



Christian Religious Education Teachers as Catalysts for Student Participation: Insights from Exodus 35:29 at SMK Swasta Maduma

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers as catalysts for student participation at SMK Swasta Maduma, drawing inspiration from Exodus 35:29. The research focuses on how teachers translate the voluntary, community-oriented contributions depicted in the biblical narrative into pedagogical practice, fostering active, morally grounded, and relationally mediated engagement among 200 Christian students. A qualitative case study design was employed, utilizing semi-structured interviews with 15 Christian teachers, classroom observations, and document analysis of lesson plans and project assignments. Data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns linking teacher social competence, instructional strategies, and student participation. Findings reveal that CRE teachers foster participation through relational modeling, empathetic responsiveness, cooperative learning structures, reflective activities, and service-oriented projects. Teachers contextualize Exodus 35:29, encouraging voluntary engagement and ethical responsibility while creating psychologically safe and inclusive learning environments. Participation is influenced by teacher demonstration of fairness, collaboration, and ethical consistency, extending beyond classroom instruction to collegial interactions that reinforce a culture of communal responsibility. Challenges, such as resource limitations and variability in student readiness, are navigated through adaptive pedagogy, scaffolding, and moral framing of activities. The study concludes that CRE teachers effectively catalyze participation by integrating theological insight, social competence, and pedagogical expertise. Student engagement emerges not only as an instructional outcome but also as a form of moral formation and faith-informed practice. By operationalizing biblical principles, CRE teachers at SMK Swasta Maduma cultivate a participatory culture where learning, ethical development, and spiritual values converge, demonstrating the transformative potential of socially competent, faith-informed education.

Keywords: Catalysts, Christian Religious Education, Student Participation

INTRODUCTION

Active student participation is a hallmark of effective educational practice, particularly in faith-based instruction where moral, spiritual, and social development intersect with academic learning. Within Christian Religious Education (CRE), teachers are not merely conveyors of doctrinal knowledge but also facilitators of student engagement, community building, and value formation. In this context, fostering participation is both a pedagogical and spiritual responsibility, aligning with the broader mission of nurturing responsible, committed, and socially aware individuals. This study explores how CRE teachers at SMK Swasta Maduma serve as catalysts for student participation, drawing inspiration from the biblical narrative of Exodus 35:29, where the Israelites voluntarily contributed materials for the construction of the Tabernacle. The school hosts 200 Christian students and 15 Christian teachers, including CRE instructors, providing a unique context to examine relational dynamics and participatory culture within a faith-informed educational environment. Exodus 35:29 presents a narrative in which the community willingly offers resources to support a sacred project, demonstrating initiative, commitment, and collective responsibility. Biblical scholars highlight this passage as an example of inspired participation rooted in understanding purpose and shared mission (Waltke & Fredricks, 2001). The verse emphasizes that contributions are motivated not by coercion but by internalized values, reflecting voluntary engagement and alignment with divine objectives. For CRE teachers, this narrative offers a model for cultivating student participation: engagement that is intrinsically motivated, ethically grounded, and socially constructive (Brueggemann, 2010). By translating these principles into classroom practice, teachers can encourage students to take ownership of their learning, collaborate meaningfully, and participate actively in both academic and extracurricular activities. Pedagogical theory supports the notion that active participation enhances cognitive, social, and moral development. Vygotskian perspectives on social learning emphasize the role of interaction, dialogue, and collaborative problem-solving in knowledge construction (Vygotsky, 1978). In CRE, these approaches intersect with theological instruction: teachers guide students to interpret Scripture, reflect on ethical implications, and apply insights to community and personal life. Social constructivist strategies, such as group discussion, project-based learning, and peer teaching, align with the voluntary contributions depicted in Exodus 35:29, transforming abstract biblical principles into concrete student actions. Participation thus becomes both a learning strategy and a moral exercise. The context of SMK Swasta Maduma is particularly relevant due to its composition of 200 Christian students and 15 Christian teachers. In such an environment, relational modeling is highly visible; students observe teachers' attitudes, collaborative behavior, and commitment to faith-informed goals. Interviews and observations reveal that teacher behavior significantly influences students' willingness to engage. Social and relational competence, including empathy, fairness, and ethical consistency, mediates participation by creating a climate of trust and inclusivity (Goleman, 2006). Teachers who demonstrate active commitment and ethical integrity inspire reciprocal engagement among students, reflecting the principle exemplified in Exodus 35:29: participation is fostered through relational modeling as much as through direct instruction. Contemporary educational research emphasizes that participation is multidimensional, encompassing cognitive involvement, behavioral engagement, and affective investment

(Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). CRE teachers at SMK Swasta Maduma navigate these dimensions by integrating biblical content, school activities, and community projects. For instance, students participate in service-learning initiatives, religious celebrations, and collaborative class assignments that operationalize the concept of voluntary contribution. Teachers' role is catalytic: they structure opportunities, provide guidance, and exemplify the values underpinning participation. Research indicates that CRE classrooms often face challenges, including student passivity, limited motivation, and variability in teacher facilitation skills (Tirri & Kuusisto, 2013). Addressing these challenges requires teachers to exercise both professional competence and spiritual insight, creating environments where students understand the purpose and value of their engagement. The Exodus 35:29 narrative provides a theological lens through which participation can be framed as both an ethical duty and a spiritual response to God's calling, linking voluntary action with moral formation. The present study aims to analyze how CRE teachers at SMK Swasta Maduma act as catalysts for student participation. By examining pedagogical strategies, relational modeling, and faith-informed motivational approaches, the study seeks to demonstrate that active student engagement is not merely an educational outcome but a reflection of holistic teacher professionalism that integrates biblical insight, social competence, and ethical intentionality. Understanding this dynamic contributes to the broader discourse on faith-based education, teacher effectiveness, and the practical application of biblical narratives in contemporary school settings.

METHODS

A qualitative research design was used to examine how Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMK Swasta Maduma act as catalysts for student participation, drawing inspiration from Exodus 35:29. A qualitative approach was selected because the research aimed to explore teachers' lived experiences, instructional practices, and relational strategies in fostering student engagement, rather than to measure variables numerically. By focusing on meaning-making and contextual interpretation, this design allowed for in-depth understanding of the ways in which biblical principles are translated into participatory pedagogical practices within a faith-based school setting. The study followed a case study methodology (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), focusing on a single educational setting as a bounded system. This approach enabled detailed investigation of teacher-student interactions, classroom dynamics, and institutional culture. Emphasis was placed on understanding how CRE teachers interpret Exodus 35:29 and operationalize its values to encourage voluntary, ethical, and socially responsible student engagement. By integrating biblical exegesis with pedagogical practice, the case study design facilitated holistic analysis of the relational and instructional dimensions of participation. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure their direct involvement in CRE instruction and relevance to the research objectives. The primary participants were CRE teachers, who provided insight into instructional strategies, motivational techniques, and relational modeling. Additional perspectives were obtained from selected Christian teachers to triangulate data on student engagement and school culture. The school hosts 200 Christian students and 15 Christian teachers, including CRE instructors, providing a cohesive faith-informed environment that allows for observation of sustained relational influence and participatory patterns. In-

depth interviews were conducted with all CRE teachers and selected Christian teachers. The interviews explored teachers' understanding of student participation, strategies for motivating engagement, and application of Exodus 35:29 in classroom and school-wide activities. Interviews were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Non-participant observations were conducted during CRE lessons addressing the Exodus 35:29 narrative. Observations focused on teacher-student interaction patterns, instructional strategies that promote participation, student collaboration, and demonstrations of voluntary engagement. Field notes captured both verbal and nonverbal behaviors, highlighting instances of ethical and relational modeling. Data were coded inductively to capture emergent concepts related to teacher strategies, relational modeling, student engagement, and application of Exodus 35:29. Codes were then organized into broader themes reflecting the multidimensional nature of participation, including cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Triangulation across data sources strengthened the credibility of the findings and ensured that interpretations reflected consistent patterns of teacher practice and student response.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMK Swasta Maduma play a pivotal role as catalysts for student participation, operationalizing the principles of Exodus 35:29 in practical, pedagogically coherent, and relationally grounded ways. Analysis of semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document review reveals that participation is fostered through a complex interplay of social competence, motivational strategies, contextual application of biblical narratives, and deliberate structural interventions designed to encourage voluntary and meaningful engagement. The presence of 200 Christian students and 15 Christian teachers, including CRE instructors, provides a cohesive environment in which teacher modeling significantly shapes student behavior, attitudes, and engagement patterns. Teachers consistently emphasized that students are more likely to engage actively when they perceive their instructors as approachable, empathetic, and ethically consistent. In interviews, several CRE teachers noted that participation is not merely about responding to instructions or completing assignments but reflects a relational dynamic in which students internalize the values demonstrated by adults in authority. One teacher described that students "observe how I treat their peers with fairness, listen attentively to questions, and show respect even when correcting mistakes," highlighting the relational aspect of motivating engagement. Classroom observations corroborated these statements: teachers consistently maintained eye contact, addressed individual student contributions positively, and facilitated group discussions that required active student input. Theological reflection on Exodus 35:29, where Israelites voluntarily contributed materials for the Tabernacle, reinforced this modeling, as teachers framed participation as both a moral responsibility and a voluntary expression of faith. This suggests that social competence, as operationalized through relational modeling, functions as a critical mechanism for catalyzing student engagement. Teachers at SMK Swasta Maduma strategically employed group-based activities, peer-led projects, and cooperative problem-solving exercises to translate the voluntary generosity of the Exodus

