



## Pedagogical Reflection on the Sermon on the Mount and Its Implications for Christian Education at SD Negeri 078140 Orahili Sibohou

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### ABSTRACT

*Pedagogical reflection grounded in biblical teaching is increasingly recognized as essential for strengthening the effectiveness of Christian Religious Education (CRE). The Sermon on the Mount, particularly in Matthew 5-7, presents a transformative ethical framework that emphasizes compassion, righteousness, humility, and peace, values that are highly relevant to contemporary classroom practice. This study aims to examine the pedagogical implications of the Sermon on the Mount for Christian education at SD Negeri 078140 Orahili Sibohou, South Nias. The research employed a quantitative descriptive design with students as the primary respondents. The population consisted of 60 Christian students taught by one CRE teacher, and total sampling was applied to ensure comprehensive representation. Data were collected through a structured Likert-scale questionnaire measuring students' perceptions of the teacher's pedagogical sensitivity, caring attitude, moral modeling, and Christ-centered instructional approach. The instrument demonstrated acceptable validity and reliability prior to full deployment. Descriptive statistical analysis revealed that the overall implementation of Sermon-on-the-Mount-based pedagogy was in the high category. Students generally perceived the CRE teacher as demonstrating compassion, fairness, and moral consistency consistent with the teachings of Matthew 9:36 and related passages. The findings indicate that biblical pedagogical principles can be meaningfully operationalized in contemporary classroom settings and positively shape the relational climate of learning. The study concludes that pedagogical reflection rooted in the Sermon on the Mount provides a viable framework for strengthening spiritually grounded and student-centered Christian education in Indonesian primary schools.*

**Keywords:** *Pedagogical Reflection, Christian Religious Education, Sermon on the Mount*

### INTRODUCTION

Pedagogical reflection has become an increasingly important dimension in contemporary Christian Religious Education (CRE), particularly in pluralistic school environments where teachers are expected not only to transmit knowledge but also to nurture character,

empathy, and spiritual maturity. In Indonesian public schools, including SD Negeri 078140 Orahili Sibohou in South Nias, Christian Religious Education teachers often work within limited instructional time and diverse classroom dynamics. In such contexts, the teacher's capacity to interpret biblical teachings pedagogically is crucial for fostering meaningful learning experiences. One biblical passage that offers rich pedagogical insight is the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), which presents Jesus' transformative teaching on righteousness, compassion, and ethical living. Scholars widely recognize the Sermon on the Mount as a foundational ethical discourse that shapes Christian moral formation and educational philosophy (Stott, 1978). The Sermon on the Mount is not merely theological instruction; it represents a holistic teaching model that integrates cognition, affection, and action. Jesus teaches through parables, contrasts, blessings, and practical moral commands, demonstrating what modern educators would call learner-centered and transformative pedagogy. According to Hagner (1993), the Sermon on the Mount functions as a manifesto of kingdom ethics that calls learners to internal transformation rather than mere external compliance. This perspective is highly relevant for Christian Religious Education teachers who are tasked with shaping students' character in addition to their doctrinal understanding. In the Indonesian educational framework, where character education (*pendidikan karakter*) is strongly emphasized, the pedagogical values embedded in Jesus' teaching provide a powerful foundation for CRE practice. Research in religious education consistently shows that effective CRE teachers integrate biblical reflection with contextual pedagogical strategies. Groome (1999) argues that Christian education should be dialogical and life-oriented, enabling learners to connect faith traditions with their lived experiences. This approach resonates strongly with the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus addresses everyday ethical issues such as anger, forgiveness, generosity, and peacemaking. When CRE teachers reflect pedagogically on this passage, they are better equipped to design learning that is transformative rather than merely informative. Moreover, the emphasis on humility, mercy, and righteousness in Matthew 5:1-12 (the Beatitudes) aligns closely with contemporary educational goals related to social-emotional learning and moral development (Hull, 2000). The local context of SD Negeri 078140 Orahili Sibohou presents a unique educational setting. The presence of 60 Christian students and only one Christian Religious Education teacher creates both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, the relatively small Christian student population allows for more focused pastoral and pedagogical attention. On the other hand, the limited number of CRE teachers may increase instructional workload and require more strategic pedagogical planning. In such circumstances, pedagogical reflection grounded in biblical teaching becomes not only spiritually meaningful but also practically necessary. Teachers must intentionally translate theological insights into classroom practices that are engaging, contextual, and developmentally appropriate.

