



Developing Social Competence through Forgiveness: A Biblical-Educational Study of Matthew 6:14-15 at SDN 060834 Medan

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ABSTRACT

Social competence is a fundamental aspect of students' holistic development, particularly in elementary education where interpersonal skills and moral awareness are actively formed. Within Christian education, forgiveness represents a core biblical value that shapes social relationships and ethical behavior. This study aims to examine the role of forgiveness, grounded in Matthew 6:14-15, in developing students' social competence within Christian Religious Education. The research was conducted at SDN 060834 Medan, involving 33 Christian students and nine Christian teachers, including a Christian Religious Education teacher. Employing a quantitative research design with a descriptive-correlational approach, data were collected using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire measuring forgiveness-based instructional practices and students' social competence. The instrument demonstrated acceptable validity and reliability. Descriptive statistics were used to identify levels of forgiveness-oriented teaching and social competence, while Pearson's product-moment correlation was applied to examine the relationship between the two variables. The results indicate that forgiveness-based Christian teaching is implemented at a high level and that students demonstrate strong social competence, particularly in empathy, cooperation, and conflict resolution. Statistical analysis reveals a positive and significant correlation between forgiveness-based instruction and students' social competence. These findings suggest that when forgiveness is consistently modeled and taught by educators, students are more likely to develop constructive interpersonal behaviors and emotional sensitivity. This study concludes that forgiveness functions as an effective pedagogical resource for social competence development and serves as a bridge between biblical values and educational practice. Integrating Matthew 6:14-15 into Christian Religious Education contributes meaningfully to students' social and moral formation, particularly within pluralistic public school contexts.

Keywords: Social Competence, Christian Religious Education, Forgiveness

INTRODUCTION

Social competence is widely recognized as a crucial dimension of students' holistic development, particularly at the elementary education level where interpersonal skills,

emotional regulation, and moral awareness are formed. In contemporary educational discourse, social competence refers to the ability to interact effectively with others, manage conflicts constructively, demonstrate empathy, and maintain healthy social relationships (Gresham & Elliott, 2008). In school environments characterized by diversity and dynamic social interaction, deficiencies in social competence often manifest in unresolved conflicts, intolerance, and relational breakdown among students. Within Christian education, social competence is not merely understood as a psychological or behavioral construct, but as a moral and spiritual capacity rooted in biblical values. One of the central values emphasized in the teachings of Jesus is forgiveness, particularly as articulated in Matthew 6:14-15. This passage explicitly links forgiveness toward others with one's own relationship with God, highlighting forgiveness as both a spiritual obligation and a relational imperative (Stott, 1992). From a biblical perspective, forgiveness functions as a transformative practice that restores relationships, nurtures reconciliation, and promotes communal harmony.

Despite its theological significance, forgiveness is often insufficiently integrated into pedagogical practice as a concrete dimension of social competence. In many educational settings, forgiveness is discussed normatively but rarely operationalized as a teachable and observable social skill. Educational research indicates that students who lack the ability to forgive are more susceptible to prolonged interpersonal conflict, emotional distress, and social withdrawal (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). This underscores the need for educational frameworks that intentionally connect forgiveness with social competence development. In the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE), forgiveness occupies a central position as both doctrine and lived ethic. Matthew 6:14-15 situates forgiveness within the broader discourse of the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus redefines righteousness as relational faithfulness rather than mere ritual compliance (Blomberg, 1992). Educationally interpreted, this passage challenges teachers to embody forgiveness as a model of social interaction, thereby enabling students to internalize forgiveness not only as belief but as social behavior. This study is situated at SDN 060834 Medan, a public elementary school operating within a pluralistic educational context. The research focuses specifically on the Christian education environment within the school, involving 33 Christian students and 9 Christian teachers, including a Christian Religious Education teacher. As a public institution, the school provides a unique context for examining how Christian values such as forgiveness can be expressed pedagogically through universal social competencies like empathy, respect, and conflict resolution, without undermining inclusivity or professionalism. Previous studies have demonstrated that teachers play a pivotal role in shaping students' social competence through modeling and relational pedagogy (Bandura, 1986; Palmer, 1998). When teachers consistently demonstrate forgiveness in classroom interactions, such as responding constructively to mistakes or interpersonal tensions, students are more likely to adopt similar attitudes in peer relationships. This aligns with social learning theory, which emphasizes imitation and observation as key mechanisms of behavioral development (Bandura, 1986). However, empirical studies that explicitly integrate biblical exegesis with educational analysis of social competence remain limited, particularly in the Indonesian elementary school context. Most existing research treats forgiveness either as a psychological intervention or as a theological concept, without adequately bridging the two domains. This study