narrative into classroom practice. Observations indicated that lessons were consistently designed to provide students with meaningful choices regarding the form and scope of participation. For instance, in a unit discussing Exodus 35:29, students were tasked with designing a collaborative “service project” for the school community, determining the roles, resources, and steps required to execute the project. Teachers facilitated without dictating, allowing students to assume ownership of decisions and outcomes. Interview responses emphasized that this approach aligns with Joseph Waltke and Fredricks’ (2001) interpretation of the text, which positions voluntary contribution as an informed and ethically motivated action. By providing structured autonomy, teachers enabled students to experience agency while maintaining ethical and theological guidance, bridging biblical narrative with contemporary pedagogical theory. Teachers explicitly connected Exodus 35:29 to broader educational goals, including civic responsibility, collaborative ethics, and communal awareness. Interviews revealed that teachers often contextualized the Tabernacle contributions within contemporary school or community scenarios, such as organizing fundraisers, preparing learning materials for under-resourced students, or planning school events collaboratively. Observations supported these accounts: in group activities, students were encouraged to identify peers’ needs, allocate tasks equitably, and engage in reflective discussion about the impact of their contributions. This integration illustrates that teacher competence extends beyond scriptural knowledge to include the capacity to translate theological principles into actionable social behavior. The pedagogical implication is that student participation is not treated as incidental or performative but is intentionally cultivated through structured tasks that reinforce the moral and communal dimensions of faith-informed learning. Teachers demonstrated sensitivity to students’ emotional readiness, motivational states, and confidence levels. For example, when some students were hesitant to contribute ideas or assume responsibilities, CRE teachers employed scaffolding techniques, provided verbal encouragement, and publicly recognized incremental contributions. One teacher highlighted that “students often start with small acts, but when they see their efforts valued, they begin to take more initiative, mirroring the voluntary spirit of the Israelites in Exodus 35:29.” Observations confirmed this pattern: students initially reluctant to speak during group discussions gradually increased their participation when teachers acknowledged their input and linked it to collective outcomes. This finding supports Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris’ (2004) conceptualization of engagement as encompassing cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions. Social competence, in this context, involves recognizing and responding to emotional cues, fostering an environment in which voluntary participation is psychologically safe, socially reinforced, and morally encouraged. CRE teachers incorporated reflective discussion, journaling exercises, and post-activity debriefs to help students internalize their experiences and connect them with biblical principles. In one observed session, students discussed how contributing to a classroom service project paralleled the Israelites’ voluntary offerings, exploring the ethical and spiritual motivations behind such actions. Teachers guided reflections by asking questions such as, “Why do you think giving freely matters?” and “How does your contribution help the community?” Interview data indicated that these reflective practices strengthened the intentionality of participation, moving it from compliance to commitment, and helped students articulate the moral and spiritual rationale for engagement. This approach aligns with Brueggemann’s (2010) assertion that

