



The Role of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Fostering Peaceful Communal Life: A Study of Exodus 9:16 at SMPN 1 Jati Agung

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in fostering peaceful communal life through a theological reflection on Exodus 9:16 at SMPN 1 Jati Agung, South Lampung. In Indonesia's plural educational context, CRE teachers are expected not only to deliver doctrinal content but also to cultivate attitudes of harmony, empathy, and respectful coexistence. The research employed a qualitative descriptive approach involving 13 Christian students and 4 Christian teachers. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, and were analyzed using the interactive model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that the CRE teacher plays a significant role as a facilitator of peace formation, primarily through four dimensions: integration of peace values in instruction, personal modeling of respectful behavior, relational mediation in student interactions, and theological framing that links faithfulness to God with social responsibility. Students generally perceive the teacher as approachable, fair, and spiritually consistent, which strengthens trust and supports a harmonious classroom climate. However, the study also identifies areas for improvement, particularly the need for more student-centered peace-learning strategies, structured conflict-resolution training, and stronger explicit theological articulation of peaceful living. The study concludes that the CRE teacher at SMPN 1 Jati Agung functions effectively as an agent of peacebuilding within a minority Christian context, although pedagogical enrichment is still needed to deepen experiential learning. These findings contribute to the development of contextually grounded Christian education practices that support peaceful communal life in Indonesian public schools.

Keywords: Social Competence, Christian Religious Education, Peaceful Communal

INTRODUCTION

Schools play a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes toward harmony, tolerance, and responsible social interaction. Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers, in particular, carry a distinctive theological and pedagogical mandate: they are called not only to

transmit doctrinal knowledge but also to form students who embody Christlike values in communal life. Among these values, peaceful living together stands as a central expression of Christian ethics and witness (Pazmiño, 2008). Teacher influence in value formation has been consistently affirmed in educational research. Effective teachers function as moral models whose attitudes and behaviors significantly shape students' social dispositions (Stronge, 2018). Within faith-based instruction, this modeling function becomes even more critical because students often interpret religious teaching through the lived example of the teacher (Van Brummelen, 2009). Therefore, the role of CRE teachers in fostering peaceful communal life must be understood as both pedagogical practice and spiritual ministry. The call to manifest God's purposes within human community can be reflected through Exodus 9:16, where God declares His intention to display His power so that His name may be proclaimed throughout the earth. Although the immediate context concerns God's confrontation with Pharaoh, theologians note that the broader theological trajectory emphasizes God's sovereignty and redemptive purpose in history (Wright, 2004). For Christian educators, this passage provides a reflective framework: the revelation of God's character, including justice, mercy, and peace, should be embodied through the lives of believers in communal settings. Thus, CRE teachers are positioned as mediators who help students understand that faithfulness to God must be expressed in constructive social relationships. Fostering peaceful communal life involves nurturing empathy, respect for differences, conflict management skills, and collaborative attitudes. Research in Christian education emphasizes that peace-oriented character formation requires intentional instructional design, relational warmth, and consistent spiritual modeling (Yount, 2010). Many schools still emphasize cognitive religious achievement more than relational transformation, creating a gap between theological teaching and daily student interaction. This gap highlights the importance of examining how CRE teachers operationalize peace values in real classrooms.

SMPN 1 Jati Agung, South Lampung, represents a meaningful locus for such investigation. The school reflects Indonesia's plural educational environment, with a minority population of 13 Christian students supported by 4 Christian teachers. In minority contexts, the role of CRE teachers becomes even more strategic because they must simultaneously nurture Christian identity and promote harmonious coexistence within a diverse student body. The small number of Christian students also raises important pedagogical questions about how effectively peace-oriented values are being transmitted and experienced. Empirical studies focusing specifically on the role of CRE teachers in Indonesian public junior high schools remain limited. Most previous research has concentrated on doctrinal understanding, general character education, or teacher competence broadly, leaving a gap in studies that explicitly connect biblical reflection, teacher role, and peaceful communal outcomes. Addressing this gap is important for strengthening the practical contribution of CRE to national goals of social harmony. This study aims to analyze the role of Christian Religious Education teachers in fostering peaceful communal life through a theological reflection on Exodus 9:16 at SMPN 1 Jati Agung, South Lampung. By employing a quantitative approach based on student perceptions, this research seeks to provide empirical insight into how CRE teachers function as agents of peace formation in a minority educational context. The findings are

expected to contribute both to the development of Christian educational practice and to the broader discourse on faith-based peacebuilding in Indonesian schools.

