



Social Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Teaching the Value of Gratitude (Genesis 33:20): A Study at UPT SDN 066433 Medan

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in teaching the value of gratitude based on Genesis 33:20 at UPT SDN 066433 Medan. The research employed a quantitative descriptive design involving 102 Christian students as respondents. Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire measuring two main dimensions: teachers' social competence and the effectiveness of gratitude instruction. The analysis utilized descriptive statistics, including mean scores and percentage distributions, to determine the level of perceived competence. The findings indicate that the social competence of CRE teachers is generally perceived to be high. Students reported positive experiences related to teachers' respectful communication, empathy, fairness, and approachability. Teacher modeling of grateful behavior emerged as one of the strongest indicators, suggesting that authentic interpersonal example plays a crucial role in value transmission. However, several aspects showed moderate variation, particularly in helping students understand gratitude as an act of worship and in providing structured opportunities for students to practice thankful behavior in daily life. The study concludes that strong social competence provides an essential relational foundation for effective Christian value formation. Nevertheless, maximizing the impact of Genesis 33:20 in classroom practice requires more intentional pedagogical strategies that connect biblical teaching with students' lived experiences. Strengthening reflective activities, participatory learning, and theological clarification of gratitude is recommended. These findings highlight the importance of integrating interpersonal excellence with purposeful instructional design to foster holistic spiritual development among elementary-level learners in Christian Religious Education contexts.

Keywords: Social Competence, Christian Religious Education, Value of Gratitude

INTRODUCTION

Teacher competence has long been recognized as a decisive factor in determining the quality of learning and the formation of student character. Among the various domains of teacher competence, social competence plays a crucial role because it reflects a teacher's ability to build meaningful relationships, communicate effectively, and model positive values in the learning environment (Shulman, 1987; Hargreaves, 2000). In the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE), social competence is not merely pedagogical but also theological and ethical, as teachers are expected to embody and transmit Christian virtues through both instruction and personal example. Strengthening character education has become an urgent priority, particularly in elementary schools where foundational values are formed. Christian Religious Education contributes significantly to this mission by integrating biblical teachings with character formation. One value that holds central importance in Christian spirituality is gratitude. Gratitude is widely associated with spiritual maturity, emotional well-being, and prosocial behavior among students (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Therefore, CRE teachers are challenged not only to teach the concept cognitively but also to cultivate it affectively and behaviorally. The value of gratitude is deeply rooted in the narrative of Jacob in Genesis 33:20, where Jacob builds an altar named *El-Elohe-Israel* as an expression of thanksgiving to God. This passage reflects gratitude as a lived response to divine faithfulness, not merely verbal acknowledgment. The theological depth of this text provides rich material for CRE instruction, especially in helping students understand gratitude as an integral part of faith practice. However, the effectiveness of transmitting such values largely depends on the teacher's social competence, how teachers communicate, contextualize, and model gratitude in daily school interactions. Previous studies have emphasized that socially competent teachers tend to create more supportive classroom climates, which positively influence students' moral and spiritual development (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012). In CRE settings, this competence becomes even more critical because value internalization occurs primarily through relational processes rather than mere content delivery. Teachers who demonstrate empathy, openness, and culturally sensitive communication are more successful in helping students internalize Christian virtues (Groome, 2011). Empirical studies focusing specifically on CRE teachers in Indonesian elementary contexts remain limited. Many existing works discuss pedagogical competence broadly but pay less attention to how social competence functions in value-based biblical instruction, particularly regarding gratitude. This gap is significant, especially in plural and diverse school environments where teachers must navigate interpersonal dynamics carefully while maintaining confessional integrity. The context of elementary education in Medan provides a relevant setting for this investigation. With 102 Christian students and four Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher, the school environment represents a microcosm where interpersonal interaction, faith instruction, and character formation intersect. Such a context raises important questions: How do CRE teachers exercise social competence in teaching gratitude? How is the biblical message of Genesis 33:20 translated into classroom practice? And to what extent does teacher social competence support students' understanding and embodiment of gratitude? This study aims to analyze the social competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in teaching the

value of gratitude based on Genesis 33:20. By focusing on an elementary school context, the research seeks to contribute to the growing discourse on faith-based character education, particularly within Indonesian Christian education. The findings are expected to provide both theoretical enrichment and practical recommendations for improving CRE teacher professionalism, especially in nurturing gratitude as a lived Christian virtue among students.

