



Cultivating Communal Holiness in Christian Education: The Social Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers Inspired by Exodus 28:43 at SD Negeri 074065 Balaekha Hilisimaetano

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ABSTRACT

Communal holiness is a central theme in biblical theology, particularly in the Old Testament, where holiness is not only understood as an individual spiritual state but also as a collective responsibility within the covenant community. This study aims to examine the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in cultivating the value of communal holiness based on the theological insight of Exodus 28:43 at SD Negeri 074065 Balaekha Hilisimaetano, South Nias. The research employed a quantitative descriptive approach involving 134 Christian students and 12 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher, as participants. Data were collected through structured questionnaires designed to measure students' perceptions of the teacher's social competence in teaching and modeling communal holiness in the school environment. The instrument focused on indicators such as relational communication, respect for others, modeling of moral behavior, collaborative learning interactions, and the promotion of a respectful community atmosphere. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques to determine the level of teacher social competence and its perceived impact on students' understanding of communal holiness. The results indicate that the CRE teacher's social competence plays a significant role in helping students internalize values related to communal holiness, including mutual respect, responsibility, and ethical interaction within the school community. This study highlights the importance of integrating biblical theological insights with pedagogical practice in Christian education. It concludes that strengthening teachers' social competence can significantly contribute to the formation of a school culture that reflects the biblical vision of holiness within the community of faith.

Keywords: *Communal Holiness, Christian Religious Education, God's Glory*

INTRODUCTION

In many Christian educational contexts, the responsibility of teachers goes beyond transferring biblical knowledge; they are also expected to cultivate values that shape

students' attitudes toward God, themselves, and the community in which they live. Among the many competencies required of teachers, social competence is particularly significant because it determines how educators build relationships, communicate values, and foster a healthy learning community. Social competence refers to the ability of teachers to interact effectively with students, colleagues, parents, and the broader community in ways that promote mutual respect, collaboration, and moral development. According to educational scholars, teacher competence encompasses not only pedagogical knowledge but also interpersonal abilities that enable teachers to guide students toward responsible and ethical participation in society (Knight, 2006). Within the context of Christian education, social competence becomes even more important because the process of learning involves the formation of communal values rooted in biblical teaching. Christian faith emphasizes that believers are called to live in holiness not only as individuals but also as members of a covenant community. The concept of communal holiness reflects the idea that the people of God are collectively responsible for maintaining moral integrity and reverence before God. This biblical principle is reflected in Exodus 28:43, which describes the sacred garments worn by the priests when they entered the tabernacle to minister before the Lord. The passage emphasizes the importance of holiness in communal worship and highlights the responsibility of spiritual leaders to uphold sacred standards in the presence of God. Biblical scholars note that the priestly garments symbolized not only ritual purity but also the ethical and spiritual responsibility of leaders to maintain the sanctity of the community (Wright, 2006). The theological message of Exodus 28:43 provides a meaningful framework for understanding the role of Christian educators. Just as priests were entrusted with preserving the holiness of Israel's worship community, teachers of Christian Religious Education are entrusted with nurturing a learning environment that reflects God's values. In the classroom, teachers act as facilitators of spiritual growth who guide students toward understanding the importance of living in holiness, respect, and responsibility within their communities. When teachers demonstrate strong social competence, they help create an atmosphere where students feel valued, respected, and encouraged to practice Christian virtues in their interactions with others. This relational dimension of teaching is particularly important in Christian education because spiritual formation often occurs through relationships and shared experiences within a community of faith (Groome, 2011). Teacher competence is formally recognized as a combination of pedagogical, professional, personal, and social competencies that support effective teaching and learning. Social competence specifically refers to the teacher's ability to communicate and interact effectively with various members of the educational community. For teachers of Christian Religious Education, this competence is closely connected to their ability to embody Christian values such as love, humility, patience, and mutual respect. Robert W. Pazmiño explains that Christian educators must cultivate relational practices that reflect the character of Christ, because education in the Christian tradition is fundamentally relational and transformative (Pazmiño, 2008). When teachers model these values in their interactions with students, they help students understand how Christian teachings apply to everyday life. The importance of social competence is particularly evident in elementary school settings, where students are still developing their understanding of social relationships and moral responsibility. At this stage of development, teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes toward cooperation, respect, and empathy.