seeks to address this gap by offering a biblical-educational interpretation of Matthew 6:14-15 as a foundation for developing social competence among students. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to examine how forgiveness, grounded in Matthew 6:14-15, can be understood and implemented as a core component of social competence within Christian education. By integrating biblical interpretation and educational analysis, this research aims to contribute to the development of faith-informed pedagogical practices that support students' social and moral growth in contemporary school settings.

METHODS

The quantitative approach was chosen to obtain objective, measurable data regarding students' social behaviors and attitudes toward forgiveness as taught in Christian Religious Education (CRE), to examine the relationship between forgiveness-based Christian teaching and students' social competence. Quantitative methods are appropriate for identifying patterns, tendencies, and relationships among variables within a defined population (Creswell, 2014). The research was conducted at SDN 060834 Medan, a public elementary school with a diverse social and cultural environment. The population of this study consisted of 33 Christian students who actively participated in Christian Religious Education classes. Given the relatively small population size, this study employed a total sampling technique, in which all Christian students were included as research participants. In addition, contextual information was obtained from 9 Christian teachers, including one CRE teacher, to support the interpretation of instructional practices related to forgiveness. The independent variable (X) in this study was forgiveness-based Christian teaching, grounded in the biblical principles of Matthew 6:14-15. This variable was operationalized through instructional indicators such as teachers' emphasis on forgiving others, responses to student mistakes, encouragement of reconciliation, and modeling of forgiving attitudes. The dependent variable (Y) was students' social competence, defined as the ability to interact positively with peers and teachers, manage interpersonal conflicts, demonstrate empathy, and maintain cooperative relationships. Indicators of social competence included communication skills, conflict resolution, empathy, respect for others, and self-control. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed based on relevant educational and psychological literature on social competence (Gresham & Elliott, 2008) and Christian perspectives on forgiveness (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). The questionnaire consisted of Likert-scale items ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Prior to data collection, the instrument was reviewed by educational experts to ensure content validity. A pilot test was conducted to assess the reliability of the instrument. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha indicated that the questionnaire met acceptable reliability standards, with coefficients exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviations, were used to describe levels of forgiveness-based teaching and social competence. Inferential analysis was conducted using Pearson's product-moment correlation to examine the relationship between the two variables. Statistical analysis was performed at a significance level of 0.05.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The quantitative analysis reveals that forgiveness-based Christian teaching plays a significant role in shaping students' social competence at SDN 060834 Medan. Descriptive statistical results indicate that the overall mean score for forgiveness-oriented instructional practices is categorized as high. This suggests that teachers consistently emphasize values related to forgiveness, reconciliation, and empathetic interaction within Christian Religious Education classes. Students reported that teachers often encourage resolving conflicts peacefully, refraining from retaliatory behavior, and seeking mutual understanding when interpersonal tensions arise. The descriptive analysis of students' social competence shows a relatively high average score across key indicators, including empathy, cooperation, respect for peers, and conflict resolution skills. Among these indicators, empathy and cooperative behavior recorded the highest mean values, indicating that students demonstrate sensitivity to others' feelings and a willingness to collaborate in group learning situations. These findings suggest that social competence among Christian students at SDN 060834 Medan is generally well developed. Inferential statistical analysis using Pearson's product-moment correlation reveals a positive and statistically significant relationship between forgiveness-based Christian teaching and students' social competence. The correlation coefficient indicates a moderate to strong relationship, suggesting that higher levels of instructional emphasis on forgiveness are associated with higher levels of social competence among students. This finding confirms the research hypothesis that forgiveness, as taught and modeled in Christian education, contributes meaningfully to students' social development. Further analysis of specific questionnaire items reveals that students who perceive their teachers as consistently modeling forgiveness, such as responding calmly to mistakes, avoiding harsh punishment, and encouraging apologies, tend to exhibit better interpersonal behaviors. These include reduced aggressive responses, increased willingness to forgive peers, and improved communication during conflicts. This empirical evidence supports the view that forgiveness is not merely a theological concept but a practical pedagogical resource that shapes students' social behavior.