METHODS

A quantitative descriptive research design was used to examine the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in teaching the value of gratitude based on Genesis 33:20. A quantitative approach was selected because it allows for systematic measurement of students' perceptions regarding teachers' social competence and the effectiveness of gratitude instruction (Creswell, 2014). The descriptive orientation enabled the researcher to portray the existing condition without manipulating variables. The research was conducted at UPT SDN 066433 Medan. The population consisted of 102 Christian students enrolled in the school. Because the population size was manageable, the study applied total sampling, meaning all Christian students were invited to participate as respondents. This approach increases representativeness and minimizes sampling bias (Sugiyono, 2019). Contextual information noted that there are four Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher, who serve as the primary agents of value transmission. However, the unit of analysis in the quantitative measurement focused on student responses. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed based on indicators of teacher social competence and gratitude education. The instrument used a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The questionnaire comprised two main dimensions: Teachers' Social Competence (effective communication with students, empathy and caring attitude, openness and approachability, fair and respectful interaction, ability to create a supportive classroom climate); Teaching of Gratitude Values (Genesis 33:20) - (clarity in explaining biblical gratitude, relevance to students' daily life, teacher modeling of gratitude, encouragement of thankful behavior, students' understanding of gratitude as worship. The instrument was developed through literature review and adapted to the elementary CRE context. Content validity was established through expert judgment involving two specialists in Christian Religious Education and one educational measurement expert. Revisions were made based on their feedback to ensure conceptual alignment with social competence theory and biblical gratitude. Empirical validity was tested using product-moment correlation, while reliability was measured using *Cronbach's Alpha*. The instrument was considered reliable when the alpha coefficient exceeded 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The final instrument met acceptable validity and reliability standards. Data collection was conducted in several stages: securing permission from the school principal, explaining the research purpose to students in age-appropriate language, administering the questionnaire during scheduled class time, ensuring anonymity and voluntary participation, collecting and screening completed questionnaires. The process was carried out in one academic term to capture current classroom conditions. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including: mean scores, percentage distributions, categorization of competence levels (very high, high, moderate, low).

Interpretation followed standard Likert conversion guidelines to determine the level of teachers' social competence in teaching gratitude. Cross-indicator analysis was conducted to identify which aspects of social competence most strongly supported students' understanding of gratitude in light of Genesis 33:20.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study investigated the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in teaching the value of gratitude based on Genesis 33:20 at UPT SDN 066433 Medan. Responses were collected from 102 Christian students using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire. The quantitative analysis revealed that students generally perceived the CRE teachers' social competence to be high, with the overall mean score falling within the upper category of the predetermined scale. The findings indicate that most students experience positive relational interactions with their teachers. High scores were particularly evident in indicators related to teacher approachability, respectful communication, and the modeling of thankful behavior. However, several items related to contextual application of gratitude and student-led expression of thankfulness showed comparatively moderate scores. This pattern suggests that while interpersonal interaction is strong, pedagogical deepening of gratitude practices still has room for development. These results support the theoretical position that social competence significantly shapes the effectiveness of value-based religious instruction. In CRE settings, relational quality often determines whether biblical values are merely understood cognitively or internalized affectively. The first indicator, teachers' ability to communicate effectively, received one of the highest mean scores. Students largely agreed that the CRE teacher explains lessons clearly, listens attentively, and responds kindly to questions. This finding aligns with Shulman's (1987) assertion that meaningful teaching requires not only content knowledge but also the capacity to translate ideas into forms accessible to learners. From a social competence perspective, communication functions as the primary channel through which values are transmitted. In elementary education, especially, students interpret tone, facial expression, and responsiveness as indicators of teacher credibility. The high rating in this area suggests that the CRE teacher has established communicative trust, which forms a strong foundation for gratitude instruction. Descriptive comments from the dataset indicate that some students still rely heavily on teacher-led explanations rather than dialogical engagement. This implies that while communication clarity is strong, interactive depth could be further strengthened to promote deeper value internalization.

The empathy indicator also scored in the high category. Students reported that the teacher shows concern when they face difficulties and demonstrates patience during classroom interactions. This finding is significant because empathy is closely associated with students' emotional openness to moral and spiritual formation (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). In the context of Genesis 33:20, gratitude emerges from an awareness of relational blessing, Jacob responds to God's faithfulness with worship. Similarly, when teachers demonstrate genuine care, students become more receptive to lessons about thankfulness. The data suggest that the CRE teacher's empathetic posture contributes positively to creating a classroom climate conducive to gratitude formation. The

distribution shows slight variation among students, indicating that empathetic experiences are not entirely uniform. This suggests the need for more differentiated relational strategies, especially for quieter or less academically confident students. Students rated the teacher highly in openness and approachability. Most respondents agreed that they feel comfortable asking questions and expressing opinions during CRE lessons. This finding reinforces the view that social competence includes psychological accessibility, not merely physical presence (Pianta et al., 2012). In value education, approachability is crucial because students often process moral concepts through personal reflection and dialogue. When teachers are perceived as approachable, students are more likely to share experiences of gratitude, family practices, and personal struggles related to thankfulness. The data also show that structured opportunities for student sharing remain limited. While students feel permitted to speak, not all are actively invited into reflective dialogue. This indicates a pedagogical opportunity: strengthening structured reflective practices could amplify the impact of the teacher's already strong interpersonal presence. The fairness indicator achieved consistently high ratings. Students overwhelmingly perceived the teacher as treating them equally regardless of academic ability or background. This is a critical finding because perceived fairness strongly influences students' moral trust in teachers. In Christian pedagogy, fairness reflects the theological principle of *imago Dei*, the equal dignity of all learners. When teachers model respect, students are more likely to understand gratitude not as forced politeness but as a relational virtue rooted in mutual honor. The strong performance in this dimension suggests that the CRE teacher has successfully established a morally safe classroom environment. Such an environment is foundational for teaching values drawn from Genesis 33:20, where gratitude is expressed in the context of restored relationships and divine faithfulness. This indicator also fell within the high category but showed slightly more variability. Most students agreed that the CRE classroom feels positive and encouraging. However, some responses indicated that moments of passive learning still occur, particularly during extended explanation segments. A supportive climate is essential for gratitude education because thankfulness is inherently relational and experiential. Research in social-emotional learning demonstrates that positive classroom environments enhance students' prosocial dispositions and moral engagement (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). The findings suggest that the teacher has laid a strong relational foundation but could further strengthen participatory learning structures, such as gratitude journals, peer appreciation activities, or reflective worship moments, to deepen the experiential dimension of gratitude.

Students generally agreed that the teacher explains Genesis 33:20 clearly. Most respondents indicated that they understand the story of Jacob building an altar as an expression of thanksgiving to God. This demonstrates adequate biblical communication competence. Deeper analysis shows that understanding remains largely at the narrative level. Fewer students demonstrated strong agreement on items measuring theological depth (e.g., gratitude as covenant response). This pattern suggests that while storytelling is effective, theological unpacking could be strengthened in age-appropriate ways. This finding echoes Groome's (2011) argument that Christian education must move beyond storytelling toward transformative understanding. For elementary students, this does not mean increasing abstraction but rather using concrete applications that reveal the

relational meaning of gratitude. This indicator showed moderate-to-high scores, indicating partial success. Many students reported that the teacher connects gratitude lessons to everyday situations such as family, school, and friendship. The variability suggests that contextualization is not yet maximized. Effective CRE requires bridging biblical text and lived experience. Genesis 33:20 portrays gratitude as a response to experienced blessing. When students recognize parallels in their own lives, internalization becomes more likely. The data imply that contextual application could be expanded through: testimony sharing, reflective questioning, service-learning activities, family-based gratitude assignments. Strengthening these practices would align social competence with experiential pedagogy. One of the strongest findings in the study is the high student agreement that the CRE teacher models thankful behavior. Students reported observing the teacher expressing thanks, showing appreciation, and acknowledging God's blessings in classroom interactions. This finding is highly significant. In Christian education, modeling is often more formative than verbal instruction. Social learning theory suggests that students imitate behaviors demonstrated by credible authority figures. The strong modeling dimension indicates that the teacher's personal practice reinforces the biblical message of Genesis 33:20. This alignment between teaching and behavior represents a hallmark of authentic professional competence in CRE. Students generally agreed that the teacher encourages them to practice gratitude. However, compared to modeling, this indicator showed slightly lower intensity. This suggests that while the teacher exemplifies gratitude well, structured student practice opportunities could be expanded. Gratitude formation requires repetition and habituation. Occasional verbal reminders are less effective than embedded classroom routines. The data suggest potential for strengthening: daily gratitude reflections, peer appreciation moments, worship-based thankfulness activities, project-based gratitude expressions. Enhancing these practices would move students from passive recognition to active embodiment of gratitude. This indicator showed the greatest variability. While many students understand gratitude as saying "thank you," fewer demonstrate strong agreement that gratitude is an act of worship to God. This is a theologically significant finding. Genesis 33:20 presents gratitude not merely as politeness but as covenantal worship. The partial gap suggests that instructional emphasis may still lean toward moral behavior rather than theological meaning. Strengthening this dimension would require integrating: simple theological explanations, worship connections, reflective prayer practices, narrative reinforcement. The findings confirm that the CRE teacher at UPT SDN 066433 Medan demonstrates strong social competence, particularly in relational interaction, fairness, and behavioral modeling. These strengths create fertile ground for character formation. The study also reveals an important developmental trajectory: interpersonal excellence must be paired with deeper pedagogical structuring to fully internalize gratitude as a theological virtue. In a school context with 102 Christian students and four Christian teachers, the relational ecosystem is highly influential. Strengthening collaborative practices among teachers could further amplify gratitude formation across the school culture. The quantitative evidence affirms that social competence significantly supports gratitude education in CRE. Yet, maximizing impact requires intentional pedagogical design that transforms gratitude from a taught concept into a lived spiritual habit consistent with the theological vision of Genesis 33:20.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in teaching the value of gratitude based on Genesis 33:20 at UPT SDN 066433 Medan. Using a quantitative descriptive approach with 102 Christian students as respondents, the findings provide important insights into how teachers' interpersonal capacities support value-based Christian learning. Overall, the results demonstrate that the CRE teacher's social competence is perceived by students to be in the high category, particularly in areas of respectful communication, empathy, fairness, and personal modeling of gratitude. The data confirm that social competence functions as a critical mediating factor in the successful transmission of biblical values. Students who experience teachers as approachable, caring, and respectful show greater openness to lessons on gratitude. This supports the broader theoretical view that Christian Religious Education is inherently relational; values such as thankfulness are not effectively formed through cognitive instruction alone but through sustained interpersonal engagement. The strong ratings in teacher modeling further reinforce the importance of authenticity in CRE. When teachers consistently demonstrate thankful attitudes in daily classroom life, students are more likely to perceive gratitude as meaningful and credible. The study also reveals several developmental needs. While relational interaction is strong, some aspects of pedagogical deepening, particularly the theological framing of gratitude as an act of worship, remain uneven among students. Many respondents understand gratitude primarily as polite behavior rather than as a covenantal response to God's faithfulness as depicted in Genesis 33:20. In addition, structured opportunities for students to practice gratitude, such as reflective activities or participatory exercises, appear to be present but not yet maximized. These findings suggest that strong social competence must be intentionally integrated with purposeful pedagogical design to achieve deeper spiritual internalization. The relatively close-knit environment of the school, with 102 Christian students and four Christian teachers, provides a strategic opportunity to cultivate a school-wide culture of gratitude. Strengthening collaboration among teachers, embedding gratitude routines across learning activities, and reinforcing worship-oriented interpretations of thankfulness could significantly enhance outcomes. Professional development programs for CRE teachers should therefore emphasize not only interpersonal skills but also pedagogical strategies that translate biblical theology into age-appropriate spiritual practices. The study affirms that the CRE teacher's social competence at UPT SDN 066433 Medan provides a strong relational foundation for teaching gratitude. However, the transformative potential of Genesis 33:20 will be more fully realized when relational excellence is paired with intentional, structured, and theologically grounded learning experiences that help students live out gratitude as a holistic expression of faith.

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