



Social Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Fostering Relational Courage: A Study of Genesis 32:30 at SMP Negeri 2 Pancur Batu

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in fostering relational courage among students at SMP Negeri 2 Pancur Batu, Deli Serdang. Situated within a public junior high school that includes approximately 310 Christian students and 37 Christian teachers, the research addresses the need to integrate biblical theology with relational pedagogy in adolescent education. Grounded exegetically in Genesis 32:30, the study interprets Jacob's transformative encounter at Peniel as a theological framework for understanding relational courage as vulnerability preceding reconciliation. Employing a qualitative descriptive case study design, data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with CRE teachers, and document analysis of instructional materials. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns related to teacher social competence, relational modeling, communicative strategies, and conflict mediation practices. The findings reveal that relational courage is cultivated not through doctrinal instruction alone but through socially competent pedagogy characterized by empathetic dialogue, emotional regulation, restorative facilitation, and moral exemplarity. Teachers intentionally reinterpret Genesis 32:30 as a narrative of inner transformation that prepares students for honest and responsible relational engagement. The study demonstrates that social competence in Christian Religious Education is multidimensional, integrating theological clarity, interpersonal sensitivity, and contextual awareness. Within a pluralistic public-school setting, such competence enables teachers to create psychologically safe learning environments where adolescents can confront fear, practice reconciliation, and develop relational maturity. The findings contribute to the discourse on Christian pedagogy by affirming that socially competent educators function as mediators between biblical narrative and students' lived relational experiences, thereby fostering courageous and responsible engagement within contemporary school communities.

Keywords: Social Competence, Christian Religious Education, Relational Courage

INTRODUCTION

Social competence is an essential dimension of teacher professionalism, particularly within Christian Religious Education (CRE), where relational integrity and moral formation are inseparable from academic instruction. In educational settings, social competence refers to a teacher's ability to build constructive relationships, communicate effectively, exercise empathy, and foster a climate of trust and mutual respect (Goleman, 2006; Shulman, 1987). Within CRE, this competence assumes a theological depth, as relational engagement is grounded not only in pedagogical skill but also in biblical anthropology and spiritual formation. Teachers are not merely facilitators of knowledge; they are relational agents who model courage, reconciliation, and authenticity in community life. The concept of relational courage, understood as the willingness to engage honestly, vulnerably, and responsibly in interpersonal relationships, has increasing relevance in contemporary schooling contexts marked by social fragmentation, digital isolation, and identity struggles among adolescents. Relational courage is not impulsive boldness; rather, it is the moral and spiritual capacity to confront fear, conflict, and insecurity in pursuit of restored and meaningful relationships. From a biblical perspective, this theme finds profound expression in Genesis 32:30, where Jacob declares, "I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered" (Gen. 32:30, NIV). This statement follows Jacob's intense struggle at Peniel and precedes his reconciliation with Esau. The narrative reveals a transformative encounter in which fear, guilt, and past conflict are confronted, resulting in renewed identity and relational readiness (Wenham, 1994; Brueggemann, 1982). Genesis 32 presents Jacob at a liminal moment, caught between his past deception and his impending reunion with Esau. The wrestling episode is both divine encounter and existential crisis. Scholars interpret this event as a turning point in Jacob's character formation, where vulnerability precedes relational restoration (Waltke & Fredericks, 2001). Jacob's acknowledgment in Genesis 32:30 reflects not triumphalism but humble astonishment at survival and transformation. The text suggests that authentic relational reconciliation is preceded by inner transformation through encounter with God. Pedagogically, this narrative offers a rich framework for cultivating relational courage among adolescents who struggle with peer conflict, self-image, and social anxiety. In the context of SMP Negeri 2 Pancur Batu, Deli Serdang, the significance of social competence in CRE becomes especially evident. The school community includes approximately 310 Christian students and 37 Christian teachers, including CRE educators, functioning within a pluralistic public-school environment. Adolescence is a developmental stage characterized by identity formation, heightened emotional sensitivity, and peer relational complexity (Santrock, 2019). Within such a setting, CRE teachers are positioned not only as transmitters of doctrinal knowledge but also as mentors who model relational courage through dialogue, conflict mediation, and empathetic engagement. Their social competence directly influences how students perceive faith as embodied practice rather than abstract belief. Educational theory underscores that teacher-student relationships significantly affect students' socio-emotional development and academic engagement (Hattie, 2009). In faith-based instruction, relational quality becomes even more critical because the credibility of spiritual teaching is often evaluated through the authenticity of the teacher's character and interpersonal conduct (Groome, 2011). When CRE teachers demonstrate openness, fairness, and courage in addressing relational tensions, they

