



## Social Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Fostering Inclusive Relationships: A Reflection on Philippians 1:3-5 at SMA Negeri 1 Lahewa Timur

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in fostering inclusive relationships within a public school context, with specific reference to SMA Negeri 1 Lahewa Timur. Grounded in both educational theory and a theological reflection on Philippians 1:3-5, the study explores how biblical values inform teachers' social interactions in pluralistic learning environments. Using a qualitative reflective approach, this research integrates a systematic review of recent literature on teacher social competence, inclusive education, and Christian pedagogy with a contextual analysis of the educational setting. The reflection on Philippians 1:3-5 highlights key relational principles-gratitude, joy, and partnership (koinonia)-which provide a theological foundation for inclusive educational practices. These principles are examined in relation to the professional responsibilities of CRE teachers in public schools characterized by religious and cultural diversity. The findings indicate that socially competent CRE teachers play a vital role in creating inclusive classroom climates that promote mutual respect and a sense of belonging. By embodying relational values rooted in Christian theology, teachers are able to engage students without imposing exclusivist attitudes, thereby supporting tolerance and social harmony. The study also reveals that social competence functions as a mediating factor between faith-based instruction and inclusive educational practice. This research affirms that social competence grounded in biblical reflection enhances the effectiveness of Christian Religious Education in public schools. The integration of theological values and professional social skills offers a meaningful contribution to inclusive education and teacher development in multicultural contexts.*

**Keywords:** Social Competence, Christian Religious Education, Inclusive Relationships

### INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary educational landscape, teachers are no longer perceived merely as transmitters of knowledge but as key agents in shaping social interaction, values, and inclusive relationships within school communities. This paradigm shift is particularly

significant in multicultural and religiously diverse contexts, where social competence plays a decisive role in fostering mutual respect, collaboration, and harmony among students. Within this framework, the social competence of teachers has emerged as a critical dimension of professional effectiveness, complementing pedagogical, personal, and professional competencies (Hoy & Miskel, 2016). Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers occupy a distinctive position in public schools. While they are responsible for delivering faith-based instruction, they simultaneously function within a pluralistic educational environment that demands inclusivity, tolerance, and sensitivity toward diversity. Consequently, the social competence of CRE teachers extends beyond interpersonal skills; it encompasses the ability to build inclusive relationships that affirm Christian values while respecting differences in religious, cultural, and social backgrounds (Sallis, 2015). This dual responsibility requires CRE teachers to embody social attitudes that reflect both professional ethics and theological integrity.

Social competence in education is commonly understood as the capacity to interact effectively with students, colleagues, parents, and the wider community through communication, empathy, cooperation, and conflict management. In inclusive educational settings, social competence enables teachers to create learning environments characterized by trust, participation, and mutual appreciation (Oakland, 2018). For CRE teachers, this competence becomes a practical expression of faith in action, translating theological convictions into relational practices that promote inclusivity and social cohesion. The biblical foundation for inclusive relational practices can be found in Philippians 1:3-5, where the Apostle Paul expresses gratitude, joy, and partnership in the gospel. This passage highlights relational values such as appreciation, communal participation, and shared commitment, which resonate strongly with the concept of social competence in education. Paul's reflection emphasizes that authentic relationships are built on gratitude, mutual support, and collaborative purpose, offering a theological lens through which the social role of CRE teachers can be understood and evaluated (Fee, 2019). In the context of public education, where religious instruction occurs alongside students of diverse beliefs, Philippians 1:3-5 provides a normative framework for inclusive engagement. The emphasis on partnership (*koinonia*) suggests that Christian educators are called to foster relationships marked by openness and cooperation rather than exclusivism. Thus, biblical reflection does not distance CRE teachers from inclusivity; instead, it reinforces their responsibility to cultivate social relationships that reflect Christian love and respect for others (Wright, 2018).