The findings of this study underscore the pedagogical significance of forgiveness as a foundational element of social competence in Christian education. Interpreted through Matthew 6:14-15, forgiveness emerges as a relational ethic that directly influences how students interact with others. Jesus' teaching that forgiveness toward others is inseparable from one's relationship with God situates forgiveness as a moral imperative with tangible social implications (Stott, 1992). Educationally, this principle translates into a learning environment where reconciliation, empathy, and mutual respect are actively cultivated. The positive correlation between forgiveness-based teaching and social competence aligns with social learning theory, which posits that individuals learn behaviors through observation and imitation of significant role models (Bandura, 1986). In the classroom context, teachers function as primary moral models. When teachers demonstrate forgiveness through patience, openness, and restorative responses to conflict, students internalize these behaviors and replicate them in peer interactions. This finding reinforces previous research indicating that teacher behavior significantly influences students' social and emotional development (Palmer, 1998). From a biblical-

educational perspective, Matthew 6:14-15 offers a transformative framework for understanding social competence. Rather than emphasizing social skills merely as adaptive behaviors, the biblical text frames forgiveness as an act of obedience and relational faithfulness. Blomberg (1992) notes that the Sermon on the Mount redefines righteousness in relational terms, emphasizing internal disposition over external conformity. When applied educationally, this insight suggests that social competence rooted in forgiveness goes beyond surface-level politeness to encompass genuine relational restoration. The high levels of empathy and cooperation observed among students further indicate that forgiveness-oriented teaching fosters prosocial attitudes. Psychological studies have shown that forgiveness is associated with reduced anger, increased empathy, and improved interpersonal relationships (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). The present findings corroborate this literature by demonstrating that students exposed to forgiveness-centered instruction exhibit greater emotional sensitivity and social responsibility. This is particularly important in elementary education, where early social habits often persist into adolescence and adulthood. The context of SDN 060834 Medan as a public school adds an important dimension to the discussion. Despite operating within a pluralistic educational environment, Christian values such as forgiveness are expressed through universally acceptable social competencies. Forgiveness manifests pedagogically as patience, respectful communication, and conflict resolution-values that align with broader educational goals of character education and citizenship. This supports the argument that faith-based values can contribute positively to public education when articulated through inclusive and ethical pedagogical practices (Knight, 2006). The findings suggest that forgiveness enhances classroom climate by reducing fear-based authority and fostering relational trust. Students are more willing to participate, admit mistakes, and engage in dialogue when they perceive teachers as forgiving and fair. This aligns with Palmer's (1998) assertion that authentic teaching arises from relational integrity rather than control. In such environments, authority is exercised through moral credibility rather than coercion, which strengthens both instructional effectiveness and social formation.