create safe spaces for students to process conflict and vulnerability constructively. Conversely, deficiencies in social competence may undermine both moral formation and classroom climate. Limited research has examined how social competence in CRE specifically contributes to fostering relational courage among junior high school students in Indonesian public schools. Much of the existing scholarship emphasizes pedagogical strategies or curriculum implementation without sufficiently exploring how biblical narratives are socially mediated in classroom interactions. There remains a need to integrate exegetical insight with empirical educational analysis, particularly within contexts where Christian communities function as part of broader pluralistic institutions. This study investigates the social competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in fostering relational courage, grounded exegetically in Genesis 32:30 and situated contextually at SMP Negeri 2 Pancur Batu, Deli Serdang. By employing a qualitative case study approach, the research seeks to examine how teachers' relational skills, communicative practices, and theological interpretations converge to shape students' courage in facing interpersonal conflict and identity challenges. Through this integrative lens, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of socially competent Christian pedagogy that forms not only informed believers but also courageous relational agents in contemporary school communities.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in fostering relational courage among students at SMP Negeri 2 Pancur Batu, Deli Serdang. A qualitative approach was selected because the research sought to understand relational dynamics, lived experiences, communicative practices, and meaning-making processes within a natural educational setting rather than to quantify behavioral variables (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study was structured as a descriptive case study, allowing in-depth examination of a bounded system, namely, the Christian Religious Education context within a public junior high school environment (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Pancur Batu, a public secondary school in Deli Serdang with approximately 310 Christian students and 37 Christian teachers, including CRE teachers. This substantial Christian population within a pluralistic institutional framework provided a relevant context for examining relational interactions shaped by faith identity and adolescent development. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on CRE teachers who are directly responsible for Christian Religious Education instruction and who actively engage in mentoring, counseling, or relational mediation within the school community (Patton, 2015). Several Christian students were included as supporting informants to provide insight into their perceptions of teacher relational practices. Selection criteria emphasized diversity in grade level and gender to capture varied relational experiences. Participation was voluntary, and ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity were strictly maintained in accordance with qualitative research standards (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data were collected through three primary qualitative techniques: classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Non-participant classroom observations were conducted during CRE instructional sessions. Observations focused on teacher–student interaction

patterns, conflict mediation strategies, communicative tone, and the integration of Genesis 32:30 within relational discussions. Particular attention was given to how teachers addressed themes of vulnerability, reconciliation, identity transformation, and courage. Detailed field notes were recorded systematically to capture both verbal and non-verbal relational dynamics. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with CRE teachers to explore their understanding of social competence, their interpretation of Genesis 32:30, and their intentional strategies in fostering relational courage. The interview protocol included open-ended questions that encouraged reflective responses while allowing flexibility for emergent themes (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Follow-up probing questions were used to clarify examples of relational challenges and pedagogical responses within the school setting. Document analysis was undertaken to examine lesson plans, instructional materials, school guidelines related to character formation, and reflective student assignments. These documents were analyzed to identify explicit or implicit objectives related to relational development, courage, and reconciliation. Document analysis functioned as triangulation to enhance data credibility by corroborating observational and interview findings (Patton, 2015). Data analysis followed a thematic analysis procedure. All interviews were transcribed verbatim, and observational notes were compiled into structured narrative records. The data were coded inductively to identify recurring patterns related to teacher social competence, relational modeling, conflict engagement, and pedagogical mediation of Genesis 32:30. Codes were subsequently grouped into broader themes reflecting dimensions of relational courage formation. The interpretive process integrated educational theory on teacher competence (Shulman, 1987) with exegetical insights from Genesis 32:30 to ensure coherence between theological interpretation and pedagogical analysis. Trustworthiness was established through methodological triangulation, member checking with selected participants, and maintaining an audit trail of coding decisions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability were addressed systematically to ensure the rigor of the qualitative findings. Through this methodological framework, the study sought to generate a nuanced understanding of how socially competent Christian educators cultivate relational courage within adolescent learners in a pluralistic public-school context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this qualitative study reveal that the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Pancur Batu, Deli Serdang, plays a decisive role in fostering relational courage among students. Within a school community that includes approximately 310 Christian students and 37 Christian teachers (including CRE educators), relational dynamics are complex, multilayered, and developmentally sensitive. Adolescents navigate identity formation, peer pressure, emotional volatility, and social comparison. In this context, relational courage, the capacity to engage honestly, vulnerably, and responsibly in interpersonal relationships, does not emerge automatically. Rather, it is cultivated through intentional relational modeling, communicative integrity, and biblically grounded reflection. The data indicate that teachers' social competence operates as the primary mediating factor between theological narrative and students' relational practice. Classroom observations