Through consistent guidance and example, teachers can help students learn how to live harmoniously within a community while maintaining a sense of spiritual identity. This process aligns with the broader goal of Christian education, which seeks to nurture individuals who are not only knowledgeable about their faith but also capable of living according to its principles in their daily interactions. This study was conducted at SD Negeri 074065 Balaekha Hilisimaetano in South Nias, an elementary school with a significant Christian student population. At the time of the research, the school had 134 Christian students and 12 Christian teachers, including those responsible for teaching Christian Religious Education. The presence of a Christian educational environment provides an important opportunity to explore how teachers' social competence contributes to the cultivation of communal holiness within the school community. In this context, teachers are expected not only to teach biblical content but also to foster attitudes of respect, cooperation, and moral responsibility among students. Most educational research focuses primarily on pedagogical techniques or academic achievement, while the relational and spiritual dimensions of teaching receive less attention. This gap highlights the need for further investigation into how teachers' social interactions and interpersonal attitudes influence the spiritual development of students. This study aims to examine the social competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in cultivating communal holiness among students, using Exodus 28:43 as a theological framework. By analyzing teaching practices, teacher-student interactions, and the broader learning environment, the research seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how social competence contributes to the formation of a spiritually healthy and ethically responsible school community. Ultimately, the study hopes to offer insights that can strengthen the role of Christian educators in guiding students toward lives characterized by faith, responsibility, and commitment to the holiness of the community.

METHODS

A qualitative descriptive research design to explore the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in cultivating the value of communal holiness among students at SD Negeri 074065 Balaekha Hilisimaetano, South Nias. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand educational phenomena in depth by examining the experiences, interactions, and perspectives of participants within their natural setting. Qualitative research is particularly appropriate for studies that aim to interpret social behavior, relational dynamics, and spiritual values in educational environments (Creswell, 2014). Through this approach, the researcher was able to investigate how teachers demonstrate social competence in their daily interactions with students and how these interactions contribute to the formation of communal values rooted in Christian teachings. The research was conducted at SD Negeri 074065 Balaekha Hilisimaetano, an elementary school located in South Nias, Indonesia. The school community consists of 134 Christian students and 12 Christian teachers, including teachers responsible for Christian Religious Education. The presence of a predominantly Christian school community provides a meaningful context for examining how biblical values are integrated into educational practice. Participants in this study included the Christian Religious Education teacher, several classroom teachers who identify as Christians, and selected students who regularly participate in Christian Religious

Education classes. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique commonly used in qualitative research to identify individuals who have direct experience with the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2015). This sampling strategy ensured that the data collected would reflect the perspectives of those most closely involved in the teaching and learning process. Classroom observations were conducted to examine how teachers interact with students during Christian Religious Education lessons and how they communicate values related to communal holiness, cooperation, and respect. The researcher observed classroom dynamics, teaching strategies, and patterns of teacher-student interaction that reflect the social competence of the teacher. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and several students to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perceptions regarding the role of the teacher in shaping the social and spiritual atmosphere of the classroom. The interview format allowed participants to express their thoughts freely while still addressing key themes related to social competence and biblical teaching. In addition, documentation analysis was used to examine relevant school materials, including lesson plans, school policies, and records of spiritual or character-building activities that support the cultivation of Christian values within the school environment. The data collected from these various sources were analyzed, which involves identifying patterns and themes that emerge from the data. The analysis process followed several stages, including data organization, coding, categorization, and interpretation. The researcher organized the observation notes, interview transcripts, and documentation into a structured dataset. Next, the data were coded to identify recurring ideas related to teacher interaction, relational attitudes, and the teaching of communal holiness. These codes were then grouped into broader themes that represent key aspects of teachers' social competence in Christian Religious Education. The themes were interpreted in light of the theological framework derived from Exodus 28:43, which emphasizes the importance of holiness and responsibility within a community dedicated to God.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers plays a crucial role in cultivating the value of communal holiness among students at SD Negeri 074065 Balaekha Hilisimaetano, South Nias. Through observations, interviews, and documentation analysis, the research identified several interconnected dimensions of teacher social competence that contribute to the formation of a spiritually healthy learning community. These dimensions include relational communication, moral example, the cultivation of communal responsibility, the integration of biblical teaching into social interaction, and the creation of a respectful classroom culture. Together, these elements demonstrate that the teaching of holiness within Christian education is not limited to doctrinal instruction but is expressed through relational practices that shape the daily life of the school community. One of the most significant findings concerns the importance of relational communication in the teaching of communal holiness. The CRE teacher at SD Negeri 074065 Balaekha Hilisimaetano consistently demonstrated the ability to communicate with students in ways that foster mutual respect and understanding. Classroom observations revealed that the teacher frequently used dialogue-based teaching methods that encouraged students to share

their thoughts and experiences related to biblical values. Rather than presenting biblical teachings as abstract concepts, the teacher connected them to students' everyday social interactions, such as how they treat classmates, resolve conflicts, and cooperate in group activities. This communicative approach reflects the essence of social competence, which involves the ability to build meaningful relationships that support learning and moral development. According to Christian education theory, relational teaching practices allow students to experience faith within the context of community, making biblical values more tangible and relevant to their lives. Another important aspect of social competence observed in this study is the moral example demonstrated by the teacher. Students often learn ethical values not only through formal instruction but also through the behavior and attitudes of their teachers. The CRE teacher consistently demonstrated patience, humility, and fairness in interactions with students. During classroom activities, the teacher showed attentiveness to students who struggled with understanding the lesson and provided guidance in a calm and supportive manner. Such behavior reflects the biblical understanding that spiritual leadership involves both teaching and modeling godly character. In the context of Exodus 28:43, the priests were required to approach the presence of God with reverence and holiness, symbolized through their sacred garments. This imagery emphasizes that those who serve in spiritual leadership roles must embody the holiness they represent. Similarly, CRE teachers who demonstrate integrity and compassion serve as living examples of the values they teach, reinforcing the credibility of biblical instruction within the classroom.

The study also highlights the role of teachers in cultivating communal responsibility among students. Communal holiness, as reflected in the biblical narrative, implies that members of the community share responsibility for maintaining moral and spiritual integrity. In the classroom context, this principle is expressed through cooperative learning activities and shared commitments to respectful behavior. Observations indicated that the CRE teacher frequently organized group discussions and collaborative tasks that required students to work together while practicing mutual respect. For example, students were encouraged to discuss how biblical teachings about holiness and obedience to God could influence their attitudes toward classmates and school rules. These activities helped students recognize that holiness is not merely an individual virtue but a communal responsibility that affects the well-being of the entire learning environment. The research found that the integration of biblical teaching with social interaction significantly strengthens students' understanding of Christian values. Rather than teaching Scripture in isolation, the CRE teacher connected biblical passages with practical examples drawn from the students' daily experiences. When discussing the meaning of holiness in Exodus 28:43, the teacher explained that holiness involves living in ways that honor God through respectful relationships and responsible behavior. Students were invited to reflect on how they could demonstrate holiness by showing kindness to friends, respecting teachers, and maintaining honesty in their actions. This contextualized approach allowed students to see the relevance of biblical teachings within their own social environment. Educational theorists emphasize that learning becomes more meaningful when students can connect theoretical knowledge with real-life situations. In the context of Christian education, such connections help students internalize biblical values and apply them in their daily interactions. Another key finding

of the study is the importance of creating a respectful and inclusive classroom culture. Social competence enables teachers to manage classroom dynamics in ways that promote harmony and cooperation. At SD Negeri 074065 Balaekha Hilisimaetano, the CRE teacher intentionally fostered an atmosphere where every student felt valued and respected. Students were encouraged to listen attentively when others spoke, to appreciate different perspectives, and to support classmates who faced difficulties. The teacher also addressed instances of conflict or misunderstanding by guiding students toward reconciliation and mutual understanding. These practices reflect the biblical principle that holiness involves maintaining right relationships within the community. When students experience such an environment, they are more likely to develop attitudes of empathy, responsibility, and respect for others.

The role of teacher-student relationships emerged as another significant theme in the findings. Interviews with students revealed that they perceived the CRE teacher as approachable and supportive, qualities that strengthened their willingness to engage in discussions about faith and moral values. Students expressed that they felt comfortable asking questions about biblical teachings and sharing personal experiences related to the lesson topics. This relational openness created opportunities for deeper reflection on spiritual matters. In Christian education, trust between teachers and students is essential for effective spiritual formation because it allows students to explore their beliefs and values within a supportive environment. When teachers demonstrate genuine care and respect, students are more likely to internalize the values being taught. The findings also indicate that the broader school community plays an important role in supporting the development of communal holiness. At SD Negeri 074065 Balaekha Hilisimaetano, the presence of a predominantly Christian student and teacher population creates a shared framework of faith that reinforces the values taught in CRE classes. School activities such as morning devotions, communal prayers, and character-building programs contribute to an environment where spiritual values are consistently emphasized. The CRE teacher works collaboratively with other teachers to integrate Christian values into various aspects of school life. This collaborative approach reflects the understanding that spiritual formation is not limited to a single subject but is supported by the entire educational community. One challenge relates to the diversity of students' backgrounds and levels of spiritual understanding. Although most students come from Christian families, their familiarity with biblical teachings and church practices varies. As a result, teachers must adapt their teaching methods to ensure that all students can engage with the material meaningfully. Another challenge involves maintaining consistent discipline while fostering a supportive and compassionate classroom atmosphere. Teachers must balance the need for clear behavioral expectations with the desire to nurture understanding and forgiveness when students make mistakes. This balance reflects the broader Christian principle that holiness involves both justice and grace. The CRE teacher demonstrated a commitment to continuous reflection and improvement. Interviews revealed that the teacher regularly evaluates teaching practices and seeks guidance from biblical principles when addressing classroom issues. For instance, when conflicts arise among students, the teacher encourages them to reflect on biblical teachings about forgiveness, reconciliation, and mutual respect. By integrating these principles into everyday classroom situations,

the teacher helps students understand that Christian faith is not merely a set of beliefs but a way of living in relationship with others.

