



Social Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers and the Spirit of Fellowship: An Exegetical Study of Philippians 1:3-8 at SDN Buntut Bali

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers and its role in fostering the spirit of fellowship among students at SDN Buntut Bali. Drawing on Philippians 1:3-8 as a theological framework, the research investigates how CRE teachers translate scriptural principles into practical strategies that cultivate relational harmony, trust, and cooperative engagement in the classroom. Utilizing a qualitative approach, data were collected through systematic literature review and semi-structured interviews with nine Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher, within a student population of 61 Christian learners. The findings reveal that social competence extends beyond interpersonal skills to encompass ethical authority, emotional sensitivity, and intentional structuring of social interactions. Teachers were observed to model gratitude, encouragement, and collaboration, thereby creating environments in which students internalize communal values and experience Christian fellowship in tangible ways. The study also highlights the importance of aligning pedagogical practices with spiritual reflection, demonstrating that faith-informed relational management enhances both student development and teacher professionalism. By integrating biblical insight with contemporary educational theory, this research contributes to understanding how social competence functions as a multidimensional and spiritually grounded competency in faith-based education. The results underscore that the cultivation of fellowship through socially competent teaching not only supports academic and moral development but also strengthens the formation of socially responsible, ethically aware, and spiritually mature students. These findings provide implications for teacher training, professional development, and the design of relationally oriented educational programs in Christian schooling contexts.

Keywords: *Social Competence, Christian Religious Education, Spirit of Fellowship*

INTRODUCTION

Social competence has emerged as a critical dimension of effective teaching in contemporary educational contexts. Beyond delivering subject knowledge, teachers are expected to cultivate relational skills, ethical integrity, and collaborative engagement, shaping the social and moral development of students (Day, 2004; Campbell, 2017). For Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers, social competence extends into the spiritual domain, integrating pedagogical expertise with the lived expression of faith. Within faith-based instruction, the ability to foster meaningful relationships, mediate conflicts, and encourage cooperative participation is inseparable from theological reflection and moral modeling. At SDN Buntut Bali, where 61 Christian students are guided by 9 Christian teachers, including CRE educators, social competence carries particular significance. As a minority community within the broader public school setting, Christian students rely heavily on the relational and ethical modeling of their teachers. The teachers' social interactions not only facilitate learning but also exemplify the principles of Christian fellowship, underscoring the inseparability of professional competence and spiritual formation (Tirri & Kuusisto, 2013). Scholarly literature emphasizes that social competence in education encompasses communication effectiveness, empathy, conflict resolution, and collaborative leadership (Berkowitz & Bier, 2014; Arthur, Kristjánsson, & Walker, 2015). In faith-based contexts, these competencies are further informed by ethical and theological frameworks that provide guidance for relational conduct. Philippians 1:3-8 offers a compelling scriptural basis for understanding social competence as an expression of spiritual fellowship. Paul's letter underscores gratitude, mutual care, and the sustaining power of shared faith as central to community life. The Apostle writes, "I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now" (Phil. 1:3-5, NIV). This passage highlights relational continuity, shared purpose, and affective engagement as hallmarks of authentic fellowship, principles directly applicable to teacher-student and teacher-colleague interactions. Exegetical studies note that Paul's emphasis on partnership (*koinonia*) extends beyond mere cooperation; it embodies mutual commitment, emotional investment, and sustained relational fidelity (Hawthorne, Martin, & Reid, 2004). For CRE teachers, this theological insight provides a blueprint for professional practice: social competence is realized not only through procedural strategies but through the cultivation of a relational ethos that mirrors Christ-like fellowship (Fee, 1995). By modeling gratitude, mutual care, and relational attentiveness, teachers enact a pedagogy that integrates ethical behavior, spiritual formation, and social cohesion. The contemporary classroom presents increasing relational complexity. Students come with diverse backgrounds, varying social-emotional needs, and differing levels of engagement. The modern educational environment requires teachers to navigate these dynamics skillfully, balancing authority with empathy, guidance with encouragement, and structure with relational flexibility (Day et al., 2006). In such contexts, the spiritual insights of Philippians 1:3-8 reinforce the importance of maintaining relational integrity, fostering trust, and sustaining a collaborative spirit.

In minority settings, relational competence assumes additional weight. Teachers' actions are highly visible, and their modeling of fellowship shapes the broader school culture.