biblical narratives provide ethical exemplars that gain meaning when actively interpreted and applied. Institutional and collegial factors reinforced participation. The small but cohesive faculty of 15 Christian teachers provided a model of collaborative engagement that complemented student-focused strategies. Interviews revealed that CRE teachers coordinated lesson plans, shared best practices for fostering engagement, and jointly organized extracurricular initiatives. Observations indicated that this professional solidarity created a coherent school culture in which participation was normalized and expected. Students observed not only teacher-student interaction but also teacher-teacher collaboration, internalizing participation as a communal, relational, and morally coherent practice. Social competence, therefore, extends beyond direct classroom interaction to include modeling collaboration, ethical integrity, and shared responsibility at the institutional level. Challenges were identified that influence the extent and quality of student participation. Teachers reported that limited resources, variability in student preparedness, and occasional time constraints posed barriers. Some students exhibited initial disengagement due to external pressures, such as family obligations or limited familiarity with cooperative learning methods. Teachers addressed these challenges by differentiating tasks, providing scaffolded support, and connecting activities to meaningful biblical narratives that resonated with students' lived experiences. The ability to navigate these challenges demonstrates advanced professional competence, integrating pedagogical flexibility, relational sensitivity, and theological insight to sustain participation under diverse circumstances. The study revealed the importance of voluntary motivation as both a theological and pedagogical principle. Interviews indicated that teachers deliberately avoided coercion or excessive extrinsic incentives, emphasizing intrinsic motivation grounded in biblical ethics. Participation was framed as an expression of faith, communal responsibility, and personal moral growth, reflecting the voluntary contributions of the Israelites described in Exodus 35:29. Classroom observations confirmed that students responded positively to this approach, engaging in collaborative projects, discussions, and service-oriented activities with apparent enthusiasm and commitment. This finding underscores the alignment between scriptural modeling and pedagogical strategy: ethical motivation enhances genuine engagement and mirrors the spiritual principles inherent in the text. Students' outcomes provide evidence of the effectiveness of these strategies. Observations and teacher reports indicated that students displayed increased cooperation, initiative, and responsibility in both academic and extracurricular contexts. Group project participation, peer mentoring, and voluntary contributions to school events increased over the course of the study. Students articulated in informal discussions that they valued opportunities to contribute meaningfully, connecting their actions to both personal growth and community benefit. This demonstrates that teacher social competence not only facilitates immediate participation but also cultivates enduring attitudes of engagement, responsibility, and moral awareness. The study confirms that CRE teachers' ability to catalyze participation relies on multidimensional social competence, integrating cognitive, emotional, relational, and ethical capacities. Teachers draw on exegetical knowledge, pedagogical expertise, and relational sensitivity to create environments where students can act voluntarily, responsibly, and collaboratively. By operationalizing Exodus 35:29, teachers transform biblical narrative into actionable, contextually meaningful strategies that foster engagement, ethical reflection, and communal solidarity.

The results highlight that student participation in CRE is both a pedagogical outcome and a moral formation process. Teachers at SMK Swasta Maduma effectively leverage social competence to catalyze participation by modeling ethical behavior, structuring cooperative activities, facilitating reflective engagement, and fostering an inclusive, relationally supportive environment. Participation is thus cultivated through a combination of relational modeling, structured opportunities, reflective practice, and intrinsic motivation informed by biblical narrative. This study demonstrates that active engagement in faith-based education is not incidental; it is the product of deliberate, socially competent teaching that bridges theological insight, pedagogical design, and relational practice.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMK Swasta Maduma act as catalysts for student participation, drawing inspiration from Exodus 35:29. The findings demonstrate that student engagement is significantly influenced by teachers' social competence, which integrates relational modeling, empathetic awareness, ethical consistency, and pedagogical intentionality. CRE teachers translate biblical narratives into actionable strategies, fostering voluntary, morally grounded participation that reflects both cognitive engagement and affective investment. Teachers operationalize participation through cooperative learning structures, reflective discussions, and service-oriented projects, providing students with meaningful opportunities to contribute while reinforcing ethical and spiritual lessons. Relational modeling extends beyond teacher-student interactions to include teacher-teacher collaboration, establishing a coherent school culture in which participation is normalized, valued, and ethically framed. The voluntary and intrinsically motivated nature of participation, emphasized in Exodus 35:29, emerges as a key principle guiding teacher practice and student response. The study further highlights that effective participation requires navigating contextual challenges, such as limited resources or varying student preparedness. CRE teachers demonstrate professional competence by adapting strategies, scaffolding engagement, and linking activities to students' lived experiences, ensuring participation is both inclusive and meaningful. Observed outcomes indicate that students develop cooperation, responsibility, initiative, and moral awareness, illustrating the practical impact of socially competent, faith-informed teaching. CRE teachers at SMK Swasta Maduma exemplify the role of educators as catalysts for participation, translating theological insight into relational, pedagogical, and ethical practice. Student engagement is not merely an instructional objective but a manifestation of moral formation, communal responsibility, and faith-informed professionalism. By integrating biblical principles, social competence, and pedagogical strategy, these teachers create an educational environment in which participation is active, voluntary, and transformative.

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