Contemporary scholarship emphasizes that teacher reflection is a key component of professional competence. Reflective teachers are more adaptive, more responsive to student needs, and more effective in promoting deep learning (Schön, 1983). Within Christian education, reflective practice also carries a spiritual dimension, as teachers discern how biblical truths can be embodied in pedagogical action. The Sermon on the Mount, with its emphasis on inner transformation and ethical integrity, provides a particularly rich framework for such reflection. By examining how CRE teachers interpret

and implement the pedagogical values of this passage, researchers can better understand the role of faith-informed pedagogy in Indonesian primary schools. Empirical studies focusing specifically on pedagogical reflection derived from the Sermon on the Mount in Indonesian elementary school contexts remain limited. Most existing research discusses character education or general teacher competence without deeply exploring the integration of specific biblical texts into pedagogical practice. This gap is especially evident in rural or semi-rural regions such as South Nias, where contextual realities may significantly shape teaching approaches. This study aims to analyze pedagogical reflection on the Sermon on the Mount and its implications for Christian Religious Education at SD Negeri 078140 Orahili Sibohou, South Nias. The research seeks to explore how biblical insights are interpreted pedagogically, how they influence classroom practice, and what implications emerge for strengthening CRE in primary education settings. By doing so, this study contributes to the growing discourse on faith-integrated pedagogy and offers practical insights for CRE teachers working in similar contexts.

## METHODS

A quantitative research design was implemented to examine the pedagogical reflection on the Sermon on the Mount and its implications for Christian Religious Education at SD Negeri 078140 Orahili Sibohou, South Nias. A quantitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to measure perceptions systematically, identify patterns across respondents, and generate generalizable findings regarding students' experiences of pedagogical practices. Quantitative methods are particularly appropriate when the objective is to examine relationships between instructional variables and learner responses in a structured manner (Creswell, 2014). In the context of Christian Religious Education, this approach allows for empirical assessment of how pedagogically reflected teaching influences students' spiritual and moral learning outcomes. The population of this study consisted of all Christian students enrolled at SD Negeri 078140 Orahili Sibohou, totaling 60 students. Because the population size was relatively small and manageable, the study applied a total sampling technique in which all members of the population were included as research respondents. Total sampling is recommended when the population is limited and the researcher seeks comprehensive representation (Sugiyono, 2017). Thus, the sample size of this study was 60 students, ensuring that the data reflected the full spectrum of student perceptions within the Christian Religious Education classroom. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed based on key pedagogical dimensions derived from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) and contemporary Christian education theory. The instrument measured several indicators, including: teacher empathy toward learners' needs, clarity of moral and spiritual instruction, contextualization of biblical teaching, encouragement of peaceful and compassionate behavior, and student engagement in CRE learning. Each item was measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The use of Likert scaling is widely accepted for capturing attitudes and perceptions in educational research because it provides quantifiable ordinal data suitable for statistical analysis (Likert, 1932). To ensure instrument validity, the questionnaire underwent content validation by two experts in Christian Religious Education and educational measurement. Their feedback was used to refine item clarity, theological accuracy, and pedagogical relevance.

Construct validity was examined through item-total correlation analysis, while reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. A reliability coefficient of  $\geq 0.70$  was considered acceptable for internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). These procedures ensured that the instrument was both theoretically grounded and statistically reliable. Data collection was conducted during the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year with formal permission from the school administration and the Christian Religious Education teacher. Students completed the questionnaire in a supervised classroom setting to ensure standard administration conditions and minimize response bias. Prior to participation, students were given a brief explanation of the study's purpose and assured that their responses would remain confidential and used solely for research purposes, in line with ethical research principles in educational studies (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores, standard deviations, and percentage distributions, were used to portray overall trends in students' perceptions of pedagogically reflective CRE teaching. Inferential analysis using simple correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between pedagogical sensitivity inspired by the Sermon on the Mount and students' perceived spiritual-moral learning outcomes. All statistical analyses were performed using a standard significance level of 0.05. Through this quantitative procedure, the study sought to provide empirical evidence regarding the pedagogical implications of the Sermon on the Mount within the CRE context at SD Negeri 078140 Orahili Sibohou.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study present empirical evidence regarding the pedagogical reflection on the Sermon on the Mount and its implications for Christian Religious Education (CRE) at SD Negeri 078140 Orahili Sibohou, South Nias. The analysis is based on responses from all 60 Christian students, providing a comprehensive representation of learner perceptions toward the pedagogical practices of the Christian Religious Education teacher. The discussion integrates quantitative findings with relevant educational and theological perspectives in order to interpret the significance of the data in a meaningful and contextually grounded manner. Descriptive analysis revealed that students generally perceived the pedagogical approach of the Christian Religious Education teacher as positive and aligned with the values of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). The overall mean score across all measured indicators was in the high category, indicating that the teacher's instructional practices were viewed as supportive, compassionate, and spiritually meaningful. The indicator of teacher empathy toward learners' needs obtained one of the highest mean scores. Most students agreed that the teacher demonstrated care, patience, and attentiveness during learning activities. This finding reflects the core message of Matthew 9:36 and the broader ethos of the Sermon on the Mount, where compassion is central to spiritual leadership. Empathetic teaching is widely recognized as a key factor in creating emotionally safe learning environments that promote engagement and trust (Hattie, 2009). In the context of SD Negeri 078140 Orahili Sibohou, the presence of only one Christian Religious Education teacher serving all Christian students appears to have fostered a more personal and relational instructional climate. Clarity of moral and spiritual instruction, also showed a high mean score. Students reported that biblical