This study is situated at SMA Negeri 1 Lahewa Timur, a public senior high school that reflects the broader multicultural reality of Indonesian education. As a public institution, the school serves students from diverse religious and social backgrounds, making inclusive relational practices an essential component of effective teaching. In such a context, the social competence of CRE teachers becomes particularly significant, as it influences not only classroom dynamics but also interreligious and interpersonal relationships within the school community. Studies focusing specifically on the social competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in public schools remain limited. Existing research often addresses pedagogical strategies or theological content, while the relational and social dimensions of CRE teaching receive comparatively less attention (Srikanthan & Dalrymple,

2017). This gap underscores the need for research that integrates educational theory, social competence, and biblical reflection within real educational contexts. This article aims to examine the social competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in fostering inclusive relationships through a reflective analysis of Philippians 1:3-5. By combining educational perspectives with biblical insights, this study seeks to contribute to a more holistic understanding of CRE teacher competence in public schools. Specifically, it explores how theological reflection can inform social practices that promote inclusivity, partnership, and mutual respect in educational settings. Through this approach, the study is expected to offer both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it enriches discussions on teacher social competence by integrating biblical reflection into educational discourse. Practically, it provides insights for CRE teachers, school leaders, and policymakers seeking to strengthen inclusive relational practices in public education. Ultimately, the study affirms that social competence, grounded in Christian values and expressed through inclusive relationships, is a vital dimension of effective Christian Religious Education in pluralistic school contexts.

## METHODS

A qualitative approach, to explore the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in fostering inclusive relationships within a public school context, is considered appropriate because the focus of the study is on understanding meanings, values, and relational practices rather than measuring variables quantitatively (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research integrates biblical reflection and educational analysis to provide a holistic understanding of social competence in Christian Religious Education. The methodological framework combines reflective exegetical analysis and contextual educational inquiry. An exegetical reflection on Philippians 1:3-5 was conducted to identify key theological themes related to gratitude, partnership (*koinonia*), joy, and shared commitment. This biblical reflection serves as the normative foundation for interpreting inclusive relational practices in Christian education (Fee, 2019). The exegetical process involved analyzing the text's literary context, key Greek terms, and theological emphasis, with reference to reputable biblical commentaries and scholarly interpretations. The study applies these theological insights to the educational context of SMA Negeri 1 Lahewa Timur, a public senior high school characterized by religious and social diversity. The locus was selected because it represents a typical Indonesian public school setting where Christian Religious Education is delivered within a pluralistic environment. This context provides a relevant setting for examining how CRE teachers' social competence contributes to inclusive relationships among students and the wider school community. Data sources in this study are secondary and contextual, consisting of scholarly literature on teacher social competence, inclusive education, and Christian Religious Education, biblical and theological commentaries on Philippians, and policy documents and academic discussions related to inclusivity in public education. The literature was selected using purposive sampling, focusing on peer-reviewed books and journal articles published within the last ten years to ensure academic relevance and theoretical currency (Sallis, 2015; Hoy & Miskel, 2016). The process involved identifying recurring themes related to social competence, such as empathy, communication, cooperation, respect for diversity, and relational responsibility, and examining how these

themes align with the theological values found in Philippians 1:3-5. This methodological design allows the study to critically and contextually examine how the social competence of CRE teachers, informed by biblical reflection, can foster inclusive relationships in public education settings. The integration of theological and educational perspectives provides a robust framework for understanding social competence as both a professional and faith-informed dimension of Christian Religious Education.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this qualitative descriptive and reflective analysis indicate that social competence is a central dimension of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers' professional identity, particularly in fostering inclusive relationships within public school contexts. Based on the synthesis of educational literature and exegetical reflection on Philippians 1:3-5, social competence emerges not merely as a set of interpersonal skills but as a relational disposition grounded in values such as gratitude, empathy, partnership, and shared responsibility. These findings reinforce the view that social competence is inseparable from ethical and theological orientations in Christian education (Hoy & Miskel, 2016). The exegetical reflection on Philippians 1:3-5 reveals that the Apostle Paul frames relationships within the Christian community through the language of thanksgiving, joy, and partnership. Paul's expression of gratitude "in every remembrance" of the Philippian believers highlights an attitude of appreciation that transcends transactional relationships. When applied to educational settings, this theological insight suggests that CRE teachers who cultivate gratitude toward students and colleagues are more likely to foster inclusive and affirming learning environments. Gratitude, as a relational attitude, strengthens trust and reduces hierarchical distance between teachers and learners, thereby supporting inclusive educational practices (Fee, 2019). In the context of public education, where diversity is a defining characteristic, gratitude-based relationships become a foundation for social inclusion. CRE teachers who approach students with appreciation rather than judgment are better positioned to engage learners from different religious and social backgrounds. This aligns with educational research emphasizing that positive teacher-student relationships significantly influence students' sense of belonging and engagement (Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2017). Thus, the theological value of gratitude reflected in Philippians 1:3-5 directly informs the social competence required for inclusive teaching. Another key theme derived from the biblical text is *koinonia*, commonly translated as partnership or fellowship. Paul's emphasis on partnership "in the gospel" underscores a relational model characterized by shared purpose and mutual participation. In educational terms, this concept resonates with collaborative learning and participatory school cultures. The findings suggest that CRE teachers who embody *koinonia* in their social interactions tend to promote inclusive relationships by recognizing students and colleagues as partners rather than passive recipients of instruction. Such an approach aligns with contemporary views of inclusive education that prioritize participation, dialogue, and shared responsibility (Oakland, 2018).

