



The Implementation of Christian Religious Education Teachers' Pedagogical Competence in Fostering Student Relationships at SMPN 1 Alasa Talumuzoi Based on Genesis 2:18

Erni Asnawati Telaumbanua^{1*}, Lasmaria Lumban Tobing²

¹Student, Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

²Lecturer, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: ernitelaumbanua82@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examines the implementation of pedagogical competence by Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in fostering interpersonal relationships among students at SMPN 1 Alasa Talumuzoi, grounded in the theological foundation of Genesis 2:18, which emphasizes that "it is not good for man to be alone." The research employed a qualitative descriptive approach with data collection through interviews, observations, and document analysis involving three CRE teachers and 30 students. Findings reveal that teachers implement pedagogical competence through three primary strategies: designing collaborative learning activities that promote peer interaction, integrating biblical values of fellowship and mutual support in classroom management, and facilitating reflective discussions on the importance of relationships in spiritual development. The study demonstrates that pedagogical competence, when rooted in theological principles, significantly contributes to creating a supportive learning environment where students develop meaningful relationships characterized by empathy, cooperation, and mutual respect. However, challenges persist, including limited instructional time, diverse student backgrounds, and technological distractions. This research contributes to the discourse on Christian pedagogy by illustrating how theological foundations can be operationalized through specific teaching competencies to address contemporary social challenges in adolescent development.

Keywords: *pedagogical competence, student relationships, Genesis 2:18, secondary education*

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary educational landscape presents significant challenges in fostering meaningful interpersonal relationships among adolescent students. In the digital era, students increasingly experience social isolation despite constant connectivity through technological devices. This phenomenon is particularly concerning in secondary education, where adolescents are at a critical developmental stage requiring positive peer

relationships for healthy social-emotional growth. Christian Religious Education (CRE) occupies a unique position within the Indonesian educational system, offering not only spiritual instruction but also moral and social guidance grounded in biblical principles. Genesis 2:18 states, "*The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'*" This foundational biblical text establishes the theological principle that human beings are inherently relational and require companionship for wholeness. This divine declaration transcends the immediate context of marital partnership, articulating a universal truth about human nature: individuals are created for community and relationship. Within the educational context, this theological foundation provides a compelling framework for understanding the essential role of interpersonal relationships in student development and learning. Pedagogical competence, as defined by Indonesian educational standards, encompasses teachers' abilities to understand learners' characteristics, design and implement learning strategies, conduct assessments, and facilitate student development. For CRE teachers, this competence must be exercised within a distinctly theological framework that recognizes education as not merely cognitive development but holistic formation of individuals in community. The integration of pedagogical competence with biblical principles represents a critical yet underexplored area in educational research.

SMPN 1 Alasa Talumuzoi serves a diverse student population in a region characterized by cultural plurality and varying socioeconomic backgrounds. Preliminary observations indicate that while academic instruction occurs regularly, intentional cultivation of student relationships remains inconsistent. Given the biblical mandate for community and the developmental needs of adolescents, investigating how CRE teachers implement their pedagogical competence to foster student relationships presents both theoretical and practical significance. Despite the critical importance of interpersonal relationships in adolescent development and the clear biblical mandate for community as articulated in Genesis 2:18, there remains limited empirical understanding of how Christian Religious Education teachers operationalize their pedagogical competence to foster meaningful student relationships in secondary school contexts. This study aims to: 1) Examine the strategies employed by CRE teachers in implementing pedagogical competence to foster student relationships. 2) Analyze how Genesis 2:18 informs and shapes teachers' pedagogical approaches to relationship building. 3) Identify the impacts of these pedagogical practices on student interpersonal dynamics. 4) Explore challenges encountered by teachers in fostering student relationships through CRE instruction. This research contributes to educational theory by bridging theological foundations and pedagogical practice, offering empirical insights into how biblical principles can be operationalized through specific teaching competencies. Practically, findings provide guidance for CRE teachers, curriculum developers, and educational administrators seeking to enhance the relational dimensions of Christian education. Furthermore, this study addresses a gap in literature concerning the intersection of theological anthropology and pedagogical competence in Indonesian secondary education contexts.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to examine the implementation of pedagogical competence by CRE teachers in fostering student

