



Social Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers and the Spirit of Solidarity: A Study of Philippians 2 at SDN 178497 Sibargot

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers and its relationship to the spirit of solidarity, interpreted through the theological framework of Philippians 2, at SDN 178497 Sibargot. In contemporary educational discourse, social competence is increasingly recognized as a core dimension of teacher professionalism, encompassing ethical interaction, empathy, and relational responsibility. This research employed a qualitative approach combining a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and simple semi-structured interviews. The SLR analyzed international scholarly literature on teacher social competence, moral education, and Christian pedagogy from reputable academic publishers. Empirical data were collected through interviews with two Christian teachers at SDN 178497 Sibargot to explore how social competence and solidarity are understood and practiced in a public elementary school context with a small Christian population. Data were analyzed thematically by integrating theoretical insights from the literature with contextual findings from the interviews. The findings indicate that social competence among CRE teachers is manifested through relational integrity, humility, ethical responsibility, and inclusive interaction. Solidarity was understood not as a formal program but as a daily pedagogical attitude expressed through service, cooperation, and respect for others. The study concludes that social competence grounded in the spirit of solidarity articulated in Philippians 2 strengthens ethical professionalism and contributes positively to classroom climate and school culture. This research highlights the relevance of integrating biblical theology with educational theory in understanding teacher competence within pluralistic educational settings.

Keywords: Social Competence, Christian Religious Education, Spirit of Solidarity

INTRODUCTION

The role of teachers has expanded beyond academic instruction to include social responsibility, ethical modeling, and relational engagement with students. This shift reflects growing awareness that learning is deeply influenced by the quality of social interactions within the classroom. Research in educational studies consistently demonstrates that teachers' social competence, defined as the ability to communicate

effectively, demonstrate empathy, collaborate constructively, and foster respectful relationships, plays a crucial role in shaping classroom climate and students' social and moral development (Day et al., 2006; Campbell, 2017). Within Christian Religious Education (CRE), social competence acquires an additional theological dimension, as teachers are expected to embody values rooted in Christian faith and communal life. Social competence in teaching is closely related to the capacity to build trust, encourage cooperation, and manage diversity in ways that affirm the dignity of every learner. In pluralistic school environments, such competence becomes increasingly significant, as teachers must navigate differences while maintaining ethical integrity and inclusivity. Studies in moral and character education emphasize that students learn social and moral values primarily through relational modeling rather than through explicit instruction alone (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2013; Berkowitz & Bier, 2014). Consequently, the social behavior of teachers serves as a powerful medium through which values such as respect, fairness, and solidarity are internalized by students. The concept of solidarity is deeply rooted in Scripture, particularly in Philippians 2. This chapter presents a compelling vision of communal life shaped by humility, mutual concern, and self-giving love. The apostle Paul exhorts believers to be "of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind" (Philippians 2:2), grounding social unity in the example of Christ's self-emptying love (Philippians 2:5-8). Biblical scholars interpret this passage as a call to relational solidarity that prioritizes the interests of others over self-centered ambition, emphasizing humility as the foundation of authentic community (Wright, 2004; Fee, 1995). When applied to educational settings, this theological vision offers a rich framework for understanding how teachers' social competence can nurture a spirit of solidarity among students. In Christian Religious Education, teaching is not merely a professional activity but a form of moral and spiritual witness. Teachers are called to embody the values they teach, translating theological convictions into daily relational practices. Social competence informed by Philippians 2 encourages teachers to engage students with humility, patience, and mutual respect, thereby creating learning environments characterized by cooperation rather than competition. Educational research supports this approach, indicating that classrooms marked by relational trust and social cohesion contribute positively to students' emotional well-being, engagement, and moral sensitivity (Tirri & Kuusisto, 2013; Carr, 2018).

The relevance of this study becomes particularly evident in small-scale educational contexts such as SDN 178497 Sibargot, where six Christian students are guided by two Christian teachers, including CRE teachers. In such intimate settings, teachers' social interactions are highly visible and exert a strong influence on students' attitudes and behaviors. The limited number of students intensifies the relational dimension of teaching, making social competence and solidarity central to the educational experience. Within this context, the embodiment of Christian solidarity is not primarily conveyed through formal doctrine but through daily practices of care, cooperation, and mutual responsibility. Many existing studies address social competence from a general pedagogical perspective without engaging theological foundations, while theological discussions of solidarity often remain abstract and disconnected from classroom practice. By grounding the analysis in Philippians 2 and situating it within the lived realities of Christian Religious Education at SDN 178497 Sibargot, this study seeks to bridge that gap.