The relevance of *koinonia* becomes particularly evident in the setting of SMA Negeri 1 Lahewa Timur, where Christian Religious Education is conducted within a pluralistic

student population. In this context, social competence involves the ability to collaborate respectfully with students of different beliefs while maintaining the integrity of Christian teaching. The findings indicate that partnership-oriented social competence enables CRE teachers to navigate religious diversity without compromising inclusivity. Rather than fostering exclusivism, such competence encourages respectful engagement and mutual understanding, which are essential for social harmony in public schools. Joy, as another relational theme in Philippians 1:3-5, also contributes significantly to the understanding of social competence. Paul's expression of joy in his relationships reflects an affective dimension of social interaction that enhances relational quality. Educational literature supports the notion that teachers' emotional dispositions influence classroom climate and student motivation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). CRE teachers who demonstrate joy in teaching and interacting with students are more likely to create welcoming environments that support inclusion and positive social interaction. The integration of joy into social competence challenges purely technical understandings of teacher professionalism. Instead of viewing competence solely in terms of skills and strategies, the findings emphasize affective and relational qualities as essential components. In inclusive educational settings, joy contributes to emotional safety, enabling students from diverse backgrounds to participate without fear of marginalization. This finding reinforces the argument that social competence in Christian education is holistic, encompassing cognitive, behavioral, and emotional dimensions (Sallis, 2015). From an educational perspective, the findings also highlight communication as a core aspect of social competence. Inclusive relationships require teachers to communicate clearly, empathetically, and respectfully with students, parents, and colleagues. The biblical reflection on Philippians 1:3-5 supports this emphasis by illustrating relational communication rooted in appreciation and shared commitment. CRE teachers who model such communication practices contribute to inclusive school cultures by addressing differences constructively and preventing relational conflict (Hoy & Miskel, 2016). The analysis further reveals that social competence is closely linked to ethical responsibility in public education. CRE teachers operate within institutional frameworks that demand respect for diversity and adherence to inclusive values. The findings suggest that biblical reflection does not contradict these demands; rather, it provides moral motivation for inclusive practices. The ethic of partnership and gratitude found in Philippians 1:3-5 aligns with broader educational principles of equity, respect, and social justice, demonstrating the compatibility of Christian values with inclusive education (Wright, 2018).

Another important result concerns the role of social competence in fostering interreligious sensitivity. In pluralistic schools, CRE teachers must balance faith-based instruction with sensitivity toward students of other religious traditions. The findings indicate that social competence informed by biblical values enables teachers to engage in respectful dialogue without diluting doctrinal content. This balance is critical for maintaining both professional integrity and inclusivity in public education contexts (Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2017). The discussion also highlights the institutional dimension of social competence. Inclusive relationships are not solely the result of individual teacher behavior but are influenced by school culture and leadership. However, CRE teachers play a strategic role as moral and relational agents within the school community. By modeling inclusive social competence, they contribute to shaping school norms that value

cooperation and mutual respect. This finding aligns with organizational theories emphasizing the role of individual actors in cultivating inclusive institutional cultures (Oakland, 2018). The results suggest that professional development programs for CRE teachers should explicitly address social competence and inclusive relational practices. Training that integrates theological reflection with social skills development can enhance teachers' ability to respond effectively to diversity. Such programs should emphasize reflective practice, enabling teachers to critically examine how biblical values inform their social interactions in educational settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The findings also underscore the importance of reflective practice in sustaining social competence. Reflecting on biblical texts such as Philippians 1:3-5 allows CRE teachers to continually reassess their relational attitudes and practices. This reflective process supports continuous professional growth and aligns with broader models of lifelong learning in education (Sallis, 2015). Social competence, therefore, is not a static attribute but a dynamic capacity that develops through reflection and experience.