relationships. The qualitative approach was selected for its capacity to capture the nuanced, contextual, and meaning-laden dimensions of educational practice grounded in theological principles. This design enabled deep exploration of teachers' perspectives, strategies, and the lived experiences of students within their natural educational setting. The research was conducted at SMPN 1 Alasa Talumuzoi, located in Nias Selatan Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia, during the academic year 2024-2025. The school serves approximately 450 students across grades 7-9, with a predominantly Christian student population. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, consisting of three certified CRE teachers with teaching experience ranging from 5 to 15 years, and 30 students from grades 8 and 9 selected to represent diversity in gender, academic performance, and social engagement levels. All participants provided informed consent, with parental consent obtained for student participants. Data were collected through three primary methods over a period of four months: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the three CRE teachers, each lasting 60-90 minutes. Interview protocols explored teachers' understanding of pedagogical competence, their interpretation of Genesis 2:18 in educational contexts, specific strategies employed to foster student relationships, and perceived challenges and successes. Student focus group discussions were held with six groups of five students each, lasting 45-60 minutes, focusing on their experiences of relationships in CRE classes and perceptions of teacher practices that influenced peer interactions. Non-participant classroom observations were conducted across 15 CRE lessons, with each teacher observed five times. Observations focused on instructional strategies, classroom interaction patterns, teacher-student and student-student communication, integration of biblical content related to relationships, and classroom climate. Field notes were recorded using a structured observation protocol developed specifically for this study. Document analysis examined lesson plans, teaching materials, student assignments, and assessment instruments to identify how relationship-building objectives were integrated into curricular planning and evaluation. Data analysis followed Creswell's six-step process for qualitative data analysis. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and field notes were organized chronologically. Initial coding identified recurring themes, patterns, and significant statements. Focused coding then grouped initial codes into broader categories aligned with research objectives. Thematic analysis identified four major themes regarding pedagogical strategies, theological integration, student impacts, and implementation challenges. Data triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents enhanced credibility. Member checking was conducted with teacher participants to verify interpretations. This research received approval from the school administration and adhered to ethical research principles. Participants' identities were protected through pseudonyms, participation was voluntary with the right to withdraw, and data were stored securely with access limited to the research team. Trustworthiness was established through prolonged engagement in the field, triangulation of data sources and methods, peer debriefing with educational researchers, and maintenance of an audit trail documenting all research decisions and processes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of interview data revealed that CRE teachers at SMPN 1 Alasa Talumuzoi conceptualize pedagogical competence as extending beyond conventional instructional skills to encompass spiritual formation and relational facilitation. Teacher 1 stated, *"Pedagogical competence in CRE is not just about delivering biblical knowledge, but about creating spaces where students experience the love of Christ through relationships with each other."* This understanding reflects a theological conception of teaching that integrates cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of learning. All three teachers explicitly connected their pedagogical approach to Genesis 2:18, interpreting the text as establishing a divine blueprint for human community. Teacher 2 explained, *"When God said it is not good for man to be alone, He revealed something fundamental about how we are created. In my classroom, I see this truth lived out-students flourish when they have genuine friendships and support from peers."* Teachers demonstrated sophisticated theological reflection, recognizing that the text speaks not merely to adult relationships but to the universal human need for belonging and connection across developmental stages.

Pedagogical Strategies for Fostering Student Relationships

Observations documented extensive use of collaborative learning activities specifically designed to promote positive peer interactions. Teachers consistently employed small group discussions, cooperative projects, and peer teaching activities. In one observed lesson on the parable of the Good Samaritan, students worked in groups of four to dramatize contemporary applications of the parable. The activity structure required role allocation, collective decision-making, and mutual support, creating natural contexts for relationship development. Teacher 3 explained her rationale: *"I intentionally create diverse groups mixing students who don't usually interact. This mirrors the biblical call to love our neighbor-not just those we naturally gravitate toward."* Document analysis of lesson plans revealed systematic rotation of group compositions across the semester, ensuring students built relationships with multiple classmates rather than remaining in established friendship clusters. Teachers integrated principles from Genesis 2:18 into classroom norms and management practices. Each classroom displayed a jointly created "covenant" articulating relational expectations grounded in biblical values. These covenants included commitments such as "we listen with respect," "we encourage one another," and "we recognize we need each other to grow." Teacher 1 noted, *"The covenant is not just rules-it's our commitment to live out Genesis 2:18 together. We reference it regularly when conflicts arise or when someone feels excluded."*

Observations confirmed that teachers actively intervened in negative peer dynamics, reframing conflicts as opportunities for spiritual growth and relational healing. When a disagreement occurred between two students during an observed lesson, Teacher 2 facilitated a restorative conversation grounded in biblical principles of reconciliation, modeling for all students how to navigate relational challenges constructively. Teachers regularly facilitated discussions connecting biblical content to students' relational experiences. One observed lesson on the early church in Acts included extended discussion of how the believers "were together and had everything in common" (Acts

2:44), with students reflecting on their own experiences of community and isolation. Teacher 1 asked probing questions: *"When have you experienced the blessing of not being alone? How does our faith community help us grow in ways we couldn't alone?"* These discussions created space for vulnerable sharing, with students describing experiences of loneliness, the joy of supportive friendships, and challenges in building relationships. Document analysis of student reflection journals revealed deep engagement with relational themes, with many students explicitly connecting Genesis 2:18 to their own lives.