This research aims to examine how the social competence of Christian Religious Education teachers contributes to the cultivation of a spirit of solidarity among students. By integrating insights from international educational research and biblical theology, the study seeks to contribute to the discourse on faith-informed professionalism in education. The findings are expected to offer theoretical and practical implications for CRE teachers, highlighting the importance of social competence as an expression of Christian solidarity in everyday educational practice.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research methodology combining a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and simple semi-structured interviews. This design was selected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers and the cultivation of a spirit of solidarity, as grounded in Philippians 2. The qualitative approach is appropriate for exploring values-based educational practices and theological dimensions that are deeply embedded in teachers' lived experiences and relational interactions. The first phase of the study consisted of a Systematic Literature Review aimed at identifying and synthesizing scholarly discussions on social competence, teacher professionalism, solidarity, and Christian education. The review followed established SLR procedures, including identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and synthesis. Peer-reviewed journal articles and academic books were sourced from reputable international databases and publishers. Publications that were non-peer-reviewed, opinion-based, or lacking academic rigor were excluded. The selected literature was analyzed thematically to identify conceptual patterns linking teachers' social competence with relational solidarity and moral formation. This thematic synthesis provided the theoretical framework for interpreting the empirical data. The next phase involved simple semi-structured interviews conducted at SDN 178497 Sibargot. The research site was selected due to its distinctive context as a public elementary school with a small number of Christian students and teachers. The participants consisted of two Christian teachers, including a Christian Religious Education teacher, who were directly involved in teaching and mentoring Christian students. Given the limited number of participants, interviews were designed to be in-depth yet focused, allowing participants to articulate their experiences and perspectives clearly. The interview guide included open-ended questions related to teachers' understanding of social competence, their interpretation of solidarity based on Philippians 2, and how these values are practiced in daily classroom interactions. Questions also explored challenges encountered in fostering solidarity and strategies used to model humility, cooperation, and mutual respect among students. Interviews were conducted in a conversational manner to encourage openness and reflective responses. Data from the SLR and interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The literature review findings were first organized into key thematic categories, such as relational modeling, humility in teaching, and solidarity as educational practice. Interview transcripts were then coded inductively to identify recurring themes and patterns. The findings from both data sources were integrated to ensure triangulation, enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents an integrated discussion of findings derived from the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and semi-structured interviews conducted at SDN 178497 Sibargot. The analysis focuses on how the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers is manifested as a spirit of solidarity, interpreted through the theological framework of Philippians 2. By synthesizing international scholarly perspectives with empirical insights from the local educational context, this study provides a holistic understanding of social competence as a faith-informed pedagogical practice. Findings from both the SLR and interviews indicate that social competence among CRE teachers is primarily understood as relational integrity. Teachers described social competence not merely as effective communication skills, but as the ability to build meaningful, respectful, and caring relationships with students, colleagues, and the wider school community. This understanding aligns with international educational literature that defines social competence as the capacity to interact ethically, empathetically, and responsibly within diverse social contexts (Day et al., 2006; Campbell, 2017). Interview participants emphasized that relational integrity is especially critical in a public-school setting with a small Christian population. With only six Christian students and two Christian teachers at SDN 178497 Sibargot, teachers viewed their social interactions as a form of witness expressed through conduct rather than explicit verbal instruction. This perspective reflects the argument in moral education literature that teacher character is communicated more powerfully through relational consistency than through formal teaching alone (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2013). The SLR further supports this finding by highlighting that socially competent teachers foster trust, emotional safety, and mutual respect, which are foundational for effective learning environments. Studies in teacher professionalism consistently show that students are more receptive to learning when teachers demonstrate empathy, fairness, and relational attentiveness (Tirri & Kuusisto, 2013). In this study, social competence emerged as an ethical posture that shapes how teachers listen, respond, and engage with students, particularly those from marginalized or minority backgrounds.