Social competence, therefore, is both a functional skill and a spiritual calling, where pedagogical efficacy is inseparable from moral and theological intentionality (Campbell, 2017). Through deliberate relational engagement, CRE teachers demonstrate the lived reality of Christian fellowship, teaching students through both word and example. This study aims to explore how CRE teachers at SDN Buntut Bali cultivate social competence within the framework of Philippians 1:3-8. It investigates the integration of exegetical insights with classroom practice, examining the strategies, relational behaviors, and spiritual grounding that enable teachers to foster a sense of community, ethical responsibility, and cooperative learning. By focusing on both professional skill and theological reflection, the study contributes to the understanding of social competence as a multidimensional construct that bridges educational theory, pedagogy, and faith-informed practice.

METHODS

A qualitative research design was implemented to explore how Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SDN Buntut Bali cultivate social competence within the theological framework of Philippians 1:3-8. A qualitative approach was selected because it allows for in-depth understanding of complex relational phenomena, capturing both the pedagogical practices and the spiritual intentionality that underpin teacher behavior in faith-based educational settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research focused on 9 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher, who are responsible for guiding 61 Christian students within a broader public school context. The relatively small and context-specific population facilitated detailed exploration of relational practices, ethical modeling, and the embodiment of fellowship principles. Data collection involved three complementary methods: semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participating CRE teachers to explore their perceptions of social competence, strategies for fostering fellowship, and the integration of Philippians 1:3-8 into daily teaching practice. Open-ended questions allowed participants to articulate experiences, reflect on challenges, and provide examples of relational interactions that demonstrate the spirit of unity and partnership described in the Pauline text (Patton, 2015). Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was audio-recorded with participant consent. Classroom observations were conducted over a four-week period to capture teachers' enacted social competence in real-time. Observational protocols focused on teacher-student interactions, collaborative learning activities, conflict resolution strategies, and modeling of ethical and relational behaviors. Attention was given to both verbal and non-verbal cues, such as tone, gestures, and relational responsiveness, providing a holistic view of teachers' social practices (Spradley, 1980). Observations were complemented by field notes that documented contextual factors, student engagement patterns, and examples of teacher-led fellowship practices. Data analysis followed thematic procedures, beginning with open coding to identify recurring concepts related to social competence, relational strategies, and spiritual intentionality. Axial coding was then used to organize these concepts into broader themes, such as modeling of fellowship, conflict mediation, cooperative learning facilitation, and faith-informed ethical guidance. The final step involved selective coding, integrating the emergent themes with exegetical insights from Philippians 1:3–8 to

construct a conceptual framework linking theological reflection with practical social competence. Trustworthiness of the study was ensured through triangulation of multiple data sources, member checking with participants to validate interpretations, and detailed documentation of methodological procedures (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent, maintaining participant confidentiality, and ensuring that reporting emphasized collective patterns rather than identifiable individual behaviors. This methodological approach enabled the research to capture both the observable and reflective dimensions of social competence, highlighting how CRE teachers at SDN Buntut Bali operationalize the spirit of fellowship in ways that integrate pedagogy, relational skill, and theological intentionality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a multidimensional relationship between Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers' social competence and the cultivation of fellowship among students at SDN Buntut Bali. Data collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis show that social competence extends beyond basic interpersonal skill; it encompasses ethical modeling, relational sensitivity, conflict mediation, cooperative facilitation, and the deliberate integration of theological principles derived from Philippians 1:3-8. The thematic analysis identified several interrelated dimensions of social competence as enacted by the 9 CRE teachers in this school, demonstrating how pedagogical practice and spiritual intentionality converge in fostering the spirit of fellowship. Relational modeling emerged as a core mechanism through which teachers impart social competence to students. Interviews revealed that teachers consciously embody patience, respect, and empathy, reflecting the spirit of mutual care described by Paul in Philippians 1:3-8 (Fee, 1995). One teacher noted that greeting students warmly at the beginning of class, acknowledging individual efforts, and providing equitable attention regardless of prior performance were deliberate strategies to demonstrate fellowship in action. Classroom observations confirmed these practices: students responded positively to such engagement, exhibiting increased willingness to collaborate and support peers in joint tasks. Research on moral and character education emphasizes that children internalize social values most effectively through observed behavior rather than abstract instruction (Berkowitz & Bier, 2014; Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2013), a finding strongly mirrored in this study. CRE teachers at SDN Buntut Bali serve as living exemplars of relational virtues, translating biblical exhortations into tangible behaviors that students can emulate. The next theme centers on cooperative learning facilitation. Teachers intentionally structured group activities to encourage participation, shared responsibility, and peer mentoring. In observed science and language classes, students were assigned rotating leadership roles, requiring them to communicate expectations, manage group dynamics, and support one another in completing tasks. Teachers emphasized that such structures were guided not merely by pedagogical best practices but by the theological principle of partnership articulated in Philippians 1:5, which speaks of "partnership in the gospel" as a model for mutual accountability and encouragement. By fostering interdependence rather than competition, teachers created an environment where students experienced firsthand the value of communal effort. Literature on collaborative learning confirms that well-facilitated group work enhances

