



Hospitality in Action Exploring the Social Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers through Genesis 18:3-5 at SMP Negeri Satu Atap 3 Tewah

Endang Estarina

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: eestarina3@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examines hospitality as an expression of social competence among Christian teachers at SMP Negeri Satu Atap 3 Tewah, drawing theological insight from Genesis 18:3-5. Using a qualitative approach, the research involved ten Christian teachers selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and reflective documentation, and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that hospitality is practiced through relational awareness, inclusive engagement, emotional support, proactive service, and the modeling of Christian values. Teachers who intentionally welcomed students, listened empathetically, and ensured equitable participation fostered classroom environments characterized by trust, openness, and collaboration. These hospitable practices strengthened teacher-student relationships and enhanced students' willingness to engage in learning. The study also found that hospitality was understood not merely as professional courtesy but as a theological responsibility inspired by the example of Abraham in Genesis 18:3-5. This biblical framework motivated teachers to embody care, attentiveness, and fairness in their interactions. Despite practical challenges such as time constraints, hospitality was sustained through simple relational gestures, demonstrating that it is rooted more in attitude than in resources. Ultimately, the research highlights that hospitality functions as a practical dimension of social competence that bridges faith and pedagogy. By integrating biblical values into professional conduct, Christian teachers contribute to a supportive and inclusive learning environment. The study affirms that hospitality enhances not only relational harmony but also the effectiveness of educational practice in Christian Religious Education contexts.

Keywords: Hospitality, social competence, Christian Religious Education, Genesis 18:3-5

INTRODUCTION

Hospitality is increasingly recognized as a foundational expression of relational ethics in both theological discourse and educational practice. Within Christian pedagogy,

hospitality is not merely a cultural courtesy but a transformative social virtue that reflects character, empathy, and relational responsibility. In the context of education, especially Christian Religious Education (CRE), the teacher's ability to build meaningful interpersonal connections is closely linked to what is described in educational theory as social competence. Social competence refers to the capacity to interact effectively, respectfully, and empathetically with others in diverse relational settings (Goleman, 2006). Teachers who demonstrate relational warmth, openness, and care are more likely to foster inclusive learning environments where students feel valued and supported (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Thus, hospitality becomes not only a theological virtue but also an educational strategy that strengthens teacher-student relationships and enhances classroom engagement. Hospitality finds one of its most compelling biblical foundations in Genesis 18:3-5. This passage narrates Abraham's welcoming of three unknown visitors with urgency, humility, and generosity. Abraham's actions, offering water for washing, rest under the tree, and food for refreshment, illustrate a proactive commitment to meeting the needs of strangers before knowing their identity or status. Scholars note that in the ancient Near Eastern context, hospitality was not optional but constituted a moral obligation that preserved honor, safety, and communal trust. In Genesis 18, Abraham exemplifies this cultural and spiritual norm by extending generous care to travelers, transforming a potentially uncertain encounter into one marked by respect and relational openness. His willingness to serve immediately reflects an internalized disposition rather than a socially enforced duty, suggesting that hospitality flows from character formation rather than mere compliance. Abraham's hospitality carries deep theological implications. Rabbinic interpretation of Genesis 18 emphasizes that welcoming strangers may even take precedence over direct engagement with the divine, underscoring the spiritual weight attributed to acts of care toward others. The narrative demonstrates that relational openness toward others can become an avenue for encountering God's presence. This understanding aligns with broader biblical teachings that frame hospitality as an essential spiritual discipline. From a theological perspective, therefore, hospitality becomes an embodiment of faith expressed through relational action. This theological principle resonates strongly with the concept of social competence in teachers. Social competence encompasses empathy, effective communication, fairness, and the ability to nurture supportive relationships. In CRE classrooms, where moral and spiritual formation is central, the teacher's relational posture significantly shapes students' perception of faith and learning. Research suggests that when teachers demonstrate warmth, responsiveness, and relational availability, students exhibit greater motivation, trust, and emotional security (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). In this sense, hospitality becomes a lived pedagogy, an approach through which teachers embody the values they seek to teach. The story of Abraham also highlights that hospitality contributes to the development of stronger interpersonal relationships and more effective communication. In educational environments, similar dynamics emerge when teachers intentionally cultivate inclusive and welcoming atmospheres. A hospitable teacher acknowledges students' presence, listens to their concerns, and fosters participation without discrimination. Such practices reflect not only professional competence but also moral responsibility, particularly within Christian education, where relational love forms the core of discipleship.