The role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers is particularly significant in this process. As facilitators of both theological understanding and moral practice, CRE teachers bridge biblical teaching and everyday social interaction. By explicitly connecting Matthew 6:14-15 with real-life classroom situations, such as peer conflicts or disciplinary issues, teachers help students translate abstract doctrine into concrete behavior. This integration addresses a common gap in religious education, where moral teachings are often conveyed cognitively without sufficient behavioral application. The quantitative nature of this study provides empirical support for the educational relevance of forgiveness, complementing predominantly qualitative and theological discussions in existing literature. While previous studies have emphasized forgiveness as a spiritual or psychological construct, this research demonstrates its measurable impact on social competence within a school setting. This contributes to a growing body of interdisciplinary scholarship that integrates theology, education, and social science. The findings also invite critical reflection. While the correlation between forgiveness-based teaching and social competence is significant, it does not imply causation. Other factors, such as family environment, peer influence, and broader school culture, may also

contribute to students' social development. Future research employing experimental or longitudinal designs could further explore causal relationships and long-term effects of forgiveness-oriented pedagogy. The relatively small sample size limits the generalizability of findings. However, the use of total sampling enhances internal validity by capturing the entire population of Christian students within the research context. The results should therefore be understood as contextually grounded insights that may inform similar educational settings rather than universal generalizations. The results and discussion highlight forgiveness as a vital pedagogical resource for developing social competence in Christian education. Rooted in Matthew 6:14-15, forgiveness functions as a bridge between spiritual conviction and social behavior. When taught and modeled consistently, forgiveness nurtures empathy, cooperation, and relational maturity among students. This study affirms that Christian education, when integrated thoughtfully into public school contexts, can contribute meaningfully to students' holistic development by fostering social competence grounded in enduring moral values.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that forgiveness, when intentionally integrated into Christian Religious Education, plays a significant role in developing students' social competence. Interpreted through Matthew 6:14-15, forgiveness is not merely a theological doctrine but a practical educational principle that shapes interpersonal behavior, emotional regulation, and relational maturity among students. The quantitative findings from SDN 060834 Medan demonstrate a positive and statistically significant relationship between forgiveness-based Christian teaching and students' social competence, confirming the relevance of biblical values within contemporary educational practice. The high levels of social competence observed among students, particularly in empathy, cooperation, and conflict resolution, suggest that forgiveness-oriented pedagogy contributes to a healthy and supportive classroom environment. Teachers who model forgiving attitudes through patience, restorative responses, and respectful communication foster relational trust and emotional safety. Such environments enable students to practice forgiveness not as an abstract moral ideal but as a lived social skill applicable to everyday interactions with peers and teachers. From an educational perspective, this study reinforces the importance of teacher modeling in character and social development. Consistent with social learning theory, students internalize behaviors that are observed and reinforced by significant role models. When teachers embody forgiveness as part of their professional and spiritual identity, they transmit values that extend beyond academic achievement toward holistic formation. This underscores the strategic role of Christian Religious Education teachers as mediators of both theological understanding and social practice. The biblical interpretation of Matthew 6:14-15 further enriches this conclusion by framing forgiveness as a relational ethic that connects vertical spirituality with horizontal social responsibility. Jesus' teaching emphasizes that authentic faith is demonstrated through relational reconciliation. Educationally, this principle challenges schools to view social competence not merely as a functional skill but as a moral commitment to mutual respect, empathy, and peace-building. In this sense, forgiveness becomes a cornerstone of ethical social interaction within educational communities.

Importantly, the findings show that Christian values such as forgiveness can be implemented effectively within public school contexts without compromising inclusivity or professionalism. When articulated through universal social competencies, forgiveness aligns with broader educational goals of character education and citizenship. This suggests that faith-based pedagogy can contribute constructively to pluralistic educational environments when grounded in ethical practice rather than doctrinal imposition. This study affirms that developing social competence through forgiveness is both educationally effective and biblically grounded. By integrating Matthew 6:14-15 into pedagogical practice, Christian education can nurture students who are socially competent, emotionally resilient, and morally responsible. Forgiveness, therefore, stands as a transformative educational value that bridges faith and social life in meaningful and enduring ways.

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