A central contribution of this study lies in its integration of Philippians 2 as a theological lens for understanding social competence and solidarity. The SLR revealed that Philippians 2 is widely interpreted by biblical scholars as a foundational text on humility, unity, and self-giving love within communal life (Fee, 2011; Wright, 2004). The passage emphasizes having “the same mindset,” valuing others above oneself, and embodying the humility exemplified by Christ. Interviewed teachers resonated strongly with this theological message. They interpreted solidarity as a willingness to place students’ needs above personal convenience, to serve without seeking recognition, and to maintain unity even in challenging circumstances. Teachers described solidarity not as a programmatic initiative but as a daily attitude expressed through patience, availability, and cooperation with others. This interpretation aligns with theological scholarship that views solidarity as an ethical consequence of Christ’s self-emptying (kenosis) described in Philippians 2:5–8. When applied to education, this theological principle reframes teaching as a relational vocation rather than a position of authority. Teachers at SDN 178497 Sibargot perceived their role as facilitators of communal well-being, reflecting Christ’s humility in their

interactions. One of the most significant findings of this study is how solidarity is enacted within the specific context of a small Christian minority in a public school. Interview data revealed that teachers consciously practice inclusivity, respect, and cooperation across religious and cultural boundaries. Solidarity was expressed through collaborative relationships with non-Christian colleagues, fair treatment of all students, and sensitivity to diverse backgrounds. The SLR supports this contextual interpretation by emphasizing that solidarity in education is most authentic when it promotes social cohesion rather than exclusivity (Carr, 2018). International studies suggest that teachers who embody solidarity contribute positively to school culture by modeling ethical coexistence and mutual respect (Berkowitz & Bier, 2014). In this study, solidarity functioned as a bridge between Christian values and public educational responsibilities. Teachers emphasized that their social competence enabled them to navigate potential tensions between faith identity and institutional expectations. By embodying humility and service, they were able to maintain professional credibility while remaining faithful to Christian principles. This finding underscores the argument that faith-based values, when expressed through social competence, enhance rather than hinder professional practice in pluralistic settings.

Both the literature and interview findings highlight modeling as a key mechanism through which solidarity is transmitted in educational contexts. Teachers described how students learn solidarity not primarily through explicit instruction but through observing how teachers interact with others. Acts such as listening attentively, resolving conflicts peacefully, and showing concern for students' personal well-being were identified as powerful demonstrations of solidarity. This observation is consistent with character education research emphasizing the role of modeling in moral formation (Arthur et al., 2015). The SLR indicates that students internalize values when they see them consistently embodied by significant adults in their lives. In this study, teachers' socially competent behaviors served as implicit lessons in empathy, cooperation, and responsibility. Teachers also noted that modeling solidarity requires self-discipline and emotional maturity. Choosing patience over frustration, collaboration over competition, and service over self-interest were described as daily challenges. Philippians 2 provided a spiritual resource for sustaining these practices, reminding teachers that solidarity is rooted in Christ's example rather than personal strength.

An important theme emerging from the findings is the relationship between social competence and ethical authority. Teachers reported that their influence in the classroom did not stem from positional power but from moral credibility built through consistent relational behavior. Students were more responsive and cooperative when teachers demonstrated respect and understanding. The SLR corroborates this finding by distinguishing between coercive authority and relational authority. Educational theorists argue that ethical authority arises when teachers are perceived as just, caring, and trustworthy (Campbell, 2017). In this study, social competence enabled teachers to exercise authority in a manner consistent with the humility and servanthood emphasized in Philippians 2. This form of authority is particularly relevant in Christian Religious Education, where moral integrity is integral to instructional effectiveness. Teachers' socially competent conduct reinforced the credibility of the values they taught, creating coherence between message and practice. Although this study did not employ