Hospitality serves as a bridge between theological ideals and educational realities. Abraham's actions illustrate readiness, attentiveness, and generosity, qualities that are equally relevant for teachers navigating diverse classroom contexts. His eagerness to meet the needs of others, even in the heat of the day, demonstrates a proactive relational stance that parallels the role of teachers who must remain attentive to students' emotional and social needs (Jolliffe, 2016). This proactive dimension of hospitality is especially significant in contemporary schools where students come from varied backgrounds and may require reassurance of belonging. Within the Indonesian educational landscape, particularly in schools where Christian Religious Education is taught, the integration of hospitality as a pedagogical virtue remains underexplored. Teachers are often evaluated based on pedagogical and professional competencies, yet their social competence, manifested through relational sensitivity and inclusiveness, plays an equally vital role in shaping students' learning experiences (Undang-Undang Guru dan Dosen, 2005). In this regard, examining hospitality through a biblical lens offers a contextualized framework for understanding how teachers can embody social competence in meaningful ways. This study focuses on exploring hospitality as an expression of social competence among Christian Religious Education teachers at SMP Negeri Satu Atap 3 Tewah. By drawing insights from Genesis 18:3-5, the research seeks to bridge biblical theology with contemporary educational practice. The narrative of Abraham provides a model of relational engagement that transcends time and culture, offering valuable implications for teachers who serve as both educators and moral exemplars. This research is grounded in the assumption that hospitality is not merely a private virtue but a public expression of relational responsibility. When embodied by teachers, it fosters trust, inclusivity, and mutual respect, elements essential for effective learning. Through examining how hospitality is practiced in CRE classrooms, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how theological values can inform and enrich social competence in educational contexts.

METHODS

A qualitative design was considered most appropriate because the research aimed to understand lived experiences, relational behaviors, and meaning-making processes that cannot be adequately captured through numerical measurement (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative inquiry allows for an in-depth examination of attitudes, values, and practices related to interpersonal engagement, particularly in contexts where spiritual and relational dimensions are central (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The participants of this study consisted of ten Christian teachers currently serving at SMP Negeri Satu Atap 3 Tewah. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who met specific criteria, namely: identifying as Christian, actively involved in teaching activities at the school, and having at least two years of teaching experience. This sampling strategy ensured that participants possessed sufficient familiarity with the school environment and had developed relational interactions with students and colleagues (Patton, 2015). By focusing on teachers who share a common faith background, the study was able to examine how biblical values, particularly hospitality are interpreted and practiced within professional responsibilities. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and reflective documentation. Semi-structured interviews were

conducted to allow teachers to describe their experiences in expressing care, openness, and relational sensitivity toward students and colleagues. This format enabled flexibility while maintaining focus on key themes related to hospitality and social competence (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Observations were carried out during classroom interactions and school activities to capture natural expressions of hospitality, such as welcoming behaviors, inclusive communication, and responsiveness to student needs. Field notes were recorded systematically to document observable relational practices (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In addition, reflective documentation was used to gather insights from teachers regarding their understanding of Genesis 18:3–5 and its relevance to their professional conduct. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved coding, categorizing, and interpreting patterns related to hospitable behavior and social interaction (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis process began with data familiarization through repeated reading of interview transcripts and observation notes. Initial codes were then generated to identify recurring relational practices such as empathy, openness, fairness, and attentiveness. These codes were subsequently grouped into broader themes reflecting dimensions of hospitality as social competence. To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria. Credibility was enhanced through data triangulation across interviews, observations, and documentation. Member checking was conducted by inviting participants to review summarized interpretations. Thick description was used to support transferability, while an audit trail was maintained to ensure dependability and confirmability. Through this qualitative approach, the study sought to capture authentic expressions of hospitality among Christian teachers and to understand how such practices reflect their social competence within the educational setting of SMP Negeri Satu Atap 3 Tewah.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One of the most prominent themes that emerged from the interviews was the notion of hospitality as relational awareness. Teachers consistently articulated that hospitality extends beyond polite interaction or classroom friendliness; rather, it involves the conscious recognition of students as whole persons who possess emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions. In this sense, hospitality becomes a way of seeing students—not merely as recipients of knowledge but as individuals whose experiences, struggles, and aspirations shape their engagement in learning. This relational awareness was manifested in simple yet deeply meaningful practices. Teachers described greeting students personally, calling them by name, and paying attention to subtle emotional cues such as changes in mood or behavior. These actions, though seemingly ordinary, played a significant role in fostering a sense of belonging. Participants emphasized that hospitality begins with attentiveness, an intentional willingness to notice the presence and condition of others. One teacher explained that consistently welcoming students each morning contributes to emotional safety by signaling acceptance and care before academic instruction even begins. Such gestures were reported to reduce anxiety, particularly among students who might otherwise feel marginalized or hesitant to participate. Observational data supported these testimonies. Classrooms led by teachers who practiced attentive hospitality exhibited higher levels of student participation and openness. Students in these settings appeared more confident in asking questions, expressing opinions, and engaging in collaborative tasks. These findings align with the

