



Social Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Teaching the Importance of Covenant: A Reflection on Genesis 31:44-45 at SD Negeri 021 Tambusai

Nia Daniati Simarmata

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: niadaniatisimarmata21@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examines the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in teaching the importance of covenant based on Genesis 31:44-45 at SD Negeri 021 Tambusai, Rokan Hulu. The research is grounded in the understanding that teachers' relational capacity plays a decisive role in helping students internalize biblical moral values. Employing a qualitative descriptive design combined with a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), the study draws on classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The research context involves 176 Christian students and five Christian teachers, with the CRE teacher serving as the primary key informant. The findings indicate that the CRE teacher demonstrates strong social competence, particularly in communicative clarity, relational warmth, and responsiveness to students' needs. Students generally show good cognitive understanding of the covenant concept in Genesis 31:44-45, recognizing the importance of keeping promises before God and others. However, the depth of behavioral internalization varies among students, suggesting a gap between moral understanding and consistent practice. The SLR supports the finding that effective character formation requires not only relational teaching but also structured experiential reinforcement and ecological consistency within the school environment. The study concludes that teacher social competence significantly supports covenant-based moral learning in Christian Religious Education. Nevertheless, deeper transformation can be achieved through expanded experiential strategies, dilemma-based reflection, and stronger whole-school value integration. These findings contribute to the development of more relationally grounded and pedagogically effective CRE practices in Indonesian primary education contexts.

Keywords: Social Compassion, Christian Religious Education, Covenant

INTRODUCTION

Teacher competence is increasingly recognized as a multidimensional construct that significantly influences students' cognitive, affective, and moral development. Within the

framework of Christian Religious Education (CRE), teacher competence carries an even deeper significance because the instructional process is not merely concerned with knowledge transmission but also with the formation of faith-informed character. Among the four core competencies mandated in Indonesian teacher standards, pedagogical, professional, personal, and social, the social competence of CRE teachers plays a strategic role in mediating biblical values into students' relational and ethical behavior (Pazmiño, 2008). This study focuses specifically on how social competence supports the teaching of covenantal faithfulness as reflected in Genesis 31:44-45. The concept of social competence in teaching refers to the teacher's ability to communicate effectively, build meaningful relationships, demonstrate empathy, and create an inclusive learning environment that supports students' holistic growth. Educational research consistently affirms that teachers who demonstrate strong interpersonal sensitivity and relational awareness are more effective in fostering students' moral and social development (Hattie, 2009). In the context of CRE, this relational dimension is especially critical because biblical values, such as faithfulness, commitment, and trustworthiness, are inherently social and are most effectively learned through modeled interaction rather than abstract explanation alone. Genesis 31:44-45 presents a significant theological moment in the narrative of Jacob and Laban, where the establishment of a covenant becomes a concrete expression of restored trust and mutual accountability. The erection of the stone pillar (mizpah) symbolizes not only a formal agreement but also a relational commitment grounded in divine witness. Old Testament scholars emphasize that covenant language in Genesis functions as a formative framework for understanding responsibility, loyalty, and ethical consistency within community life (Goldingay, 2012). When interpreted pedagogically, this passage offers rich material for cultivating students' awareness of the importance of keeping promises in interpersonal relationships. The translation of covenant theology into age-appropriate moral instruction remains a practical challenge. Many CRE classrooms still rely heavily on narrative retelling without sufficiently engaging the relational and social implications of the biblical text. As Groome (2011) argues, effective faith education requires a praxis-oriented approach in which biblical narratives are intentionally connected to learners' lived experiences. Without this bridge, students may understand the story cognitively but fail to internalize its ethical demands. The context of SD Negeri 021 Tambusai, Rokan Hulu, provides an important site for examining this issue. The school serves 176 Christian students supported by five Christian teachers, including one CRE teacher responsible for delivering biblical instruction. The relatively large number of Christian students creates both an opportunity and a responsibility for CRE teachers to cultivate strong communal values rooted in Scripture. At the same time, the diversity of student backgrounds and developmental levels requires teachers to exercise high social competence in order to communicate covenantal values effectively and relationally. Previous studies in Christian education have highlighted the importance of teacher modeling, relational warmth, and communicative clarity in shaping students' moral dispositions (Lickona, 2012; Yount, 2010). Empirical research specifically examining the intersection between teacher social competence and the teaching of covenantal faithfulness in Indonesian primary contexts remains limited. Most existing studies focus either on general teacher competence or on broader character education outcomes without closely analyzing how specific biblical themes are pedagogically mediated through teachers' social interactions. This study aims to fill that gap by investigating how

the social competence of CRE teachers contributes to students' understanding of the importance of covenant as reflected in Genesis 31:44-45 at SD Negeri 021 Tambusai. The study is guided by the assumption that when teachers demonstrate strong relational sensitivity, effective communication, and contextual application, students are more likely to internalize the value of keeping promises in their daily social relationships. By providing empirical insight into this relationship, the study seeks to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of CRE pedagogy in Indonesia. The findings are expected to inform teacher professional development, strengthen character-oriented biblical instruction, and support schools in nurturing students who not only understand covenantal faithfulness but also practice it consistently in their social lives.