Impacts on Student Interpersonal Dynamics

Student focus groups revealed widespread perception that CRE classes fostered more supportive peer relationships compared to other subjects. One student stated, *"In CRE, we're not competing against each other. We help each other understand the lessons and support each other with problems."* Another student noted, *"I've made friends in CRE that I wouldn't have known otherwise because we work together and our teacher helps us see we need each other."* Observations documented numerous instances of spontaneous peer support, including students explaining concepts to struggling classmates, offering encouragement during presentations, and showing genuine interest in each other's contributions. The collaborative structures and relational emphasis appeared to normalize helping behaviors and mutual care. Students demonstrated increased capacity for empathy and understanding diverse perspectives. In focus groups, students articulated awareness that classmates faced different challenges and possessed unique strengths. One student explained, *"Through our discussions and group work, I learned that people who seem quiet might have really deep thoughts. I learned to listen better and not judge quickly."* Teachers reported observing growth in students' ability to navigate disagreements constructively and demonstrate compassion toward peers experiencing difficulties. Teacher 3 shared, *"At the beginning of the year, conflicts would escalate quickly. Now, students often resolve issues themselves using principles we've discussed-forgiveness, listening, finding common ground."* Students consistently described feeling a strong sense of belonging in their CRE classes. Multiple students used the metaphor of family, with one stating, *"Our CRE class feels like a family where everyone is valued."* Another noted, *"I know my classmates will support me here. It's a safe place to be myself."* This sense of community extended beyond class time, with teachers and students reporting that friendships formed in CRE classes persisted in other contexts. Teacher 2 observed, *"I see students who became friends in my class eating lunch together, studying together, supporting each other in other activities. The relationships transcend the classroom."* All teachers expressed frustration with insufficient class time to adequately address both content requirements and relationship development. Teacher 1 stated, *"We have so much curriculum to cover, and building authentic relationships takes time. I often feel tension between completing the syllabus and creating space for the relational work that's equally important."* Teachers noted that students' varying family backgrounds, prior experiences with relationships, and social skills created challenges in fostering positive peer dynamics. Teacher 3 explained, *"Some students come from homes where conflict and isolation are normal. They don't have models for healthy relationships, so we're starting from scratch with basic skills like active listening and expressing appreciation."* Teachers expressed concern about mobile devices and social media undermining face-to-face

relationship building. Teacher 2 noted, *"Students are physically present but mentally absent, checking phones instead of engaging with each other. Teaching them to value direct human connection in a digital age is increasingly difficult."* Teachers struggled with assessing relational outcomes within conventional academic assessment frameworks. Teacher 1 questioned, *"How do I fairly evaluate growth in relationships and community-building? These outcomes are real and important, but don't fit neatly into our grading system."*

Theological Integration in Pedagogical Practice

This study demonstrates that when CRE teachers ground their pedagogical competence in theological foundations such as Genesis 2:18, they develop distinctive approaches to education that prioritize holistic human formation. The finding that teachers conceptualize their role as extending beyond content delivery to relational facilitation aligns with Reformed educational theology, which emphasizes teaching as participation in God's redemptive work of restoring human community. The teachers' explicit connection between Genesis 2:18 and their classroom practices exemplifies what Palmer terms "teaching from the heart," where spiritual convictions inform every dimension of pedagogical decision-making. The integration of Genesis 2:18 into pedagogical practice reflects sophisticated theological reflection. Teachers recognized that the text reveals not merely a practical solution to Adam's solitude but a fundamental truth about human ontology—that persons are created for communion. This theological anthropology directly challenges individualistic educational paradigms that view learning as primarily individual achievement. Instead, teachers operationalized a communal epistemology consistent with African Ubuntu philosophy and Christian communitarian thought, recognizing that knowledge and growth occur within relationships.