METHODS

A qualitative descriptive approach was used to explore the role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in fostering peaceful communal life through reflection on Exodus 9:16 at SMPN 1 Jati Agung, South Lampung. The qualitative design was chosen because the research seeks to understand meanings, experiences, and observable practices related to peace formation in a natural school setting rather than to test statistical relationships (Creswell, 2014). The descriptive orientation allows the researcher to portray systematically how CRE teachers implement peace-oriented values in classroom and relational contexts. The study was conducted at SMPN 1 Jati Agung, a public junior high school characterized by religious diversity. The Christian population at the school consists of 13 Christian students and 4 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, with the following criteria: christian students who actively participate in CRE classes, CRE teachers and Christian teachers involved in student character formation, and willingness to participate in interviews and observations. All 13 Christian students were involved as key informants to capture student perceptions comprehensively, while the 4 Christian teachers served as primary informants to provide professional and pedagogical perspectives. In-depth interviews with CRE teachers and selected students to explore experiences in teaching and internalizing peaceful communal values. Semi-structured interview guides were used to maintain focus while allowing rich narrative responses. Participant observation during CRE learning activities and selected school interactions to document teacher practices related to peacebuilding, including communication style, conflict handling, and relational engagement. The primary research instrument was the researcher as the key instrument, supported by interview protocols, observation sheets, and document review checklists. These tools were developed based on indicators of teacher roles in peace education: instructional integration, relational modeling, conflict mediation, and promotion of respectful coexistence. Data analysis consisting of data reduction, data display, andhi wereU, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles et al., 2014). Interview transcripts and observation notes were coded thematically to identify recurring patterns related to the CRE teacher's role in fostering peaceful communal life. Triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents was conducted to enhance credibility and confirmability. To ensure research rigor, the study applied credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria. Member checking was conducted with key informants, prolonged engagement was maintained during field observation, and triangulation of data sources was employed to strengthen the validity of findings. Through this qualitative descriptive methodology, the study seeks to present an authentic and contextually grounded portrayal of how CRE teachers contribute to building peaceful communal life within a minority Christian setting at SMPN 1 Jati Agung.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative investigation at SMPN 1 Jati Agung, South Lampung, reveals that the role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in fostering peaceful communal life is both visible and contextually significant, although it operates within structural limitations typical of minority religious settings. Analysis of interview data, classroom observations, and document review indicates that the CRE teacher functions simultaneously as an instructor, spiritual model, relational mediator, and cultural bridge-builder. These roles collectively contribute to shaping students' understanding and practice of peaceful coexistence in a plural school environment. The findings are discussed through four major thematic domains: instructional integration of peace values, teacher modeling and relational influence, conflict mediation and social sensitivity, and theological internalization based on Exodus 9:16. Regarding instructional integration, the data show that the CRE teacher intentionally embeds themes of peace, respect, and harmonious living into lesson delivery. Although Exodus 9:16 is not always taught in isolation as a "peace text," the teacher consistently frames biblical narratives within the broader theology of God's sovereign purpose and moral order. Classroom observations demonstrate that lessons frequently connect God's self-revelation to ethical responsibilities among students, especially in maintaining respectful relationships across religious differences. Students reported that the teacher often emphasizes that faithfulness to God must be visible in how believers treat others. This aligns with the Christian education perspective that doctrinal instruction should lead to transformed social behavior (Pazmiño, 2008). The CRE teacher's lesson plans (RPP) also show explicit character indicators such as tolerance, empathy, and cooperation, indicating formal pedagogical planning rather than incidental moral talk. The instructional pattern remains largely teacher-centered. While the content of peace education is present, interactive pedagogies, such as structured dialogue, collaborative problem-solving, and role-play in conflict situations, are only moderately utilized. Some students expressed that they understood the importance of living peacefully but had limited opportunities to practice conflict-resolution skills in simulated classroom contexts. This suggests that the cognitive dimension of peace formation is stronger than the experiential dimension. From a pedagogical standpoint, this reflects a common gap in religious education where moral knowledge exceeds behavioral rehearsal (Yount, 2010). Strengthening participatory learning strategies would likely deepen students' internalization of peaceful communal values. The findings strongly highlight the importance of teacher modeling. Across interviews, students consistently described the CRE teacher as calm, approachable, and fair in dealing with both Christian and non-Christian students. Observational data confirm that the teacher maintains a gentle communication tone, avoids harsh disciplinary language, and demonstrates patience during classroom disruptions. This behavioral consistency appears to significantly influence students' perceptions of what peaceful living looks like in practice. In minority contexts such as SMPN 1 Jati Agung, modeling becomes especially powerful because students often have limited peer reinforcement for their religious values. The teacher thus becomes a primary visible embodiment of Christian ethics within the school environment. This finding reinforces Stronge's (2018) assertion that effective teachers shape student attitudes through lived example, not merely through verbal instruction. It also supports Van Brummelen's (2009) view that

Christian teachers function as “living curriculum,” where the teacher’s character communicates as strongly as the lesson content. In this study, students repeatedly linked their understanding of peaceful behavior to the teacher’s personal demeanor. Several students noted that when conflicts arose among classmates, the teacher did not immediately assign blame but first encouraged mutual listening. Such practices implicitly teach restorative rather than punitive approaches to conflict. The modeling dimension is not without challenges. Because the number of Christian students is small (13 students), opportunities for sustained peer culture formation are limited. Some students reported that outside the CRE classroom, the broader school environment does not always reinforce the same peace-oriented values with equal intentionality. This indicates that while the CRE teacher’s influence is strong within the instructional sphere, its diffusion into the wider school culture depends on broader institutional collaboration. The presence of four Christian teachers in the school provides potential for such collaboration, but the data suggest that cross-teacher coordination in peace education is still informal rather than systematically programmed.

The study reveals that the CRE teacher plays a meaningful role in conflict mediation and social sensitivity development. Interview data show that students frequently approach the CRE teacher not only for academic questions but also for interpersonal concerns, including friendship tensions and misunderstandings with peers. This pastoral accessibility indicates a high level of relational trust. Observations further reveal that the teacher occasionally facilitates brief reflective conversations when minor conflicts appear during group work. These interventions typically emphasize empathy (“try to understand your friend’s feelings”) and self-control rather than authority-based resolution. From the perspective of peace education theory, such micro-level interventions are highly significant because they provide real-time moral formation opportunities (Yount, 2010). The teacher’s approach reflects what may be described as relational peace pedagogy, an approach that prioritizes heart transformation alongside behavioral regulation. In the context of Exodus 9:16, this relational emphasis can be interpreted theologically: if God’s actions in history aim to reveal His character to the nations, then the teacher’s role in shaping student relationships becomes part of that revelatory process in the school microcosm. The data also indicate that structured conflict-resolution training is not yet systematically embedded in the CRE curriculum. Most mediation occurs spontaneously rather than through planned learning modules. While spontaneous pastoral care is valuable, a more programmatic approach, such as peer mediation training, peace projects, or structured reflection journals, could strengthen sustainability and student ownership of peace practices. This represents an important area for pedagogical development. The theological internalization of Exodus 9:16 emerges as a nuanced but meaningful dimension. The CRE teacher interprets the text not merely as a narrative of divine power but as a reminder that God’s actions aim to make His name known through human witness. Students demonstrated a moderate-to-strong ability to articulate that faithfulness to God includes living in ways that honor Him publicly. Several students connected the lesson to maintaining good relationships with friends of different backgrounds. This indicates that the theological bridge between divine revelation and social ethics is beginning to form in student understanding. Wright (2004) emphasizes that Old Testament theology often links God’s self-disclosure with ethical responsibility

among His people. The findings of this study resonate with that framework. The CRE teacher appears successful in helping students move beyond purely historical reading toward ethical application. However, depth of theological reflection varies among students. Some responses remain at the level of general moralism (“we must be good to others”) without explicit linkage to God’s redemptive purpose. This suggests that future instruction could strengthen explicit theological articulation, helping students see more clearly how peaceful communal life participates in God’s larger mission. An additional contextual factor shaping the findings is the minority status of Christian students in the school. Interestingly, this condition appears to heighten students’ awareness of the importance of peaceful coexistence. Many students expressed sensitivity toward maintaining good relationships with peers of other faiths. The CRE teacher intentionally reinforces this posture by framing Christian identity not as exclusivist isolation but as faithful presence marked by respect and humility. This approach aligns with contemporary Indonesian Christian education discourse, which emphasizes constructive engagement in plural society while maintaining theological integrity. At the same time, minority conditions create certain pedagogical constraints. Limited instructional time for CRE, small class size, and the broader secular school framework all shape the scope of peace formation initiatives. The teacher often works through relational influence rather than formal programming because of these structural realities. While this relational strategy is effective at the micro level, institutional support would enhance long-term impact. The findings indicate that the CRE teacher at SMPN 1 Jati Agung is functioning effectively as an agent of peaceful communal formation, particularly through personal modeling and relational engagement. The integration of biblical reflection, especially through Exodus 9:16, provides a meaningful theological foundation for this work. Students demonstrate growing awareness that faithfulness to God must be expressed socially, not merely devotionally. However, the study also identifies areas for professional strengthening: expanding interactive peace pedagogy, systematizing conflict-resolution training, deepening theological articulation, and enhancing cross-teacher collaboration within the school. This study contributes to the understanding that teacher role in Christian education operates multidimensionally, pedagogical, relational, spiritual, and cultural. In minority educational contexts, the relational and modeling dimensions may carry even greater weight than formal curriculum structures. The findings suggest that CRE teachers who intentionally embody calm authority, empathetic communication, and theological clarity can significantly influence students’ capacity for peaceful communal life even within limited structural conditions. The role of the CRE teacher at SMPN 1 Jati Agung demonstrates strong alignment with the peace-oriented implications of Exodus 9:16, though continued pedagogical innovation and institutional support are recommended to maximize transformative impact in plural school environments.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in fostering peaceful communal life through reflection on Exodus 9:16 at SMPN 1 Jati Agung, South Lampung. Based on qualitative analysis of interviews, observations, and document review involving 13 Christian students and 4 Christian teachers, the findings indicate that the CRE teacher plays a meaningful and constructive role in nurturing students’ attitudes

toward peaceful coexistence within a plural school environment. The results demonstrate that the teacher's contribution is most evident in four interconnected domains: intentional integration of peace values in instruction, consistent personal modeling of calm and respectful behavior, relational accessibility in mediating student conflicts, and theological framing that connects faithfulness to God with ethical social living. Students generally perceive the CRE teacher as a credible spiritual and moral guide whose attitudes reinforce the importance of empathy, tolerance, and harmonious interaction with peers of different backgrounds. This confirms that in minority educational contexts, the lived example of the teacher becomes a primary vehicle for peace formation. At the pedagogical level, the study finds that peace-oriented content has been embedded in CRE learning, but classroom practice still tends to be moderately teacher-centered. Opportunities for experiential learning, such as structured dialogue, collaborative peace projects, and systematic conflict-resolution training, remain limited. Consequently, while students demonstrate good cognitive understanding of peaceful communal values, the depth of practical skill formation can still be strengthened. Theologically, the reflection on Exodus 9:16 has begun to shape students' awareness that God's purposes should be reflected through their social conduct, although further explicit theological articulation would deepen this internalization. The study concludes that the CRE teacher at SMPN 1 Jati Agung functions effectively as an agent of peacebuilding, particularly through relational modeling and pastoral sensitivity. However, to maximize impact, future development should focus on expanding interactive pedagogical strategies, institutionalizing peace education practices, and strengthening collaboration among Christian teachers within the school. Future research is recommended to involve broader samples, longitudinal designs, and mixed-method approaches in order to capture more fully the dynamics of faith-based peace formation in Indonesian public schools.

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