



Managing Social Relationships in Christian Education: Insights from Exodus 26:30 in the Context of SD Swasta Sola Fide School Medan

Suparjo Hariono Lumban Gaol

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: lumbangaolsuparjo@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examines the importance of managing social relationships in Christian education through theological reflection on Exodus 26:30 and its pedagogical implications within the context of SD Swasta Sola Fide School Medan. The research aims to explore how relational competence among Christian Religious Education teachers contributes to the creation of harmonious learning environments that support both academic engagement and character formation. Using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, this study synthesizes relevant scholarly works on teacher relational skills, classroom social dynamics, and faith-integrated educational practices. The review process involved identifying, screening, and analyzing peer-reviewed sources published between 2005 and 2024 to construct a conceptual understanding of relational management grounded in biblical principles. The findings indicate that effective management of social relationships is closely linked to communication clarity, emotional regulation, and value-based interaction. Teachers who intentionally model respect, empathy, and cooperation foster classroom environments characterized by trust and collaboration. The symbolic insight of Exodus 26:30 highlights the importance of intentional structure, suggesting that social harmony in educational communities requires purposeful relational design. In this framework, teachers act as relational leaders who guide interaction through consistent modeling and structured engagement. Furthermore, the literature reveals that restorative approaches to conflict and authentic value integration strengthen social cohesion and support moral development among students. This study concludes that relational competence is a vital component of professional practice in Christian education. By integrating theological reflection with pedagogical strategies, teachers can cultivate learning environments that reflect both academic excellence and spiritual values. The findings offer practical insights for faith-based schools seeking to enhance social harmony and holistic student development.

Keywords: *Christian education, social relationship management, teacher competence*

INTRODUCTION

The role of teachers in Christian Religious Education extends beyond cognitive instruction into the formation of students' character, values, and social attitudes (Groome, 2011; Knight, 2006). In this context, the ability of teachers to manage social relationships becomes a crucial professional and spiritual competency, particularly within learning environments that emphasize faith-based values (Lickona, 2012). Christian education is inherently relational, rooted in love, community, mutual respect, and harmony as reflected in biblical teachings (Van Brummelen, 2009). One theological reflection that offers a meaningful framework for relational order is Exodus 26:30, which emphasizes the importance of structure and intentional arrangement according to divine instruction (Wenham, 2003). Although the text primarily refers to the construction of the Tabernacle, its underlying principle highlights the necessity of order, intentionality, and harmony in communal life (Goldingay, 2014). Applied within educational settings, this scriptural insight suggests that social relationships, like sacred structures, require thoughtful management to function effectively and meaningfully (Van Brummelen, 2009). In schools where Christian values guide both academic and moral formation, teachers are expected not only to deliver knowledge but also to cultivate environments where respect, cooperation, empathy, and constructive interaction can flourish (Lickona, 2012). The modern classroom presents increasing social complexity due to diverse student backgrounds, varying personalities, and the influence of contemporary digital culture on interpersonal behavior (Darling-Hammond, 2017). These dynamics often lead to misunderstandings, conflicts, or disengagement if not carefully guided (Marzano, 2007). Therefore, the teacher's relational competence plays a significant role in shaping a positive social climate that supports both spiritual growth and academic engagement (Hattie, 2009). Relational management is not merely a pedagogical strategy but a reflection of lived theology, demonstrating principles such as unity, mutual edification, and stewardship of community life (Groome, 2011). Teachers who are skilled in managing relationships are able to foster trust, mediate conflicts constructively, encourage collaboration, and model Christ-like interaction patterns (Knight, 2006). These practices help students internalize values that extend beyond the classroom into their broader social lives (Lickona, 2012). Within the specific setting of SD Swasta Sola Fide School Medan, the integration of faith and learning forms the foundation of educational practice. As a Christian-based institution, the school seeks to nurture not only intellectual competence but also social maturity grounded in biblical principles (Van Brummelen, 2009). However, achieving this holistic vision requires teachers who are equipped to manage social relationships intentionally and effectively (Hattie, 2009). Classroom interactions, peer dynamics, teacher-student communication, and collaborative learning processes all demand relational sensitivity and leadership (Marzano, 2007). When teachers are unable to navigate these dynamics, the learning environment may become fragmented, limiting both academic outcomes and character formation (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Conversely, when social relationships are guided by principles of structure, mutual respect, and purposeful interaction, as symbolically reflected in Exodus 26:30 (Wenham, 2003), the classroom becomes a space of harmony that supports meaningful learning experiences. Yet, the success of faith-based education depends heavily on the quality of social interactions within the school community (Groome, 2011).