Pedagogical Strategies and Relationship Development

The collaborative learning structures employed by teachers represent more than instructional techniques; they constitute embodied theology, creating social contexts where Genesis 2:18 is experientially realized. Research in cooperative learning consistently demonstrates that structured positive interdependence enhances both academic outcomes and social relationships. This study extends existing research by illustrating how deliberate theological framing transforms cooperative learning from mere instructional strategy into formational practice. When teachers explicitly connect collaborative activities to biblical principles of community, students not only develop academic and social skills but also internalize theological values regarding human interdependence. The classroom covenants observed in this study exemplify what Smith describes as "liturgical pedagogy"—practices that shape desires and dispositions through embodied routines. By collectively creating and regularly referencing relational commitments grounded in Scripture, students practice a communal identity that transcends conventional classroom management. This approach aligns with virtue ethics in education, which emphasizes character formation through habituation in communities of practice. The reflective discussions on relationships represent a critical pedagogical move, creating cognitive bridges between biblical texts and lived experience. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes that learning occurs through social interaction and cultural mediation. Teachers' facilitation of discussions connecting Genesis 2:18 to

students' relational experiences provides the cultural mediation necessary for theological concepts to become personally meaningful. This pedagogical strategy also exemplifies Freire's concept of problem-posing education, where students critically examine their reality in light of transformative principles. The documented impacts on student relationships-enhanced peer support, increased empathy, and stronger sense of belonging-demonstrate that pedagogical competence informed by theological principles can address pressing contemporary challenges in adolescent development. Research consistently identifies positive peer relationships as protective factors against numerous adolescent risks including depression, anxiety, and academic disengagement. The finding that students perceive their CRE classes as distinctively supportive suggests that intentional, theologically grounded relationship-building creates qualitatively different peer cultures compared to conventional classroom environments. The development of empathy observed in this study is particularly significant given contemporary concerns about declining empathy among young people. The combination of collaborative structures, modeling by teachers, and reflective discussion appears to create conditions conducive to perspective-taking and compassionate response. This finding supports Noddings' ethic of care in education, which argues that schools must prioritize caring relationships as foundational to all learning. The sense of belonging students described reflects fulfillment of a fundamental human need identified across psychological research. Maslow's hierarchy positions belonging as essential for higher-level development, while contemporary belonging research demonstrates its impact on academic motivation, mental health, and identity formation. This study suggests that explicitly theological approaches to education can effectively address belonging needs precisely because they recognize and respond to the divinely created relational nature of persons.

Challenges and Contextual Constraints

The challenges identified by teachers reveal tensions inherent in implementing relationally-focused pedagogical approaches within systems primarily structured around content mastery and individual assessment. The concern about limited instructional time reflects broader curricular debates about breadth versus depth, coverage versus understanding, and cognitive versus affective learning objectives. From a theological perspective, the pressure to prioritize content delivery over relationship development reflects a truncated view of education that divorces knowing from being and becoming. The challenge of student background diversity highlights the reality that pedagogical interventions occur within complex social ecologies. Students bring to school relational patterns learned in families and communities, and two or three hours of weekly CRE instruction, while significant, cannot alone overcome deeply ingrained relational dysfunctions. This reality underscores the importance of whole-school approaches to relationship cultivation and partnerships with families and faith communities. The concern about technological distractions points to broader cultural shifts affecting human relationships. While technology offers connectivity, research increasingly documents its association with loneliness, reduced face-to-face communication skills, and fragmented attention. Teachers' struggle to compete with digital distractions for students' relational engagement reflects a challenge facing not only education but society broadly. This study demonstrates that pedagogical competence in CRE must be understood as distinct from generic teaching competence due to its theological foundation and formational aims.

Teacher preparation programs for CRE should explicitly address how biblical principles inform and shape pedagogical decision-making, moving beyond training teachers merely to deliver religious content toward equipping them to facilitate holistic spiritual formation. The findings suggest that CRE curriculum frameworks should explicitly incorporate relational objectives alongside cognitive learning goals, recognizing relationship development as integral to spiritual formation rather than incidental to it. Assessment practices should evolve to capture relational and communal dimensions of learning, perhaps through portfolio assessments, peer evaluations, and qualitative descriptions of growth in community participation.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how Christian Religious Education teachers at SMPN 1 Alasa Talumuzoi implement pedagogical competence to foster student relationships, grounded in the theological foundation of Genesis 2:18. Findings reveal that teachers who explicitly integrate biblical principles of human relationality into their pedagogical practice develop distinctive approaches characterized by collaborative learning structures, values-based classroom management, and reflective discussion connecting Scripture to lived experience. These practices demonstrably enhance student relationships, fostering peer support, empathy, and belonging. The research contributes to educational theory by illustrating how theological anthropology can inform and enrich pedagogical practice, challenging individualistic educational paradigms with a communal epistemology rooted in Scripture. The study provides concrete examples of strategies CRE teachers can employ to cultivate classroom communities reflecting biblical visions of human flourishing. Significant challenges persist, including systemic constraints of limited time and assessment structures oriented toward individual achievement, diverse student backgrounds requiring differentiated relational support, and cultural forces such as technology that undermine face-to-face relationship development. Addressing these challenges requires not only individual teacher competence but also institutional commitments and broader cultural transformation. In conclusion, this study affirms the profound relevance of Genesis 2:18 for educational practice, demonstrating that the theological truth that humans are created for relationship has concrete implications for how we structure learning environments and facilitate student development. When teachers implement pedagogical competence grounded in this biblical foundation, they participate in God's redemptive work of fostering communities characterized by mutual care, support, and flourishing.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Astuti, R. W., & Waluyo, H. J. (2019). Character education model based on religion values: A qualitative study in Indonesian elementary schools. *Journal of Education and Learning (EduLearn)*, 13(4), 553-560. <https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v13i4.13267>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