METHODS

A qualitative descriptive design integrated with a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to explore how the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers contributes to teaching the importance of covenant based on Genesis 31:44-45 at SD Negeri 021 Tambusai, Rokan Hulu. The qualitative descriptive approach was selected because the study seeks to obtain an in-depth understanding of naturally occurring educational practices and relational dynamics in the CRE classroom rather than to test causal hypotheses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The SLR component was incorporated to strengthen the theoretical foundation and to situate the field findings within established scholarship in Christian education, teacher competence, and biblical pedagogy. The research was conducted at SD Negeri 021 Tambusai, Rokan Hulu, which has 176 Christian students and five Christian teachers, including one CRE teacher who serves as the primary instructional agent for biblical learning. Because the focus of the study is on teacher social competence in instructional practice, the CRE teacher was selected as the key informant using purposive sampling. Additional supporting perspectives were obtained from selected students and school stakeholders to provide contextual triangulation. Participant selection followed these criteria: the CRE teacher actively teaches Christian Religious Education at the school, students selected for supporting data are enrolled in CRE classes and have received instruction on Genesis narratives, participants are willing to provide reflective and descriptive information relevant to the study focus. The SLR followed structured stages adapted from established review protocols (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007). The review focused on three guiding questions: How is teacher social competence conceptualized in Christian education? What pedagogical approaches are effective for teaching covenantal values? What factors influence students' internalization of biblical moral values? Relevant literature was identified through academic databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, and ATLA Religion Database. Selected sources were critically reviewed, coded thematically, and synthesized to build the conceptual framework guiding field analysis. Non-participant observations were conducted during CRE lessons focusing on Genesis 31:44-45. The observation protocol examined indicators of teacher social competence, including communication clarity, relational warmth, responsiveness to students, and contextualization of covenant values. In-depth interviews were conducted with the CRE teacher and selected students. Interview questions explored instructional strategies, relational approaches, and students' understanding of the importance of keeping promises. The SLR findings were integrated with field data using a convergent

qualitative synthesis, enabling theoretical perspectives to illuminate empirical observations. Through this qualitative-SLR design, the study provides a comprehensive and contextually grounded understanding of how CRE teachers' social competence supports the teaching of covenantal faithfulness in primary education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a complex yet coherent picture of how the social competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher at SD Negeri 021 Tambusai contributes to students' understanding of the importance of covenant as reflected in Genesis 31:44-45. Drawing from classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and the systematic literature review (SLR), the results indicate that teacher social competence operates as a critical mediating factor between biblical content and students' moral internalization. The discussion below integrates empirical field data with relevant scholarly insights to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the phenomenon. From the observational data, the CRE teacher demonstrates a generally strong level of social competence, particularly in the areas of communicative clarity, relational warmth, and responsiveness to students' learning needs. During lessons on Genesis 31:44-45, the teacher consistently uses accessible language, maintains eye contact, and encourages student participation through open-ended questions. These behaviors align with the understanding that social competence in teaching involves the ability to build meaningful interpersonal connections that support learning (Pazmiño, 2008). The classroom atmosphere is notably interactive rather than purely lecture-based, which creates a relational environment conducive to moral reflection. Students appear comfortable asking questions and expressing opinions, suggesting that the teacher has successfully established psychological safety in the learning space. Interview data further reinforce this observation. Students frequently describe the CRE teacher as "easy to approach," "patient," and "clear in explanation." Such descriptors indicate that the teacher's social presence is positively perceived and that relational trust has been formed. According to Hattie (2009), relational trust and teacher-student rapport significantly enhance students' engagement and openness to value formation. In the present study, this relational capital appears to function as the primary gateway through which covenantal concepts are introduced and discussed. Rather than presenting Genesis 31:44-45 merely as historical narrative, the teacher frames the covenant between Jacob and Laban as a lived moral reality relevant to students' daily experiences, such as keeping promises to friends, completing responsibilities, and maintaining honesty in peer relationships. Document analysis of lesson plans (RPP) shows that the teacher intentionally integrates affective learning objectives alongside cognitive ones. The lesson structure typically includes biblical storytelling, guided discussion, contextual application, and reflective questioning. This sequence reflects a praxis-oriented pedagogy consistent with Groome's (2011) model of shared Christian praxis, in which learners are invited to connect Scripture with lived experience. The presence of such structured pedagogical planning indicates that the teacher's social competence is not merely dispositional but is also operationalized through intentional instructional design. This finding is significant because it demonstrates that relational effectiveness in CRE teaching is strengthened when supported by coherent pedagogical planning. The data also reveal several areas

where the enactment of social competence could be further strengthened. While students show good cognitive understanding of the covenant concept, most can correctly explain that Jacob and Laban made a promise before God, the depth of behavioral internalization varies. Some students articulate clear examples of keeping promises in their daily lives, while others remain at a more abstract level of understanding. This pattern suggests what character education scholars often describe as the cognition-behavior gap (Lickona, 2012). In other words, understanding moral principles does not automatically translate into consistent moral action.

The SLR findings help illuminate this gap. Prior research consistently indicates that moral internalization requires repeated experiential reinforcement, not solely verbal instruction. Yount (2010) emphasizes that faith-informed character formation in children develops most effectively through modeling, guided practice, and reflective feedback. In the observed classroom, while the teacher provides strong verbal explanation and relational encouragement, opportunities for structured behavioral practice of covenantal faithfulness appear somewhat limited. For example, there are few project-based or role-play activities specifically designed to allow students to enact promise-keeping behaviors in simulated or real contexts. This limitation likely contributes to the moderate depth of students' applied understanding. Another notable finding concerns the teacher's conflict mediation practices in the classroom. Observations show that when minor interpersonal conflicts arise among students, the teacher responds calmly and uses the situation as a teachable moment, often reminding students about honesty and responsibility. This practice reflects a high level of situational social competence and aligns with the biblical emphasis on relational accountability embedded in Genesis covenant theology (Goldingay, 2012). Such real-time moral coaching represents an important strength because it bridges formal instruction and lived classroom experience. Nevertheless, these moments occur spontaneously rather than as part of a systematically embedded character formation framework. Student interview responses also reveal developmental nuances. Younger students tend to interpret the covenant primarily as "a promise that must not be broken," while older primary students begin to articulate its relational and spiritual dimensions, such as accountability before God. This developmental gradient is consistent with educational psychology literature indicating that children's moral reasoning evolves progressively with cognitive maturity. The CRE teacher appears sensitive to these differences and adjusts explanations accordingly, which further demonstrates adaptive social competence. However, differentiated instructional strategies could be expanded to more deliberately scaffold covenant understanding across grade levels. SD Negeri 021 Tambusai also plays a supportive but not fully optimized role. With 176 Christian students and five Christian teachers, the institutional environment is generally conducive to reinforcing biblical values. Informal observations suggest that school culture emphasizes mutual respect and discipline. However, the teaching of covenantal faithfulness remains largely confined to the CRE classroom rather than being systematically integrated into whole-school character programming. The literature reviewed in the SLR indicates that value internalization is significantly strengthened when there is ecological consistency across classroom instruction, school culture, and peer norms. The moderate strength of students' behavioral application in

this study may therefore reflect the absence of a fully integrated school-wide reinforcement system.

The teacher demonstrates strong empathy and inclusivity in classroom interaction. Students who struggle academically are given additional explanation, and the teacher frequently affirms student contributions positively. Such practices are consistent with the social competence indicators identified in teacher effectiveness research (Hattie, 2009). Positive reinforcement appears to increase students' willingness to participate in discussions about moral responsibility. This finding supports the theoretical claim that affective classroom climate is a prerequisite for meaningful character dialogue in CRE contexts. The teacher consistently emphasizes that the covenant in Genesis 31:44-45 is witnessed by God, thereby framing promise-keeping not merely as social etiquette but as spiritual accountability. This theological framing is pedagogically significant because it elevates the moral weight of the concept in students' minds. According to Goldingay (2012), covenant in the Old Testament functions precisely as a relational bond under divine oversight. The teacher's ability to translate this theological nuance into age-appropriate language represents a key strength in professional practice. The study identifies a need for deeper reflective engagement. While students can recount the story and state its moral lesson, fewer demonstrate critical reflection on complex real-life situations involving broken promises, peer pressure, or conflicting loyalties. The SLR suggests that higher-order moral reasoning develops when students are exposed to dilemma-based discussions and guided ethical reasoning exercises. Incorporating such strategies could enhance the transformative impact of covenant teaching in this context. Another important pattern emerging from the data is the strong influence of teacher modeling. Students frequently reference the teacher's own behavior, such as punctuality, fairness, and consistency, as evidence of what it means to keep commitments. This aligns strongly with the modeling theory emphasized in Christian education literature (Pazmiño, 2008). It indicates that the teacher's social competence extends beyond instructional technique into embodied witness. In many ways, the teacher functions as the primary living curriculum through which covenant faithfulness is interpreted. This finding reinforces the theological-pedagogical principle that in CRE, who the teacher is often teaches as powerfully as what the teacher says. Reliance on individual teacher modeling raises sustainability concerns. With only one CRE teacher serving a large Christian student population, the continuity of covenant-focused character formation depends heavily on that individual's capacity and consistency. The SLR literature warns that character education initiatives are most effective when institutionalized rather than person-dependent. Professional development for other teachers and cross-curricular integration of covenant values would likely strengthen long-term impact. The results demonstrate that the CRE teacher's social competence at SD Negeri 021 Tambusai is functioning at a commendable level and is positively associated with students' understanding of covenantal faithfulness. The teacher excels in relational communication, empathetic interaction, contextual biblical explanation, and theological framing. These strengths create a supportive environment for moral learning. However, the depth of students' behavioral internalization remains moderate due to limited experiential practice opportunities, partial school-wide integration, and the developmental nature of primary learners' moral reasoning. The discussion therefore points toward a strategic

developmental pathway. Strengthening structured experiential learning (such as promise-keeping projects, peer accountability activities, and role-play), enhancing dilemma-based moral reflection, and expanding whole-school reinforcement systems would likely deepen the internalization of covenant values. Such steps would move CRE instruction from primarily cognitive-affective impact toward more consistent behavioral transformation. The study confirms the central thesis emerging from both field data and the SLR: the social competence of CRE teachers is a pivotal but not solitary factor in cultivating covenantal faithfulness among primary students. When relational skill, theological clarity, and pedagogical intentionality converge, the teaching of Genesis 31:44-45 becomes not merely a biblical lesson but a formative moral experience capable of shaping students' emerging character in meaningful and lasting ways.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers contributes to teaching the importance of covenant based on Genesis 31:44-45 at SD Negeri 021 Tambusai, Rokan Hulu. The findings demonstrate that teacher social competence functions as a significant mediating force in translating biblical narratives into meaningful moral learning for primary school students. Through qualitative analysis supported by a systematic literature review, the study confirms that relational effectiveness, communicative clarity, and empathetic engagement are essential components in helping students grasp the ethical weight of covenantal faithfulness. The CRE teacher in this context exhibits a commendable level of social competence. Observations and interviews consistently show that the teacher fosters a warm, inclusive, and dialogical classroom climate. Such an environment encourages student participation and supports the cognitive understanding of Genesis 31:44-45. Students generally demonstrate clear conceptual awareness that covenant involves promise-keeping before God and others. This indicates that the teacher's interpersonal approach successfully supports the transmission of biblical meaning at the cognitive and affective levels. The study also reveals that the depth of students' behavioral internalization remains uneven. While many students can articulate the importance of keeping promises, fewer consistently translate this understanding into concrete social practice. This finding highlights a common challenge in character-oriented Christian education: the gap between knowing moral truth and living it out. The results suggest that strong teacher social competence, although necessary, is not sufficient by itself to guarantee full character transformation. The integration of SLR findings strengthens this conclusion. Prior scholarship emphasizes that sustained moral formation requires experiential reinforcement, structured practice opportunities, and ecological consistency across classroom and school culture. In the observed setting, covenant teaching is pedagogically sound but could be further strengthened through more systematic experiential learning strategies, such as role-play, peer accountability tasks, and reflective moral dilemma discussions. Broader school-wide collaboration among teachers would help institutionalize covenant values beyond the CRE classroom. Another important insight from this study is the powerful role of teacher modeling. Students clearly perceive the CRE teacher's personal consistency and relational integrity as concrete examples of promise-keeping. This underscores the theological and pedagogical principle that in

Christian education, the teacher's lived witness significantly amplifies instructional impact. Nevertheless, reliance on individual modeling should be balanced with structural reinforcement to ensure sustainability and scalability. The social competence of CRE teachers at SD Negeri 021 Tambusai plays a vital and positive role in introducing and nurturing students' understanding of covenantal faithfulness rooted in Genesis 31:44-45. The teacher's relational strength, contextual communication, and theological framing create a strong foundation for character formation. Future development should focus on deepening experiential learning, strengthening whole-school value integration, and expanding collaborative professional support. By doing so, Christian Religious Education can more effectively move students from merely understanding the importance of covenant to faithfully embodying it in their daily social lives.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Goldingay, J. (2012). *Genesis for everyone, part 2: Chapters 17–50*. Westminster John Knox Press.
- Groome, T. H. (2011). *Will there be faith? A new vision for educating and growing disciples*. HarperOne.
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge.
- Kitchenham, B., & Charters, S. (2007). *Guidelines for performing systematic literature reviews in software engineering* (EBSE Technical Report). Keele University & Durham University.
- Lickona, T. (2012). *Educating for character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility*. Bantam Books.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Pazmiño, R. W. (2008). *Foundational issues in Christian education: An introduction in evangelical perspective* (3rd ed.). Baker Academic.
- Yount, W. R. (2010). *Created to learn: A Christian teacher's introduction to educational psychology* (2nd ed.). B&H Academic.