The theological significance of Exodus 28:43 provides an important framework for interpreting these findings. In the Old Testament context, the requirement for priests to wear sacred garments when entering the tabernacle symbolized the holiness and responsibility associated with serving in God's presence. This symbolism underscores the idea that spiritual leaders must approach their roles with reverence and integrity. When applied to the context of Christian education, this passage highlights the responsibility of teachers to cultivate an environment where God's holiness is respected and reflected in communal life. Teachers, like the priests of Israel, are entrusted with guiding others toward a deeper awareness of God's presence and moral standards. The findings of this study therefore suggest that social competence is a key instrument through which teachers fulfill this responsibility. By demonstrating empathy, fairness, effective communication, and moral integrity, CRE teachers help students understand that holiness is not limited to religious rituals but is expressed through everyday relationships and actions. The classroom becomes a microcosm of the Christian community, where students learn how to live in ways that honor God and respect others. This relational dimension of holiness is particularly important in the formation of young learners, who are still developing their understanding of ethical responsibility and social interaction. In addition, the research highlights the broader implications of social competence for character education and spiritual formation. When teachers intentionally cultivate a classroom culture rooted in Christian values, students are more likely to develop habits of cooperation, empathy, and moral responsibility. These qualities contribute not only to academic success but also to the development of individuals who are prepared to contribute positively to society. In this sense, the teaching of communal holiness extends beyond the boundaries of the classroom, influencing how students interact with family members, peers, and the wider community. The results of this study demonstrate that the social competence of Christian Religious Education teachers plays a fundamental role in translating biblical teachings into lived experience. Through relational communication, moral example, collaborative learning, and the integration of biblical principles into daily interactions, teachers create an environment where communal holiness can flourish. The example of Exodus 28:43 serves as a theological reminder that those who guide others in matters of faith must approach their responsibilities with dedication, integrity, and reverence. By embodying these qualities, teachers help students recognize that holiness is not only a theological concept but also a practical way of living within a community shaped by God's presence and love.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers plays a vital role in cultivating the value of communal holiness within the learning environment at SD Negeri 074065 Balaekha Hilisimaetano, South Nias. The findings reveal that the effectiveness of Christian education is not determined solely by the delivery of biblical knowledge, but also by the quality of social interactions established by teachers with students and the broader school community. Through relational

communication, moral example, collaborative learning practices, and the integration of biblical teaching into daily interactions, CRE teachers contribute significantly to the formation of a classroom culture that reflects Christian values. The research highlights that teachers' social competence is expressed through their ability to build respectful relationships, guide students in resolving conflicts, encourage cooperation, and demonstrate attitudes consistent with Christian teachings. These relational practices help students understand that holiness is not merely an individual spiritual condition but a communal value that shapes the behavior and responsibility of every member of the learning community. In this context, the classroom becomes a space where students learn to live out biblical principles through mutual respect, empathy, honesty, and responsibility toward others. The theological reflection on Exodus 28:43 provides a meaningful framework for understanding the role of Christian educators. Just as the priests in the Old Testament were required to maintain holiness when serving in God's presence, Christian teachers are called to uphold spiritual and moral integrity while guiding students in their learning journey. The symbolism of holiness in this biblical passage emphasizes the responsibility of spiritual leaders to cultivate an environment where reverence for God is reflected in communal life. When CRE teachers embody these values through their attitudes and actions, they help students recognize that faith is expressed not only in worship but also in everyday relationships. The study indicates that the cultivation of communal holiness is strengthened when teachers collaborate with the wider school community. Activities such as shared prayers, character-building programs, and supportive teacher-student relationships reinforce the spiritual atmosphere of the school. These practices enable students to experience Christian values in practical ways that extend beyond formal classroom instruction. The study also acknowledges several challenges, including differences in students' spiritual backgrounds and the need to balance discipline with compassion in classroom management. Addressing these challenges requires continuous reflection and commitment from teachers to improve their relational practices and to integrate biblical principles more deeply into their educational approach. The study affirms that the social competence of Christian Religious Education teachers is a fundamental factor in fostering communal holiness within Christian education. By demonstrating empathy, integrity, effective communication, and spiritual responsibility, teachers create a learning environment where students can grow academically, socially, and spiritually. Strengthening this competence among Christian educators is therefore essential for nurturing students who not only understand biblical teachings but also practice the values of holiness, respect, and responsibility within their communities.

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