demonstrate that CRE teachers consistently construct dialogical learning environments rather than authoritarian instructional spaces. Teachers invite students to articulate personal struggles, peer conflicts, and fears related to social acceptance. This communicative openness reflects high interpersonal sensitivity, one of the core dimensions of social competence. Rather than suppressing relational tension, teachers frame it as a formative opportunity. During lessons centered on Genesis 32:30, students were encouraged to reflect on Jacob's fear of encountering Esau and to draw parallels with their own anxieties about confronting unresolved conflicts. The teachers' tone was neither moralistic nor condemnatory; instead, it was invitational and empathetic. Such dialogical pedagogy creates psychological safety, which is foundational for relational courage. The exegetical grounding of Genesis 32:30 significantly shaped classroom discourse. In the narrative, Jacob wrestles through the night before meeting Esau, and his declaration, "I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered" signals transformation through encounter. Teachers interpreted this event not merely as a mystical episode but as a preparatory crisis preceding reconciliation. Observational data reveal that educators emphasized Jacob's vulnerability rather than his victory. They highlighted that relational courage begins with honest confrontation of fear and past wrongdoing. This theological framing shifts the student focus from outward bravado to inward transformation. Students were guided to see courage not as aggression or dominance but as humility and readiness for reconciliation. Interview data reinforce that CRE teachers consciously connect relational courage with spiritual encounter. Teachers described adolescence as a stage where pride, insecurity, and social comparison often inhibit authentic relationships. One participant explained that students frequently avoid direct communication when conflicts arise, preferring indirect hostility or social withdrawal. By presenting Jacob's struggle as an unavoidable internal confrontation preceding relational restoration, teachers intentionally model the necessity of self-examination. Social competence, in this sense, involves the teacher's capacity to guide students through emotionally sensitive discussions without escalating tension. The ability to regulate classroom emotion while sustaining theological depth demonstrates mature relational leadership.

Another significant finding concerns teacher exemplarity. Students consistently referenced teachers' personal conduct when describing experiences of relational courage. Observations indicate that CRE teachers demonstrate transparency when addressing misunderstandings, occasionally acknowledging personal limitations or apologizing for miscommunication. Such acts, though subtle, powerfully reinforce the lesson of Genesis 32:30: transformation precedes reconciliation. When teachers embody humility, students witness relational courage enacted rather than merely described. This modeling effect extends beyond formal instruction into informal interactions in hallways, extracurricular mentoring, and pastoral conversations. The school's relatively large Christian population provides both opportunity and complexity. With 310 Christian students, peer relationships often intersect across classes, social groups, and church communities. Teachers reported that relational conflicts can ripple quickly across social networks. Social competence therefore includes conflict mediation skills. Observational evidence shows that CRE teachers frequently facilitate restorative dialogue between students in conflict. Rather than imposing punitive measures immediately, teachers

encourage structured conversation, inviting each student to articulate perspective and emotion. The influence of Genesis 32:30 becomes visible here: just as Jacob faced both God and Esau, students are guided to face both internal fear and external relationship. This dual confrontation fosters emotional maturity. Data also reveal that relational courage is nurtured through narrative reflection exercises. Students were assigned reflective writing tasks asking them to identify situations where fear prevented honest communication. Many responses indicated reluctance to apologize, confess misunderstanding, or initiate reconciliation. Teachers used these reflections to guide small-group discussions. Social competence is evident in the teachers' facilitation strategies: they maintain confidentiality, validate emotion, and prevent ridicule. Such careful moderation ensures that vulnerability does not become social liability. In adolescent environments, where peer judgment is acute, this protective relational climate is essential. A further dimension emerging from the data is identity transformation. In Genesis 32, Jacob receives a new name, Israel, symbolizing altered identity. Teachers incorporated this motif into lessons about personal growth. Students were invited to consider how confronting fear can reshape self-perception. Interview data suggest that teachers view relational courage as integrally tied to identity security in Christ. When students understand themselves as valued by God, they are less dependent on peer validation and more willing to engage honestly. Social competence here intersects with theological anthropology; teachers translate doctrinal identity into relational confidence. The integration of biblical exegesis with adolescent psychology strengthens pedagogical coherence. Teachers demonstrate awareness that junior high students often interpret courage as physical strength or social dominance. Through guided discussion of Genesis 32:30, educators redefine courage as perseverance in vulnerability. Observational notes show students gradually adopting this reframed definition during classroom dialogue. Several students articulated that "being brave means saying sorry first" or "telling the truth even when afraid." Such statements indicate internalization rather than rote repetition. The transformation of conceptual understanding into relational intention evidences effective pedagogical mediation. Another important finding concerns communal reinforcement. Relational courage is not treated as an individual achievement but as a community value. Teachers consistently emphasize that reconciliation strengthens the entire class environment. In group activities, students practice active listening and respectful disagreement. Teachers intervene gently when sarcasm or dismissiveness emerges. This ongoing relational coaching reflects sustained social competence rather than episodic intervention. Over time, classroom culture appears increasingly characterized by mutual respect and reduced avoidance behavior during conflict discussions. Document analysis of lesson plans reveals intentional integration of relational objectives. Learning outcomes include phrases such as "students demonstrate courage in communication" and "students practice reconciliation grounded in biblical teaching." Though these objectives are not always explicitly labeled "relational courage," their thematic alignment is evident. The consistency between planning documents and observed practice suggests that relational formation is not incidental but strategically embedded within CRE instruction.