This study contributes to the discourse on teacher competence by highlighting the theological dimension of social competence in Christian Religious Education. While existing research often treats social competence as a secular construct, the findings demonstrate that theological reflection can enrich understanding and practice without undermining inclusivity. This integrative perspective addresses a gap in the literature and offers a model for contextualizing teacher competence within faith-based education (Hoy & Miskel, 2016). The findings have implications for policy and curriculum development in public schools offering religious education. Recognizing social competence as a core competency can inform standards and evaluation criteria for CRE teachers. Policies that support inclusive relational practices contribute to social cohesion and align with national educational goals emphasizing tolerance and diversity (Oakland, 2018). The results and discussion affirm that the social competence of Christian Religious Education teachers plays a vital role in fostering inclusive relationships in public school contexts. Grounded in the theological values of gratitude, partnership, and joy articulated in Philippians 1:3-5, social competence enables CRE teachers to navigate diversity with integrity and empathy. In the context of SMA Negeri 1 Lahewa Timur, this competence supports inclusive educational practices that benefit not only Christian students but the entire school community. This study demonstrates that social competence, when informed by biblical reflection and educational theory, becomes a powerful resource for inclusive education. By integrating theological insights with professional practice, CRE teachers can contribute meaningfully to social harmony and educational quality in pluralistic public schools. These findings reinforce the importance of holistic approaches to teacher competence that recognize the interplay between faith, professionalism, and inclusivity in contemporary education.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that social competence is a fundamental dimension of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers' professionalism in fostering inclusive relationships within public school contexts. Through a qualitative reflective analysis grounded in educational theory and a theological reflection on Philippians 1:3-5, this article

demonstrates that social competence extends beyond technical interpersonal skills and is deeply rooted in relational values such as gratitude, partnership, joy, empathy, and ethical responsibility. These values shape how CRE teachers interact with students, colleagues, and the wider school community, particularly in pluralistic educational environments. The reflection on Philippians 1:3-5 offers a meaningful theological framework for understanding inclusive relationships. Paul's emphasis on thanksgiving, joy, and *koinonia* (partnership) reveals a relational ethic that prioritizes mutual respect, shared purpose, and sustained commitment. When applied to the educational setting, these principles encourage CRE teachers to engage students not as objects of instruction but as partners in the learning process. Such an approach fosters a sense of belonging and mutual trust, which are essential for inclusive education in public schools characterized by religious and cultural diversity. The findings also highlight that social competence plays a strategic role in mediating faith-based instruction and inclusivity. In public schools, CRE teachers are required to uphold Christian values while respecting the beliefs and identities of students from other religious backgrounds. This study shows that social competence informed by biblical values does not lead to exclusivism; rather, it strengthens teachers' ability to engage in respectful dialogue and constructive collaboration. As a result, Christian Religious Education can contribute positively to social harmony and tolerance within the school environment. This study emphasizes that social competence is a dynamic and reflective capacity. It develops through continuous interaction, self-reflection, and engagement with both theological insights and educational practices. Reflective engagement with biblical texts such as Philippians 1:3-5 enables CRE teachers to critically examine their relational attitudes and behaviors, ensuring that their teaching practices remain inclusive, ethical, and contextually relevant. This process supports ongoing professional growth and aligns with contemporary expectations of teacher professionalism. From an institutional perspective, the conclusions suggest that fostering social competence among CRE teachers requires systemic support. Schools and educational authorities should recognize social competence as a core professional competency and integrate it into teacher development programs, evaluation frameworks, and curriculum design. Professional training that combines pedagogical skills with theological reflection and social sensitivity can enhance teachers' readiness to address diversity and promote inclusive relationships in public education settings. This study affirms that the social competence of Christian Religious Education teachers is a vital resource for building inclusive educational communities. Grounded in the relational theology of Philippians 1:3-5 and supported by educational theory, social competence enables CRE teachers to navigate diversity with integrity, empathy, and professionalism. By embodying gratitude, partnership, and joy in their social interactions, CRE teachers can contribute meaningfully to inclusive education and the broader goal of social cohesion in pluralistic societies. This integrative approach underscores the relevance of Christian values in contemporary public education and offers a constructive model for inclusive relational practice.

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