encourages them to discuss the issue calmly and to seek solutions that respect the perspectives of all parties involved. Rather than imposing immediate disciplinary measures, the teacher often facilitates dialogue between students to help them understand each other's viewpoints. This approach reflects the concept of restorative dialogue, which emphasizes repairing relationships rather than simply assigning blame. Restorative practices are widely recognized in educational research as effective strategies for building inclusive and supportive school environments. By guiding students through dialogue-based conflict resolution, the teacher helps them develop the interpersonal skills necessary for maintaining peaceful relationships in various social contexts.

Another significant aspect of the findings relates to the influence of the broader school environment on the cultivation of peace. Although this study focuses on Christian Religious Education classes, students indicated that the values discussed in these lessons often influence their interactions in other areas of school life. For example, students reported applying the principles of patience, forgiveness, and cooperation when working

on group assignments or participating in extracurricular activities. This suggests that the impact of peace-oriented education extends beyond the classroom and contributes to the development of a more harmonious school culture. Educational theorists emphasize that values taught in the classroom become most effective when they are reinforced by the broader social environment of the school. In the context of this study, the integration of biblical teachings with everyday interactions appears to support the development of a culture where respect and dialogue are valued. One challenge involves maintaining consistent student engagement during discussions about moral and spiritual values. Some students initially perceived these discussions as theoretical or distant from their everyday experiences. To address this challenge, the teacher incorporated practical examples and interactive activities that allowed students to explore the relevance of peace-oriented values in real-life situations. For instance, students were invited to analyze case studies involving interpersonal conflicts and to propose peaceful solutions based on biblical principles. These activities helped bridge the gap between theoretical concepts and practical application. Another challenge relates to the diversity of perspectives among students regarding social and cultural issues. While dialogue-based learning encourages open discussion, it also requires careful facilitation to ensure that conversations remain respectful and constructive. In this study, the teacher addressed this challenge by establishing clear guidelines for respectful communication and by emphasizing the importance of empathy when responding to differing opinions. By setting these expectations, the teacher created a framework within which students could engage in meaningful dialogue without escalating disagreements. The findings of this study highlight the importance of integrating biblical teachings about peace with pedagogical practices that encourage dialogue and cooperation. The example of peacemaking presented in Gospel of Matthew 5:9 provides a valuable foundation for understanding how peace can be cultivated within educational environments. When teachers intentionally promote respectful communication, empathy, and collaborative problem-solving, they help students develop the attitudes and skills necessary for peaceful coexistence. The experience of students at SMA Negeri 1 Leuser demonstrates that peace-oriented education can significantly influence students' perceptions of relationships and conflict resolution.

This study also contributes to broader discussions about the role of religious education in promoting social harmony. In pluralistic societies, schools are often expected to serve as spaces where students learn to navigate cultural and religious diversity. Christian Religious Education, when approached with a focus on peace and dialogue, can contribute positively to this goal by emphasizing universal values such as respect, compassion, and reconciliation. The findings of this study suggest that biblical teachings about peacemaking can serve as effective resources for guiding educational practices that support social cohesion. By integrating these teachings with interactive and dialogue-based pedagogical methods, educators can foster learning environments that encourage students to become active participants in building peaceful communities. The results of this study demonstrate that cultivating a culture of peace in education requires both intentional teaching strategies and authentic role modeling by teachers. The principles expressed in Gospel of Matthew 5:9 provide a powerful framework for understanding how peace can be integrated into educational practice. Through respectful dialogue,

empathetic relationships, and constructive approaches to conflict resolution, teachers can create classrooms where students learn not only academic content but also the values necessary for living peacefully with others. The experience at SMA Negeri 1 Leuser illustrates how the integration of biblical principles with pedagogical practice can contribute to the development of a school environment characterized by harmony, cooperation, and mutual respect.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that cultivating a culture of peace in education is an essential component of effective Christian Religious Education, particularly within the context of SMA Negeri 1 Leuser. The findings demonstrate that the integration of biblical teachings on peacemaking with pedagogical practices can significantly contribute to the development of a classroom environment characterized by respectful dialogue, cooperation, and mutual understanding among students. Inspired by the message of Gospel of Matthew 5:9, which emphasizes the blessedness of those who actively promote peace, Christian Religious Education teachers play a crucial role in guiding students to understand and practice the values of reconciliation, empathy, and social harmony. The results show that when teachers intentionally foster dialogue-based learning and model peaceful attitudes in their interactions with students, the classroom becomes a supportive environment where students feel respected and encouraged to participate actively. Through respectful communication, patient guidance, and constructive approaches to resolving disagreements, teachers help students develop the interpersonal skills necessary for maintaining harmonious relationships both inside and outside the classroom. In this way, the teacher functions not only as a transmitter of knowledge but also as a role model who demonstrates the practical meaning of biblical teachings about peace. The study highlights that peace-oriented educational practices contribute to students' moral and social development. By reflecting on biblical teachings and applying them to everyday situations, students begin to recognize the importance of promoting understanding, cooperation, and reconciliation in their relationships with others. These experiences help students internalize the value of peacemaking as an integral part of their personal and spiritual growth. The cultivation of a culture of peace in Christian Religious Education requires the integration of biblical principles, effective pedagogical strategies, and authentic teacher leadership. When these elements work together, the learning process can nurture not only students' intellectual development but also their character formation. Therefore, strengthening peace-oriented teaching practices and encouraging dialogue within the classroom are important steps in preparing students to become individuals who actively contribute to harmony and social cohesion in their communities.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniversary ed.). Continuum.
- Hagner, D. A. (1993). *Matthew 1–13* (Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 33A). Word Books.
- Harris, I. M., & Morrison, M. L. (2013). *Peace education* (3rd ed.). McFarland.

- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge.
- Palmer, P. J. (1998). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*. Jossey-Bass.
- Pazmiño, R. W. (2008). *Foundational issues in Christian education: An introduction in evangelical perspective* (3rd ed.). Baker Academic.
- Stott, J. R. W. (2007). *The message of the Sermon on the Mount: Christian counter-culture* (Rev. ed.). InterVarsity Press.
- Wentzel, K. R., & Miele, D. B. (Eds.). (2016). *Handbook of motivation at school* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Wright, N. T. (2004). *Matthew for everyone, part 1: Chapters 1–15*. Westminster John Knox Press.