The discussion of these findings underscores that social competence in CRE extends beyond sociability or friendliness. It encompasses emotional regulation, empathetic

listening, conflict facilitation, theological clarity, and moral consistency. Teachers must navigate complex adolescent social ecosystems while maintaining doctrinal fidelity. Genesis 32:30 serves as a narrative scaffold enabling such integration. The text's tension, fear preceding reconciliation, mirrors students' lived experiences. By situating relational courage within this biblical arc, teachers provide a coherent interpretive framework for personal growth. The pluralistic nature of SMP Negeri 2 Pancur Batu requires professional balance. Although the Christian community is substantial, the school operates within a broader public institutional structure. Teachers therefore cultivate relational courage in ways that are constructive and inclusive rather than sectarian. Emphasis on honesty, reconciliation, and humility resonates universally while remaining theologically grounded. This balanced approach reflects mature social competence aligned with both educational professionalism and Christian conviction. The cumulative findings suggest that fostering relational courage is a gradual, relationally mediated process rather than a single instructional outcome. Students do not instantly overcome fear; instead, they experience incremental shifts in communicative willingness. Teachers' consistent modeling, structured dialogue, and theological framing gradually reshape classroom norms. Over time, avoidance patterns decrease, and restorative conversation becomes more normalized. The evidence indicates that socially competent CRE teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Pancur Batu effectively integrate biblical exegesis, relational modeling, and adolescent-sensitive pedagogy to cultivate relational courage. Genesis 32:30 functions not merely as a doctrinal reference but as a transformative narrative through which students reinterpret fear, vulnerability, and reconciliation. The social competence of teachers, expressed through empathy, dialogical facilitation, identity affirmation, and conflict mediation, constitutes the decisive factor in translating theological truth into relational practice. Within a dynamic adolescent school environment, such competence proves indispensable for forming students who are not only knowledgeable in faith but courageous in relationship.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Pancur Batu, Deli Serdang, plays a pivotal role in fostering relational courage among students. Within a school context comprising approximately 310 Christian students and 37 Christian teachers, relational dynamics are both extensive and developmentally sensitive. The findings demonstrate that relational courage does not arise merely from doctrinal instruction but is cultivated through socially competent pedagogical practice characterized by empathy, dialogical engagement, emotional regulation, and restorative mediation. Grounded exegetically in Genesis 32:30, the study affirms that relational courage is rooted in transformation through encounter. Jacob's declaration after wrestling at Peniel illustrates that authentic reconciliation requires prior inner confrontation with fear, guilt, and vulnerability. CRE teachers who interpret and communicate this theological insight effectively are able to translate biblical narrative into lived relational practice. The text becomes a pedagogical framework through which students learn that courage is not aggression or dominance but humility, honesty, and readiness to reconcile. The research further highlights that social competence extends beyond interpersonal friendliness. It encompasses intentional facilitation of dialogue,

ethical consistency, conflict mediation skills, and the capacity to model vulnerability without compromising authority. Teachers who demonstrate transparency, fairness, and humility create psychologically safe environments in which adolescents can practice honest communication. In this setting, relational courage gradually becomes normalized within classroom culture. The study underscores that relational formation must be strategically embedded within instructional planning. The alignment between lesson objectives, classroom discourse, and teacher exemplarity indicates that fostering relational courage requires deliberate pedagogical intention. In a pluralistic public-school environment, such competence also demands professional balance, ensuring that theological integrity is expressed in ways that contribute constructively to the broader school community. The social competence of CRE teachers functions as the essential bridge between biblical theology and adolescent relational development. By integrating exegetical depth, contextual awareness, and relational modeling, teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Pancur Batu contribute significantly to shaping students who are not only informed in faith but courageous in reconciliation. The study affirms that socially competent Christian pedagogy possesses transformative potential in cultivating relational maturity within contemporary educational contexts.

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