Students learn not only from what is taught but also from how relationships are modeled and sustained (Bandura, 1986). Teachers who embody relational wisdom demonstrate how faith informs daily interaction, conflict resolution, and cooperation (Knight, 2006). In doing so, they transform biblical principles into lived experiences that students can observe and emulate (Van Brummelen, 2009). The metaphor of structured sacred space in Exodus 26:30 provides a theological lens through which relational order can be understood as essential rather than optional (Goldingay, 2014). Just as the Tabernacle required precise arrangement to reflect divine presence, the classroom requires intentional relational management to reflect Christian values in practice (Wenham, 2003). This study therefore seeks to explore how Christian Religious Education teachers manage social relationships within their instructional context and how insights drawn from Exodus 26:30 can illuminate this process. By examining relational practices within a real educational environment, this research aims to bridge biblical reflection with pedagogical application (Groome, 2011). Understanding how teachers cultivate harmonious interaction patterns can contribute to the broader discourse on faith-integrated education and teacher professionalism (Hattie, 2009). Ultimately, the ability to manage social relationships effectively is not only a functional skill but also a spiritual calling that shapes the moral and communal fabric of Christian schooling (Knight, 2006).

METHODS

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method to examine how social relationship management skills among Christian Religious Education teachers can be understood through theological reflection on Exodus 26:30 and applied within faith-based educational settings such as SD Swasta Sola Fide School Medan. The SLR approach was selected to ensure a structured, transparent, and comprehensive synthesis of relevant scholarly works (Snyder, 2019). Rather than relying on a single empirical observation, this method enables the integration of findings from multiple studies to generate a more robust conceptual understanding of relational management in Christian education (Xiao & Watson, 2019). The review process followed several systematic stages: identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and synthesis (Snyder, 2019). In the identification stage, relevant literature was collected from academic databases, was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and conference proceedings published between 2005 and 2024 in order to capture contemporary perspectives while maintaining scholarly credibility (Xiao & Watson, 2019). During the screening phase, duplicated and irrelevant studies were removed based on title and abstract review. Inclusion criteria were established to ensure the relevance and quality of selected literature (Snyder, 2019). The studies had to: discuss teacher relational competence or social interaction in educational settings; relate to Christian or values-based education; address classroom social dynamics, collaboration, or conflict management; and provide theoretical or empirical insights applicable to primary education contexts. Studies that focused solely on cognitive achievement without addressing relational or social dimensions were excluded (Marzano, 2007). This process resulted in a refined pool of literature that directly supported the study's conceptual focus. In the eligibility stage, full-text analysis was conducted to evaluate methodological rigor, theoretical relevance, and contextual applicability (Xiao & Watson, 2019). Particular attention was given to literature that emphasized the integration of moral or spiritual values in managing classroom relationships (Lickona, 2012). The selected sources were

then analyzed thematically using qualitative content analysis techniques (Snyder, 2019). Key themes identified included relational leadership, social harmony in learning environments, values-based interaction, and the role of faith-informed principles in guiding social conduct. The synthesis stage involved integrating these themes to construct a conceptual framework that aligns biblical insight from Exodus 26:30 with contemporary educational theory (Groome, 2011). The systematic approach ensured that conclusions were grounded in credible scholarship rather than subjective interpretation. Through this method, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of how structured relational management, reflecting principles of order and intentionality, can inform teaching practices in Christian educational institutions (Van Brummelen, 2009).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The systematic literature review conducted in this study reveals that managing social relationships is not merely a complementary skill in Christian education but a central dimension of effective teaching practice (Hattie, 2009). Across the reviewed sources, one consistent finding is that relational competence significantly influences classroom climate, student engagement, and the internalization of moral values (Marzano, 2007). Within faith-based institutions such as SD Swasta Sola Fide School Medan, the management of social interaction takes on an added theological dimension (Groome, 2011). Teachers are expected not only to facilitate cooperation and mutual respect but also to embody and transmit Christian virtues through relational behavior (Knight, 2006). The findings from the literature indicate that social relationships in the classroom are shaped by three major components: communication patterns, emotional regulation, and value-based interaction (Hattie, 2009). Teachers who demonstrate clarity in communication tend to establish trust more effectively, reducing the likelihood of misunderstanding among students (Marzano, 2007). In Christian education, such communication is often framed within the language of compassion, encouragement, and constructive correction (Lickona, 2012). Emotional regulation, meanwhile, enables teachers to respond to conflict in ways that maintain dignity and harmony (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Rather than reacting impulsively, relationally competent teachers guide students toward reconciliation and understanding (Knight, 2006). The third component, value-based interaction, distinguishes Christian education from secular relational models, as social management is informed by ethical commitments such as love, humility, justice, and mutual responsibility (Van Brummelen, 2009).

Exodus 26:30 provides an interpretive lens for understanding relational order. Although the passage refers to the structural arrangement of the Tabernacle, scholars often highlight its broader implication regarding intentional design within communal life (Wenham, 2003; Goldingay, 2014). Just as sacred space required alignment with divine instruction, social interaction within a learning community benefits from purposeful structure (Groome, 2011). The reviewed studies consistently show that classrooms characterized by relational clarity experience fewer behavioral disruptions and greater collaborative participation (Marzano, 2007). One key theme emerging from the literature is the importance of relational leadership. Teachers function as social architects who shape the tone of interaction through modeling behavior (Bandura, 1986). In primary education settings, students are particularly responsive to observed conduct. When

teachers demonstrate fairness, patience, and inclusivity, students are more likely to emulate these traits in peer relationships (Lickona, 2012). This modeling effect aligns with the concept of the "hidden curriculum," in which students learn social norms implicitly through observation (Hattie, 2009). In Christian education, this process is amplified by the expectation that teachers reflect Christ-like attitudes (Knight, 2006). The literature suggests that relational leadership contributes to the development of empathy and social responsibility among learners (Van Brummelen, 2009). Another recurring theme is the role of structured interaction. Cooperative learning strategies, peer mentoring, and group reflection activities are frequently cited as mechanisms that enhance relational cohesion (Marzano, 2007). However, these strategies are effective only when guided by intentional relational norms (Hattie, 2009). Without such guidance, group activities may reinforce exclusion or dominance patterns. Studies emphasize that structured interaction must be accompanied by clear expectations regarding respect, listening, and shared responsibility (Darling-Hammond, 2017). This insight resonates with the symbolic message of Exodus 26:30, where order is not restrictive but enabling, it creates conditions for harmony and purpose (Wenham, 2003).

Conflict management also emerges as a significant aspect of relational competence. Classrooms inevitably encounter disagreements arising from differences in personality, ability, or perspective (Marzano, 2007). Effective teachers address these tensions constructively, transforming conflict into opportunities for moral growth (Lickona, 2012). The literature highlights restorative approaches that prioritize dialogue and mutual understanding over punitive measures (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Within Christian contexts, such approaches are often framed through reconciliation narratives that encourage forgiveness and accountability (Groome, 2011). The integration of faith and relational practice is another major finding. Christian education does not treat social harmony as a purely functional goal but as an expression of spiritual formation (Van Brummelen, 2009). Teachers who integrate biblical values into daily interaction create environments where students perceive moral principles as lived realities rather than abstract doctrines (Knight, 2006). This integration fosters authenticity, which in turn strengthens relational trust (Hattie, 2009). The literature indicates that authenticity is a key predictor of student respect and cooperation (Bandura, 1986). The literature also underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity in relational management. Contemporary classrooms often include students from diverse backgrounds, each bringing unique social expectations (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Teachers who acknowledge and adapt to these differences enhance inclusivity and reduce social fragmentation (Marzano, 2007). In faith-based settings, inclusivity is framed not merely as tolerance but as recognition of shared dignity grounded in theological anthropology (Van Brummelen, 2009). It becomes evident that managing social relationships requires both technical skill and moral intentionality (Hattie, 2009). Teachers must navigate communication, emotion, and value systems simultaneously (Marzano, 2007). The symbolic insight of Exodus 26:30 reinforces the necessity of deliberate relational design (Wenham, 2003). Order, in this sense, is not imposed control but purposeful arrangement that enables community life (Goldingay, 2014). The literature suggests that when teachers cultivate structured, compassionate, and value-driven relationships, classrooms become spaces of mutual growth (Lickona, 2012). Students not only achieve academically but also develop social maturity grounded in ethical awareness (Knight, 2006). For institutions like

SD Swasta Sola Fide School Medan, such outcomes align closely with the mission of holistic education (Van Brummelen, 2009). Relational management thus emerges as a foundational element in the realization of Christian educational goals, bridging theological insight with everyday practice (Groome, 2011).