teachings were delivered in ways that were understandable and relevant to their daily lives. This suggests that the teacher successfully translated theological concepts from the Sermon on the Mount into age-appropriate pedagogical language. According to Christian education theory, effective faith formation requires not merely doctrinal transmission but meaningful interpretation that connects Scripture with lived experience (Groome, 2011). The data indicate that such interpretive pedagogy is already taking place in this school context. Contextualization of biblical teaching received moderately high scores, though slightly lower than empathy and instructional clarity. Some students indicated that while biblical lessons were clear, further connection to real-life situations could enhance understanding. This finding is important because contextual theology emphasizes that Scripture becomes transformative when learners see its relevance to their socio-cultural realities. In South Nias, where communal values and local culture strongly shape student identity, contextualized pedagogy is particularly crucial. Encouragement of peaceful and compassionate behavior, also scored high. Students reported that CRE learning frequently emphasized forgiveness, kindness, and reconciliation, core themes of the Sermon on the Mount, especially in Matthew 5:9 ("Blessed are the peacemakers"). This suggests that the teacher is not only transmitting cognitive knowledge but also nurturing affective and behavioral dimensions of Christian character. Character education literature supports the finding that repeated moral reinforcement in classroom settings significantly shapes student behavior over time (Lickona, 2012). Student engagement in CRE learning, showed a positive but comparatively lower mean score than other indicators. While most students expressed interest in CRE lessons, some indicated that learning activities could be made more interactive. This suggests that although the teacher's spiritual and relational approach is strong, there is still room for pedagogical innovation, particularly in active learning strategies.

Inferential statistical analysis using simple correlation revealed a significant positive relationship between pedagogical sensitivity inspired by the Sermon on the Mount and students' perceived spiritual-moral learning outcomes ( $p < 0.05$ ). This finding confirms the theoretical assumption that pedagogical approaches rooted in Christ-centered compassion contribute meaningfully to student character formation. The strength of the correlation falls within the moderate-to-strong range, indicating that while pedagogical sensitivity is an important factor, it is not the only variable influencing student spiritual development. This aligns with ecological models of education which emphasize that student formation is influenced by multiple environments, including family, church, and peer community (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Nevertheless, the classroom remains a critical formative space, especially in primary education settings. The findings strongly affirm the pedagogical relevance of the Sermon on the Mount. The Beatitudes present a countercultural model of leadership characterized by humility, mercy, and peacemaking. When translated into classroom practice, these values manifest as empathetic teaching, restorative discipline, and relational instruction. The high student perception of teacher empathy suggests that the CRE teacher is embodying what may be called incarnational pedagogy, teaching that reflects the character of Christ rather than merely conveying information. This is consistent with the understanding that in Christian education, the teacher's personhood is itself a curriculum (Palmer, 1998). In small-school contexts such as SD Negeri 078140 Orahili Sibohou, where the teacher-student ratio is intimate, the

teacher's personal spirituality becomes even more visible and influential. The strong emphasis on peace-building behaviors reflects faithful pedagogical appropriation of Matthew 5:9. Peace in the Sermon on the Mount is not merely the absence of conflict but the active cultivation of reconciliation and justice. The data indicate that students are internalizing these values at the behavioral level, which is a significant indicator of effective Christian education. The centrality of empathy confirms that affective competence must remain a core component of CRE teacher professionalism. Teacher training programs, particularly in institutions preparing Christian Religious Education teachers, should intentionally cultivate emotional intelligence and pastoral sensitivity alongside doctrinal knowledge. The slightly lower score on contextualization suggests the need for culturally responsive pedagogy. In the South Nias context, integrating local narratives, communal experiences, and culturally familiar illustrations could deepen students' grasp of biblical teachings. Contextual pedagogy has been shown to significantly improve both comprehension and retention in religious education settings. The relatively modest engagement scores highlight the importance of methodological diversity. While relational warmth is clearly present, incorporating cooperative learning, storytelling methods, role play, and project-based learning could further enhance student participation. Active learning is particularly important in primary education because younger learners process values more effectively through experiential rather than purely verbal instruction. The findings affirm that even with limited human resources, only one CRE teacher, the quality of pedagogical practice can remain high when teaching is grounded in strong spiritual motivation. This has important policy implications for small or remote schools where teacher availability is limited.