both social competence and academic engagement, especially when guided by clear norms and ethical expectations (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 2013). In the context of SDN Buntut Bali, the integration of faith-based reflection reinforced these outcomes, linking cooperative behavior to spiritual and moral purpose. Conflict mediation was another dimension highlighted in both interviews and observations. Teachers reported frequent situations in which disagreements arose due to differences in temperament, skill level, or resource access among the 61 Christian students. Instead of imposing unilateral solutions, teachers employed strategies that promoted dialogue, empathy, and accountability, drawing explicitly on the Pauline exhortation to “be of the same mind” (Phil. 2:2) as a guiding framework. Observations revealed that teachers facilitated restorative conversations, encouraged students to articulate their perspectives, and modeled respectful negotiation. These interventions not only resolved immediate conflicts but also cultivated students’ capacity to manage future interpersonal challenges independently. This aligns with the broader pedagogical literature, which asserts that teacher-led mediation, when framed within ethical and relational principles, strengthens social-emotional competence and peer cohesion (Gottman, 1997; Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012).

A critical finding concerns the deliberate integration of biblical reflection into classroom interactions. Teachers frequently referred to Philippians 1:3-8 during lessons, morning devotionals, and group reflections to underscore principles of gratitude, encouragement, and partnership. For example, one teacher highlighted that praising students for supporting peers in group tasks was framed as a form of fellowship aligned with Paul’s expression of gratitude for shared ministry. Document analysis of lesson plans and devotional guides corroborated this practice, showing systematic inclusion of scripture-based reflection on relational conduct. This approach demonstrates how social competence in Christian education is not merely functional but theological: ethical behavior is framed as an expression of discipleship and community stewardship (Tirri & Kuusisto, 2013). Emotional intelligence and relational sensitivity were also central to social competence as practiced at SDN Buntut Bali. Teachers demonstrated awareness of students’ emotional states, learning preferences, and social challenges. During observations, a teacher adjusted a group assignment to accommodate a student experiencing anxiety, encouraging peer support while maintaining equitable task distribution. Interviews revealed that such adaptations were consciously guided by the principle of “being of the same mind” (Phil. 2:2), highlighting relational attunement as a spiritual and pedagogical imperative. Research in educational psychology supports the notion that teacher sensitivity to student emotions promotes trust, engagement, and social maturity (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). In this context, the CRE teachers’ relational awareness is inseparable from their vocational identity, reflecting both pedagogical expertise and faith-informed moral responsibility. The study also identified the cultivation of ethical authority as a mechanism supporting social competence. Teachers reported that their influence depended not on positional power but on consistent demonstration of fairness, integrity, and moral commitment. Observed classrooms confirmed that students respected teachers who consistently applied relational norms, mediated conflicts equitably, and acknowledged student contributions sincerely. By modeling integrity and fostering trust, teachers reinforced the message of Philippians 1:6,

emphasizing perseverance in the shared mission of community formation. Educational research underscores that ethical authority enhances both classroom management and social-emotional learning outcomes, highlighting the interplay between moral credibility and relational competence (Campbell, 2017).