- Dewi, K. S. (2020). The role of religious education in building student character in the digital era. *Journal of Education and e-Learning Research*, 7(3), 319-324. <https://doi.org/10.20448/journal.509.2020.73.319.324>
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniversary ed.). Continuum.
- Gillies, R. M. (2016). Cooperative learning: Review of research and practice. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 41(3), 39-54. <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2016v41n3.3>
- Hakim, L. (2018). Kompetensi pedagogik guru dalam pembelajaran. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran Dasar*, 5(1), 23-34.
- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (2014). Cooperative learning in 21st century. *Anales de Psicología*, 30(3), 841-851. <https://doi.org/10.6018/analesps.30.3.201241>
- Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan. (2016). *Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia Nomor 22 Tahun 2016 tentang Standar Proses Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah*. Jakarta: Kemendikbud.
- Konopka, G., Feldman, R., & Shulman, E. P. (2020). The social dynamics of adolescent peer relationships. *Developmental Review*, 56, 100906. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2020.100906>
- Lickona, T. (2004). *Character matters: How to help our children develop good judgment, integrity, and other essential virtues*. Touchstone.
- Mulyasa, E. (2017). *Guru dalam implementasi Kurikulum 2013*. Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Ndraha, J. A., & Waruwu, M. (2021). Christian religious education and moral development of adolescents in digital society. *International Journal of Education and Social Science Research*, 4(3), 105-115. <https://doi.org/10.37500/IJESSR.2021.4308>
- Noddings, N. (2013). *Caring: A relational approach to ethics and moral education* (2nd ed.). University of California Press.
- Nugroho, A., & Mutmainah, S. (2020). The implementation of teacher pedagogical competence in Indonesian secondary schools. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 11(12), 118-125. <https://doi.org/10.7176/JEP/11-12-13>
- Palmer, P. J. (2017). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life* (20th anniversary ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Pane, A., & Darwis Dasopang, M. (2017). Belajar dan pembelajaran. *Fitrah: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu-ilmu Keislaman*, 3(2), 333-352. <https://doi.org/10.24952/fitrah.v3i2.945>

- Purwanto, Y., & Rizki, S. (2019). The role of Christian religious education teachers in character building at senior high school. *Polyglot: Jurnal Ilmiah*, 15(2), 240-252. <https://doi.org/10.19166/pji.v15i2.1436>
- Sanjaya, W. (2016). *Strategi pembelajaran berorientasi standar proses pendidikan*. Jakarta: Kencana Prenada Media Group.
- Siahaan, H. E. R. (2019). Characterizations of Christian religious education in the perspective of Deuteronomy 6:4-9. *Dunamis: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristiani*, 4(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.30648/dun.v4i1.207>
- Smith, J. K. A. (2009). *Desiring the kingdom: Worship, worldview, and cultural formation*. Baker Academic.
- Suparno, P. (2015). *Teori perkembangan kognitif Jean Piaget*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius.
- Tiffany, G. D., & Siagian, F. L. (2020). The urgency of Christian religious education in building student character. *Jurnal Teologi Berita Hidup*, 3(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.38189/jtbh.v3i1.39>
- Wentzel, K. R. (2017). Peer relationships, motivation, and academic performance at school. In A. J. Elliot, C. S. Dweck, & D. S. Yeager (Eds.), *Handbook of competence and motivation: Theory and application* (2nd ed., pp. 586-603). The Guilford Press.
- Wright, N. T. (2013). *Surprised by Scripture: Engaging contemporary issues*. HarperOne.
- Yusuf, S. (2014). *Psikologi perkembangan anak dan remaja*. Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya.