



Teachers as Instruments of Peace: Inspired by Matthew 5:9 at UPTD SD Negeri 122368 Pematangsiantar

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of Christian teachers as instruments of peace inspired by Matthew 5:9 within the educational context of UPTD SD Negeri 122368 Pematangsiantar. The research is grounded in the growing need for peace-oriented pedagogy in pluralistic school environments, where teachers are expected not only to deliver academic content but also to cultivate spiritual and social harmony. The study focuses on a context involving 27 Christian students and 10 Christian teachers, including the Christian Religious Education (PAK) teacher, highlighting the strategic position of teachers in shaping students' peacemaking character. Employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, the research synthesizes theological, pedagogical, and peace education literature to construct a conceptual framework for teachers' peace-oriented roles. The findings indicate that teachers function effectively as instruments of peace when they integrate biblical values, model reconciliatory behavior, foster inclusive classroom climates, and implement reflective pedagogical practices. The discussion reveals that peace-building in schools is strengthened through the alignment of spiritual formation and pedagogical competence. Furthermore, the study underscores that the Beatitudes, particularly Matthew 5:9, provide a robust theological foundation for Christian educators to nurture students' character, empathy, and conflict-resolution skills. The research concludes that intentional integration of peacemaking spirituality into teaching practice enhances both the spiritual atmosphere and the social cohesion of the school community. These findings contribute to the development of contextual Christian Religious Education and offer practical implications for teachers seeking to embody and transmit peace values in Indonesian primary school settings.

Keywords: Teachers, Christian Religious Education, Instruments of Peace

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary educational landscape increasingly recognizes the teacher's role not merely as a transmitter of knowledge but as a formative agent in shaping students' character and social disposition. Among the many virtues expected of educators, the

capacity to foster peace within the learning community has gained particular urgency in plural and dynamic societies. In the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE), this responsibility carries theological depth because peacebuilding is rooted in the very teachings of Jesus Christ. Teachers who embody and cultivate peace contribute not only to classroom harmony but also to the formation of students as agents of reconciliation in society. Therefore, examining teachers as instruments of peace represents both an educational and theological priority. Matthew 5:9 states, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." This Beatitude situates peacemaking at the heart of Christian identity and mission. Biblical scholars note that the Greek term *eirēnopoioi* (peacemakers) implies active and intentional work toward reconciliation rather than mere avoidance of conflict (France, 2007). Jesus' teaching emphasizes that peace is not passive tranquility but a transformative practice that restores relationships and promotes justice. For educators, particularly those involved in CRE, this passage provides a normative framework for understanding teaching as a peace-oriented vocation. Teachers who internalize this vision are more likely to cultivate classrooms marked by respect, empathy, and constructive conflict resolution. Educational research supports the strategic importance of peace-oriented teaching. Positive classroom climate, characterized by mutual respect and emotional safety, has been consistently associated with improved student engagement and social development (Wentzel, 2012). Teachers play a decisive role in shaping this climate through their communication style, classroom management, and relational posture. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) argue that socially and emotionally competent teachers are better able to prevent disruptive behavior and foster cooperative learning environments. In faith-based education, this competence intersects with spiritual formation, making the teacher's personal disposition especially influential. The promotion of peaceful communal life in schools is highly relevant. Indonesian education policy emphasizes character education, religious moderation, and social harmony as national priorities. In primary schools, where students are still forming foundational social habits, the teacher's example becomes particularly formative. Empirical studies that specifically examine CRE teachers as agents of peace in everyday classroom practice remain relatively limited. Much of the existing literature focuses on doctrinal instruction rather than relational and peacebuilding competencies. This gap highlights the need for contextually grounded research. UPTD SD Negeri 122368 Pematangsiantar offers an important setting for such investigation. The school includes 27 Christian students and 10 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher. Although the Christian student population is relatively small, the influence of teachers in shaping inter-student relationships and classroom climate remains significant. In smaller cohorts, teacher behavior may even be more visible and impactful because interactions tend to be more personal and frequent. Understanding how teachers function as instruments of peace in this environment can provide valuable insights for similar primary school contexts.

From a Christian pedagogical perspective, peacebuilding involves more than classroom discipline; it requires intentional modeling of forgiveness, fairness, empathy, and conflict mediation. Pazmiño (2008) emphasizes that Christian teachers are called to reflect the reconciling work of Christ in their educational practice. This implies that peace must be both taught and embodied. When students observe teachers handling disagreements calmly, treating learners equitably, and encouraging respectful dialogue, they internalize

peace not as abstract doctrine but as lived reality. This study therefore seeks to analyze how teachers at UPTD SD Negeri 122368 Pematangsiantar function as instruments of peace through the interpretive framework of Matthew 5:9. Specifically, the research aims to describe the observable practices of peace-oriented teaching, examine student perceptions of teachers' peacebuilding roles, and interpret the findings in light of Christian educational theology. By integrating biblical reflection with empirical classroom data, the study intends to contribute to the strengthening of peace-centered pedagogy in Indonesian Christian education. The significance of this research lies in its formative vision. If teachers truly live out the Beatitude of the peacemakers, classrooms can become micro-communities of reconciliation that prepare students to participate constructively in broader society. Investigating this reality in the context of UPTD SD Negeri 122368 Pematangsiantar is therefore both academically meaningful and spiritually urgent.

METHODS

The SLR method was selected because it enables a comprehensive and structured synthesis of existing scholarly knowledge, allowing researchers to identify patterns, gaps, and convergences in prior studies related to peace-oriented pedagogy and teacher character formation. Systematic reviews are widely acknowledged as rigorous strategies for building evidence-based educational insights because they follow transparent and replicable procedures in locating and evaluating relevant literature (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007). In the context of this research, the SLR approach is particularly appropriate because the study seeks to integrate biblical-theological reflection with contemporary educational research rather than generate primary field data. The review process began with the formulation of a guiding research focus, namely to understand how teachers, especially those involved in CRE, function as agents of peace in classroom settings and how such roles resonate with the Beatitude of the peacemakers in Matthew 5:9. Following this conceptual framing, a systematic search of academic literature was conducted across several major scholarly databases. These databases were selected because they index a wide range of peer-reviewed publications in education, theology, and religious studies. The search employed combinations of key terms such as "peace pedagogy," "teacher empathy," "Christian Religious Education," "classroom climate," and "Matthew 5:9 peacemakers." The time frame for publication was limited to works published between 2005 and 2024 in order to capture contemporary developments in both educational research and Christian pedagogical discourse. To ensure the relevance and scholarly quality of the included sources, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied during the screening process. Studies were included if they discussed teacher roles in fostering peaceful learning environments, examined character or faith-based education, or provided empirical or theoretical insights into relational pedagogy. Only peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and reputable academic proceedings published in English or Indonesian were considered. Works that were purely opinion-based, lacked methodological clarity, focused exclusively on macro-political peace education without classroom implications, or were duplicates across databases were excluded. The selection process followed a staged screening procedure beginning with title and abstract review, followed by full-text evaluation for studies deemed potentially relevant. This multi-step filtering process is consistent with best practices in systematic

review methodology and helps reduce selection bias (Snyder, 2019). After the final corpus of literature was established, each source underwent quality appraisal to assess methodological rigor, conceptual clarity, and relevance to the research focus. The analysis phase used thematic synthesis to identify recurring patterns related to teacher empathy, conflict mediation, supportive classroom climate, servant leadership, and spiritually grounded peacemaking. Through iterative coding and categorization, the study constructed an integrative framework that connects educational theory with the theological vision of Matthew 5:9. To enhance trustworthiness, the review maintained procedural transparency, consistency in applying criteria, and theoretical triangulation between biblical scholarship and educational research. By employing this systematic and critically reflective approach, the study provides a robust conceptual foundation for understanding how teachers at UPTD SD Negeri 122368 Pematangsiantar may function as instruments of peace in their educational ministry.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The systematic literature review conducted in this study yielded a coherent body of scholarly insights regarding the role of teachers as instruments of peace, particularly when interpreted through the theological framework of Matthew 5:9. After the screening and quality appraisal process, the selected literature consistently emphasized that peace-oriented pedagogy is not merely an instructional technique but a multidimensional teacher disposition encompassing empathy, relational sensitivity, ethical communication, and spiritually grounded leadership. When these dimensions are viewed together, a clear pattern emerges: teachers who intentionally cultivate peace function as formative agents who shape both classroom climate and student character development. This finding provides an important interpretive lens for understanding the potential role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at UPTD SD Negeri 122368 Pematangsiantar, where the presence of 27 Christian students and 10 Christian teachers creates a relationally concentrated educational environment. One of the most prominent themes emerging from the literature is the centrality of teacher empathy in fostering peaceful communal life. Multiple studies indicate that empathetic teachers are more effective in preventing conflict escalation and in building emotionally safe classrooms. Wentzel (2012) argues that students' perceptions of teacher care strongly predict prosocial behavior and classroom cooperation. Similarly, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) demonstrate that teachers with high social-emotional competence are better able to regulate classroom tensions and promote constructive peer interactions. When interpreted through Matthew 5:9, this body of research suggests that peacemaking begins not with disciplinary control but with compassionate attentiveness to students' lived experiences. In primary school contexts such as UPTD SD Negeri 122368 Pematangsiantar, where students are still developing emotional regulation skills, the teacher's empathetic posture becomes especially formative. The literature therefore supports the theological claim that peacemaking is relational before it is procedural. Other finding concerns the role of classroom climate as a mediating factor between teacher disposition and student behavior. The reviewed studies consistently report that peaceful classrooms are intentionally cultivated environments rather than incidental outcomes. Positive classroom climate is characterized by mutual respect, psychological safety, fairness, and

open communication. Research in educational psychology shows that such climates significantly reduce bullying behavior and increase cooperative learning (Thapa et al., 2013). From a Christian pedagogical perspective, this aligns closely with the Beatitude vision in Matthew 5:9, which portrays peacemakers as active agents of relational restoration. The literature indicates that teachers contribute to this climate through micro-level practices such as tone of voice, equitable attention to students, non-humiliating correction, and consistent emotional availability. In smaller Christian student populations like the one in this study locus, these micro-practices may have amplified impact because relational visibility is higher and teacher-student interactions are more personalized. The next pattern highlights conflict mediation as a core competency of peace-oriented teachers. The literature moves beyond the assumption that peace simply means the absence of conflict. Instead, scholars emphasize that effective teachers help students navigate disagreements constructively. Johnson and Johnson (2009) note that structured conflict resolution practices in classrooms significantly improve peer relationships and reduce aggressive behavior. Within Christian education, this competency resonates strongly with the reconciling ministry implied in Matthew 5:9. Teachers who function as instruments of peace do not suppress conflict but transform it into opportunities for moral and social learning. The reviewed studies describe several observable practices associated with effective mediation, including facilitating dialogue between disputing students, teaching perspective-taking, modeling calm responses under pressure, and guiding students toward restorative solutions. For CRE teachers, these practices carry additional theological weight because they mirror the reconciling character of Christ-centered pedagogy. Another important finding emerging from the synthesis is the significance of teacher communication style. Peacebuilding in classrooms is frequently expressed through everyday verbal interactions rather than through formal peace lessons. The literature consistently shows that respectful, non-threatening, and affirming communication from teachers contributes to student trust and reduces defensive behavior. According to Pianta, Hamre, and Allen (2012), emotionally supportive teacher communication is strongly associated with improved student engagement and reduced classroom disruption. In light of Matthew 5:9, such communication can be interpreted as practical peacemaking language that shapes the moral tone of the classroom. For the context of UPTD SD Negeri 122368 Pematangsiantar, where teacher influence is highly visible, communication patterns may function as powerful implicit curriculum. Students often internalize peace not from formal doctrinal instruction but from observing how teachers speak, correct, and respond in daily interactions.

The literature also underscores the role of servant leadership in peace-oriented teaching. Scholars in both educational leadership and Christian pedagogy argue that teachers who adopt a service-oriented mindset create more cooperative and less adversarial classroom environments. Owens and Hekman (2012) found that humble and service-focused leaders foster higher levels of follower trust and collaboration. When applied to classroom settings, this suggests that teachers who position themselves as facilitators rather than authoritarian controllers are more likely to cultivate peaceful learning communities. This insight resonates deeply with the theological thrust of Matthew 5:9, which frames peacemakers as active agents of God's reconciling work. In the CRE context, servant leadership embodies the integration of spiritual identity and pedagogical practice. For

schools like UPTD SD Negeri 122368 Pematangsiantar, where the number of Christian educators is relatively small, the modeling effect of servant-oriented teachers may be particularly influential in shaping the ethos of the learning environment. A further pattern identified in the review concerns the developmental impact of peace-oriented teachers on students' character formation. The literature consistently reports that sustained exposure to caring and fair teachers correlates with increased student empathy, reduced aggression, and stronger prosocial orientation. Berkowitz and Bier (2005) emphasize that character education is most effective when values are modeled consistently by teachers rather than merely taught cognitively. This finding strongly reinforces the theological logic of Matthew 5:9. If peacemaking is integral to Christian identity, then students must see peace embodied in the adults who teach them. In primary education contexts, observational learning is particularly powerful because younger students rely heavily on adult modeling to form social norms. The reviewed studies therefore support the argument that CRE teachers function as "living curricula" whose relational behavior communicates theological values more powerfully than verbal instruction alone. One recurring issue is the gap between teachers' theological understanding of peace and their practical classroom implementation. Some studies report that teachers affirm peace values conceptually but struggle to maintain calm and restorative responses under classroom pressure. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) note that teacher stress and emotional exhaustion can undermine peace-oriented intentions. This insight is particularly relevant for Indonesian school contexts, where teachers often manage large administrative and instructional workloads. Even in smaller Christian student populations, sustained emotional regulation requires intentional professional formation. Therefore, the literature suggests that peace pedagogy must be supported not only by theological commitment but also by socio-emotional competency development.

Another area of nuance concerns the importance of explicit peace instruction alongside implicit modeling. While many studies affirm the power of teacher example, some scholars argue that students benefit most when modeling is combined with structured peace education activities. Thapa et al. (2013) highlight that schools with integrated social-emotional learning programs show stronger long-term climate improvements than those relying solely on teacher disposition. Interpreted for the CRE context, this suggests that Matthew 5:9 should inform both the teacher's character and the curriculum design. For UPTD SD Negeri 122368 Pematangsiantar, this may imply the value of integrating biblical peacemaking themes into lesson plans, classroom routines, and reflective activities. The synthesis further indicates that school culture plays a moderating role in sustaining peace-oriented teaching. Individual teacher efforts are most effective when supported by institutional norms that prioritize respect, inclusion, and restorative discipline. Pianta et al. (2012) emphasize that relational teaching thrives in environments where school leadership reinforces positive climate practices. Given that the study locus includes 10 Christian teachers, there is potential for collaborative cultivation of a peace-supportive microculture within the school. The literature suggests that when multiple educators model consistent peace practices, the effect on students becomes more durable and systemically embedded. When the findings are interpreted holistically through Matthew 5:9, a robust theological-educational synthesis emerges. The Beatitude portrays peacemakers as active participants in God's restorative mission, and

contemporary educational research confirms that teachers can embody this role through empathetic relationships, supportive communication, conflict mediation, and servant leadership. For the specific context of UPTD SD Negeri 122368 Pematangsiantar, the relatively intimate scale of the Christian student community may enhance the visibility and impact of such practices. However, the literature also cautions that sustained peace pedagogy requires intentional professional development, emotional competence, and institutional support. The systematic review demonstrates strong convergence between biblical peacemaking theology and empirical educational research. Teachers who function as instruments of peace do so not through isolated interventions but through consistent relational presence, emotionally intelligent communication, and service-oriented leadership. Matthew 5:9 provides a compelling theological framework for understanding this vocation, while contemporary research offers practical insights into its classroom enactment. For Christian Religious Education in Indonesian primary schools, the integration of these perspectives holds significant promise for nurturing learning communities marked by reconciliation, mutual respect, and transformative peace.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how teachers may function as instruments of peace when viewed through the theological lens of Matthew 5:9 and interpreted in light of contemporary educational scholarship. Drawing on a systematic literature review, the findings demonstrate a strong convergence between biblical peacemaking theology and empirically grounded models of effective teaching. Across the reviewed studies, peace-oriented pedagogy consistently emerged as a multidimensional teacher disposition characterized by empathy, emotionally supportive communication, constructive conflict mediation, servant leadership, and the intentional cultivation of positive classroom climate. These elements collectively reflect the Beatitude vision of peacemakers as active agents of relational restoration. The synthesis shows that teacher empathy is foundational to peaceful learning environments. Students are more likely to develop prosocial behavior and cooperative attitudes when they perceive their teachers as caring, fair, and emotionally responsive. This insight reinforces the theological implication of Matthew 5:9 that peace begins with relational attentiveness rather than mere behavioral control. Similarly, the literature confirms that classroom climate functions as a critical mediator between teacher character and student outcomes. Teachers who consistently demonstrate respect, fairness, and emotional availability contribute significantly to the reduction of conflict and the strengthening of communal harmony. Another important conclusion is that effective peacemaking in education requires the capacity to transform conflict rather than simply suppress it. Teachers who guide students through dialogue, perspective-taking, and restorative practices help cultivate durable peace competencies. In Christian Religious Education (CRE), this role carries particular theological significance because it mirrors the reconciling mission central to Christian faith formation. The review also highlights the importance of servant leadership and humble teacher identity in fostering trust and cooperation among students. The literature cautions that peace-oriented teaching is not sustained by theological conviction alone. Teacher stress, limited socio-emotional training, and unsupportive school cultures may hinder consistent peacemaking practice. Therefore, intentional professional development, emotional

competence formation, and institutional reinforcement are essential for sustaining teachers' roles as instruments of peace. For the context of UPTD SD Negeri 122368 Pematangsiantar, with 27 Christian students and 10 Christian teachers, the relatively close-knit environment presents a strategic opportunity. When CRE teachers intentionally embody the Beatitude of Matthew 5:9 through relational sensitivity and servant-hearted pedagogy, their influence can extend beyond individual classrooms to shape the broader moral ecology of the school. Ultimately, the future of transformative Christian education depends not only on doctrinal instruction but on teachers whose lived practice consistently reflects the peace they proclaim.

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