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore how the management of social relationships in Christian education can be understood through theological reflection on Exodus 26:30 and informed by contemporary educational literature. Based on the findings of the systematic literature review, it can be concluded that relational competence is not an optional supplement to teaching effectiveness but a foundational dimension of professional practice in faith-based educational environments. Within the context of SD Swasta Sola Fide School Medan, the ability of Christian Religious Education teachers to intentionally guide social interaction plays a crucial role in shaping both the academic atmosphere and the moral development of students. The synthesis of the reviewed literature demonstrates that effective relational management involves the integration of communication clarity, emotional regulation, and value-based interaction. Teachers who communicate with empathy, respond to conflict constructively, and model respect establish classroom environments characterized by trust and cooperation. These relational conditions enable students to participate more actively in collaborative learning and to internalize social values that support harmonious interaction. In Christian education, such practices are deeply aligned with spiritual formation, as students learn not only through instruction but also through lived relational experiences.

The theological insight drawn from Exodus 26:30 contributes a meaningful conceptual framework for understanding the importance of intentional relational structure. The passage's emphasis on ordered construction reflects a broader principle that community life flourishes when guided by purposeful design. Applied to educational settings, this principle suggests that social relationships must be cultivated deliberately rather than left to develop spontaneously. Teachers function as relational leaders who shape the tone of interaction through consistent modeling and structured engagement. When relational norms are clearly defined and grounded in ethical values, the classroom becomes a space where diversity can coexist with unity. The review highlights that relational competence supports conflict transformation rather than mere conflict avoidance. By addressing disagreements through dialogue and restorative practices, teachers foster a culture of reconciliation and accountability. Such approaches resonate strongly with Christian values, reinforcing the idea that social harmony is not the absence of tension but the presence of understanding and mutual respect. In this way, relational management contributes directly to character formation, equipping students with skills that extend beyond academic achievement into lifelong social participation. The findings also underscore the significance of authenticity in faith-integrated teaching. Students are more likely to respond positively to relational guidance when teachers embody the values they promote. This authenticity strengthens trust and enhances the credibility of moral instruction. As a result, relational management becomes a lived expression of faith rather than a purely technical strategy. Managing social relationships in Christian education requires a balance of pedagogical expertise and moral intentionality. The integration of

biblical insight with educational practice offers a holistic framework that supports both community harmony and personal growth. For schools committed to nurturing students intellectually and spiritually, the development of teacher relational competence represents a strategic priority. By fostering structured, compassionate, and value-driven interactions, Christian educators create environments where learning and character formation unfold together. Such environments reflect not only effective teaching practice but also the deeper mission of faith-based education to cultivate communities grounded in mutual respect and purposeful unity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, T. (2009). *The theory and practice of online learning* (2nd ed.). Athabasca University Press.
- Banks, J. A. (2015). *Cultural diversity and education: Foundations, curriculum, and teaching* (6th ed.). Routledge.
- Berkovich, I., & Eyal, O. (2017). Emotional leadership in education: A review of recent research. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 45(4), 1–16.
- Bryk, A. S., & Schneider, B. (2002). *Trust in schools: A core resource for improvement*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Charry, E. T. (2010). *By the renewing of your minds: The pastoral function of Christian doctrine*. Oxford University Press.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniversary ed.). Continuum.
- Hargreaves, A. (2001). Emotional geographies of teaching. *Teachers College Record*, 103(6), 1056–1080.
- Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2009). The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence in relation to student and classroom outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(1), 491–525.
- Knight, G. R. (2006). *Philosophy and education: An introduction in Christian perspective* (4th ed.). Andrews University Press.
- MacIntyre, A. (2007). *After virtue: A study in moral theory* (3rd ed.). University of Notre Dame Press.
- Parker, S. (2014). *Theorizing biblical interpretation*. Wipf & Stock.
- Slavin, R. E. (2018). *Educational psychology: Theory and practice* (12th ed.). Pearson.

Van Brummelen, H. (2009). *Walking with God in the classroom: Christian approaches to teaching and learning* (3rd ed.). Purposeful Design Publications.

Wentzel, K. R. (2010). Students' relationships with teachers as motivational contexts. In T. C. Urdan & S. A. Karabenick (Eds.), *Advances in motivation and achievement* (Vol. 16A, pp. 69–91). Emerald Group Publishing.

Wright, N. T. (2012). *How God became king: The forgotten story of the Gospels*. HarperOne.