quantitative measures of student outcomes, interview data suggest perceived positive effects on students' character development. Teachers observed that students became more cooperative, respectful, and empathetic when solidarity was consistently modeled. These observations align with moral education literature indicating that relational environments play a crucial role in character formation (Berkowitz & Bier, 2014). Teachers emphasized that solidarity fosters a sense of belonging, which is especially important for students in minority contexts. Feeling valued and included contributed to students' emotional security and willingness to engage in learning. The SLR supports this observation by highlighting that inclusive classroom climates enhance both academic and moral development. This finding reflects the communal vision of Philippians 2, where unity and mutual concern are central to Christian life. When teachers embody this vision, the classroom becomes a space where faith-informed values are lived rather than merely discussed. Teachers acknowledged challenges in consistently practicing solidarity. Limited resources, workload pressures, and emotional fatigue were identified as obstacles. Teachers noted that maintaining humility and patience requires intentional effort, particularly in demanding situations. The SLR recognizes these challenges, noting that ethical teaching demands ongoing reflection and institutional support (Carr, 2018). Teachers' reliance on spiritual disciplines and peer support emerged as strategies for sustaining solidarity. Philippians 2 served as a reminder that solidarity is grounded in grace rather than perfection. This acknowledgment of challenges adds depth to the findings, illustrating that social competence is a dynamic and ongoing process rather than a fixed trait. The integration of SLR and interview data reveals a strong convergence between theory and practice. Concepts identified in the literature, such as humility, relational integrity, modeling, and ethical authority, were consistently reflected in teachers' lived experiences. This convergence enhances the credibility of the findings and underscores the relevance of Philippians 2 as a framework for understanding social competence in Christian education. The study contributes to existing scholarship by demonstrating that solidarity is not an abstract theological concept but a practical dimension of teacher professionalism. Social competence functions as the means through which solidarity is enacted, shaping relationships, classroom climate, and school culture.

This study addresses a gap in the literature by explicitly integrating biblical theology with educational theory in the analysis of teacher social competence. While much research on professionalism adopts secular frameworks, this study shows that scriptural values can enrich understanding of ethical teaching practices. By grounding social competence in Philippians 2, the study offers a faith-informed perspective that complements international educational research. This integration provides a holistic view of teaching as both professional practice and spiritual vocation. The findings suggest that developing social competence should be a priority in CRE teacher education and professional development. Training programs may benefit from incorporating theological reflection on texts such as Philippians 2 alongside pedagogical skill development. The study highlights the importance of supporting teachers in minority contexts, where social competence and solidarity are essential for navigating pluralistic environments. Institutional recognition of the relational and ethical dimensions of teaching can enhance teacher well-being and effectiveness. The results demonstrate that the social competence of CRE teachers at SDN 178497 Sibargot is deeply intertwined with the spirit of solidarity as articulated in

Philippians 2. Social competence is expressed through relational integrity, humility, modeling, and ethical authority, contributing to inclusive and supportive educational environments. Solidarity emerges as a lived pedagogical practice that shapes teacher identity, student experience, and school culture. These findings affirm that social competence grounded in Christian theology offers a meaningful framework for understanding and enhancing teacher professionalism in contemporary education.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers and its relationship to the spirit of solidarity, interpreted through the theological lens of Philippians 2, within the context of SDN 178497 Sibargot. By integrating a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with simple semi-structured interviews, the research provides both theoretical grounding and contextual insight into how social competence functions as a lived expression of Christian solidarity in a public elementary school setting. The findings demonstrate that social competence among CRE teachers is not limited to interpersonal skills or communication effectiveness, but is deeply rooted in relational integrity, humility, and ethical responsibility. Teachers understood social competence as the ability to build trusting relationships, practice empathy, and maintain respectful interactions with students and colleagues. These practices reflect the core message of Philippians 2, which emphasizes unity, humility, and self-giving service as foundational to communal life. Solidarity, therefore, emerged not as an abstract theological concept but as a daily pedagogical practice shaped by Christ's example of self-emptying and mutual concern. Within the minority context of SDN 178497 Sibargot, where the number of Christian students and teachers is limited, the spirit of solidarity played a crucial role in fostering inclusivity and ethical coexistence. CRE teachers expressed their faith primarily through conduct rather than verbal assertion, demonstrating that Christian values can be authentically lived out in public education through socially competent and professionally responsible behavior. This finding reinforces the argument that faith-informed social competence strengthens, rather than conflicts with, professional standards in pluralistic educational environments. The study also highlights the importance of modeling in character formation. Teachers' socially competent behaviors, such as patience, fairness, and cooperation, were perceived as influential in shaping students' attitudes toward respect and empathy. These findings align with international research on moral and character education, which emphasizes the formative power of consistent relational modeling. This study is limited by its small sample size and reliance on interview data. Future research is encouraged to expand the scope through mixed-method designs, larger samples, and comparative studies across different school contexts. Such research may further explore the long-term impact of teacher social competence and solidarity on student development. This study affirms that the social competence of Christian Religious Education teachers, grounded in the spirit of solidarity articulated in Philippians 2, is a vital dimension of ethical and effective teaching. When social competence is shaped by humility, service, and relational commitment, it becomes a powerful expression of faith in action, contributing meaningfully to inclusive school culture, student character formation, and the holistic mission of education.

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