A sense of belonging emerged as an outcome of teachers' social competence. Students reported feeling valued and supported, which fostered both engagement and willingness to participate in collaborative activities. Teachers highlighted that cultivating fellowship contributed to a cohesive classroom culture where students were motivated to contribute positively, support peers, and internalize communal values. Observations indicated that students who previously exhibited reticence became more active participants when relational norms emphasized encouragement and mutual care. This finding aligns with studies demonstrating that inclusive and relationally competent classrooms promote prosocial behavior and reinforce moral and ethical development (Berkowitz & Bier, 2014; Day et al., 2006). The integration of faith and relational practice was a consistent theme. Social competence was framed not simply as an interpersonal skill but as a spiritual discipline, where collaboration, empathy, and encouragement were expressions of Christian discipleship. Teachers consciously reflected on scripture to guide daily interactions, translating Pauline exhortations into concrete pedagogical strategies. This dual emphasis, pedagogical and theological, distinguishes CRE instruction from secular models of social competence, providing students with an embodied vision of relational living that is both ethical and faith-informed. Lesson plans demonstrated deliberate sequencing of activities that combined academic objectives with relational goals. For example, group projects were paired with guided reflections on teamwork, mutual encouragement, and scriptural principles. School activity reports highlighted peer mentoring initiatives, cooperative competitions, and recognition of student acts of service, confirming that social competence and fellowship were embedded across curricular and extracurricular domains. This structural integration mirrors the theological insight of Philippians 1:3-8, emphasizing consistent gratitude, encouragement, and partnership as foundational to relational health. Teachers reported time constraints, varying student motivation, and occasional conflicts that tested relational management skills. However, reliance on Pauline reflection provided a framework for perseverance: understanding contentment, patience, and mutual encouragement as spiritual practices allowed teachers to navigate these challenges with resilience. Interviews indicated that teachers viewed setbacks as opportunities to model problem-solving, ethical decision-making, and spiritual grounding for students. The study highlights that social competence among CRE teachers operates at multiple levels: individual, interpersonal, and institutional. At the individual level, teachers cultivate personal moral and relational awareness informed by faith. At the interpersonal level, they facilitate cooperative learning, mediate conflicts, and model ethical behavior. At the institutional level, school policies, devotional routines, and structured activities provide scaffolding that supports relational norms and the spirit of fellowship. This multilayered approach demonstrates that social competence is a holistic construct encompassing skill, character, and vocation. The findings indicate that social competence in CRE teaching is inseparable from the spirit of fellowship articulated in Philippians 1:3-8. Teachers at SDN Buntut Bali operationalize this competence through relational modeling, cooperative facilitation,

conflict mediation, emotional sensitivity, and integration of theological reflection. Their practices foster a classroom culture characterized by trust, mutual respect, and collective engagement, promoting both moral formation and academic participation. These results underscore the argument that social competence in Christian education is simultaneously pedagogical, ethical, and theological, providing a framework for cultivating students' social maturity and a lived experience of Christian community. The study contributes to understanding how scripture can inform professional practice, demonstrating that the Spirit-inspired cultivation of relational skill is central to effective and faith-grounded education.

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SDN Buntut Bali is both a pedagogical skill and a spiritual practice, deeply intertwined with the cultivation of the spirit of fellowship as articulated in Philippians 1:3-8. Through relational modeling, cooperative learning facilitation, conflict mediation, and the integration of scriptural reflection into daily classroom interactions, teachers actively foster an environment characterized by trust, mutual respect, and collective engagement. The research findings indicate that social competence extends beyond mere interpersonal skill; it encompasses ethical authority, emotional sensitivity, intentional structuring of interaction, and the ability to guide students in embodying communal values. Teachers at SDN Buntut Bali consciously translate biblical principles into practical strategies, allowing students to experience and internalize the theological concept of fellowship in tangible ways. By emphasizing gratitude, encouragement, and partnership, CRE teachers enable students to develop prosocial behaviors, interpersonal skills, and moral discernment within a faith-informed framework. The study highlights that social competence operates on multiple levels, individual, interpersonal, and institutional, demonstrating that effective relational practice requires personal moral integrity, deliberate classroom facilitation, and structural support through school programs and activities. The findings suggest that integrating theological reflection with pedagogical strategies strengthens both teacher effectiveness and student development, particularly in contexts where Christian education seeks to nurture moral, social, and spiritual growth. Ultimately, the study underscores that social competence is not an optional or peripheral component of CRE teaching but a core dimension of professional and spiritual identity. By embodying and cultivating the spirit of fellowship, CRE teachers at SDN Buntut Bali provide students with a lived experience of Christian community, equipping them with relational skills and moral dispositions that extend beyond the classroom into broader social contexts. Social competence, informed by the theological principles of Philippians 1:3-8, emerges as a foundational aspect of effective Christian education. It demonstrates that teachers' ability to nurture relational harmony, guide cooperative engagement, and model ethical behavior is essential for fostering spiritually grounded, socially responsible, and morally mature students.

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