The school context presents both strengths and challenges. The presence of 60 Christian students creates a sufficiently large learning community for CRE impact, yet the single-teacher model places considerable responsibility on the PAK teacher. Sustaining pedagogical sensitivity under such conditions requires institutional support, ongoing professional development, and possibly collaborative partnerships with local churches. At the same time, the relatively small and cohesive student population offers a unique opportunity for holistic formation. In such environments, character education initiatives can be more consistently reinforced across classroom interactions. The data suggest that SD Negeri 078140 Orahili Sibohou is already benefiting from this relational proximity. The findings of this study are consistent with prior research emphasizing the importance of compassionate pedagogy in faith-based education. Hattie (2009) identifies teacher-student relationships as one of the highest-impact factors in learning effectiveness. Similarly, Groome (2011) stresses that Christian education must integrate head, heart, and hands. The present study provides empirical support for these theoretical claims within the Indonesian primary school context. The results extend existing literature by specifically demonstrating how the Sermon on the Mount can function as a practical pedagogical framework rather than merely a theological text. This contributes to the growing field of biblically grounded educational research in Indonesia. The results demonstrate that pedagogical reflection on the Sermon on the Mount is not merely conceptually meaningful but empirically observable in classroom practice. Students at SD Negeri 078140 Orahili Sibohou perceive their Christian Religious Education learning environment as compassionate, morally clear, and peace-oriented. The significant

positive correlation between pedagogical sensitivity and student spiritual outcomes confirms that Christ-centered pedagogy has measurable educational impact. The data also call for continued pedagogical development, particularly in contextualization and active engagement strategies. Strengthening these areas will further align classroom practice with the holistic vision of the Sermon on the Mount, where teaching touches not only understanding but transformation. This study affirms that when Christian Religious Education teachers intentionally embody the compassionate ethos of the Sermon on the Mount, they become effective agents of spiritual formation within the school community.

## CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine pedagogical reflection on the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) and its implications for Christian Religious Education (CRE) at SD Negeri 078140 Orahili Sibohou, South Nias. Through a quantitative approach involving all 60 Christian students as respondents, the research sought to determine how pedagogical sensitivity rooted in biblical teaching is perceived and how it relates to students' spiritual-moral development. The findings demonstrate that students perceive the Christian Religious Education teacher as embodying strong pedagogical sensitivity characterized by empathy, moral clarity, encouragement of peaceful behavior, and meaningful engagement. Among the measured indicators, teacher empathy and encouragement of peace-building behaviors received particularly high evaluations. This suggests that the ethos of the Sermon on the Mount, especially its emphasis on humility, mercy, and peacemaking, has been meaningfully translated into classroom practice. In this sense, the teacher does not merely teach the text but reflects its spirit in relational and instructional approaches. The correlation analysis further confirmed a significant positive relationship between pedagogical sensitivity and students' perceived spiritual-moral learning outcomes. This indicates that compassionate, reflective, and biblically grounded teaching contributes substantially to character formation among elementary-level learners. Although spiritual development is influenced by multiple environments, family, church, and community, the classroom remains a powerful formative space. In the context of SD Negeri 078140 Orahili Sibohou, the presence of a single CRE teacher serving 60 Christian students has not hindered pedagogical effectiveness; rather, it appears to have fostered a relationally strong learning atmosphere. The findings also reveal areas for continued development. Student engagement, while positive, could be strengthened through more interactive and contextually integrated learning strategies. Greater incorporation of local cultural illustrations and participatory methods may enhance the transformative potential of the Sermon on the Mount within the South Nias context. This study affirms that pedagogical reflection on the Sermon on the Mount is both theologically meaningful and educationally effective. When Christian Religious Education teachers embody Christ-centered compassion and ethical integrity, they function not only as instructors but as formative agents shaping the moral and spiritual character of students. The integration of biblical reflection and professional pedagogy thus emerges as a vital pathway for strengthening Christian education in Indonesian primary schools.

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