broader understanding that social competence involves sensitivity to interpersonal dynamics and the capacity to respond appropriately to the needs of others (Goleman, 2006). Teachers who demonstrated relational awareness were able to adapt their interactions in ways that nurtured trust and mutual respect. From a theological standpoint, this form of attentiveness echoes the narrative found in Genesis 18:3-5. Abraham's encounter with three unknown visitors illustrates a profound sensitivity to the presence of others. He did not wait for formal introductions or explanations but immediately recognized the opportunity to serve. His response, offering rest, water, and nourishment, reveals a proactive attentiveness that transforms a chance encounter into an act of meaningful care. Importantly, Abraham's hospitality began with perception: he noticed the strangers and interpreted their presence as deserving of response. In educational practice, teachers mirrored this biblical principle by recognizing students' needs and responding proactively rather than reactively. Instead of waiting for behavioral issues or academic struggles to surface, hospitable teachers anticipated potential challenges and offered support in advance. This approach reflects a shift from authority-centered interaction to relationship-centered engagement. By acknowledging students' emotional states and responding with empathy, teachers fostered environments where learners felt valued rather than judged. Hospitality as relational awareness operates as both a moral disposition and a pedagogical strategy. It encourages teachers to move beyond transactional interactions toward deeper relational involvement. In doing so, it contributes to the formation of classrooms characterized by trust, openness, and mutual understanding.

Hospitality as Inclusive Engagement

A second key theme identified in the findings was hospitality as inclusive engagement. Teachers described hospitality as an intentional commitment to ensuring that every student feels welcomed and respected, regardless of differences in academic ability, socio-economic background, personality, or social standing. This understanding reframes hospitality as an act of "opening space" where diversity is not merely tolerated but embraced as part of the learning community. Participants explained that inclusivity requires deliberate effort. Hospitable teachers made conscious decisions to avoid favoritism and to provide equal opportunities for participation. Classroom observations revealed that such teachers often encouraged quieter or less confident students to share their thoughts. Rather than allowing discussions to be dominated by more outspoken individuals, they created structured opportunities for broader involvement. Group learning activities were also designed with inclusivity in mind. Teachers arranged tasks that promoted cooperation instead of competition, thereby reducing social hierarchies that might otherwise discourage participation. When conflicts arose, they mediated gently, emphasizing understanding and reconciliation rather than punishment. These practices reflect the fairness and inclusivity dimensions of social competence identified in educational research (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). This inclusive posture parallels Abraham's actions in Genesis 18. His invitation to the strangers was extended without discrimination or prior knowledge of their identity. By offering rest, water, and food, he created a space where unfamiliar guests could experience safety and dignity. His hospitality was not conditional upon social status or personal acquaintance but was grounded in an ethic of openness. Teachers demonstrated openness by ensuring

relational access for all students. They avoided practices that might unintentionally privilege certain learners over others and instead sought to cultivate a sense of shared belonging. In doing so, hospitality became a practical strategy for navigating classroom diversity. Rather than relying solely on authority to maintain order, teachers used relational warmth to build cooperation. Students responded positively to this approach, exhibiting greater willingness to collaborate and fewer tendencies toward disruptive behavior. The emphasis on belonging helped mitigate feelings of exclusion that often contribute to classroom tension. Inclusive hospitality reshaped the dynamics of teacher-student interaction. Teachers reported that when students felt welcomed, they were more inclined to engage constructively in learning activities. This suggests that hospitality not only enhances social harmony but also supports academic participation. In this way, hospitality emerges as a transformative relational practice. It moves beyond superficial politeness to actively create environments where differences are acknowledged and valued. By fostering inclusivity, teachers cultivate classrooms that function as communities rather than merely instructional spaces.

Hospitality as Emotional Support

A third significant theme that emerged from the study was hospitality as emotional support. Teachers frequently recounted experiences in which students approached them with personal concerns that extended beyond academic matters. These situations often involved family challenges, peer conflicts, or internal struggles that affected students' well-being and classroom participation. In responding to such concerns, teachers described practicing attentive listening without judgment and offering reassurance in ways that conveyed empathy and understanding. This dimension of hospitality highlights the importance of emotional availability in educational relationships. Rather than maintaining a strictly formal role, teachers positioned themselves as approachable and supportive figures. Such accessibility enabled students to perceive them not merely as authority figures but as trusted allies. Participants noted that when students sensed genuine care and acceptance, they were more willing to share their difficulties and seek guidance. This relational openness fostered a climate of trust that enhanced both communication and cooperation. Emotional support also played a critical role in shaping students' responsiveness to instruction and discipline. Teachers observed that students who felt understood were less defensive when receiving feedback or correction. Instead of interpreting discipline as punitive, they recognized it as constructive guidance. In this way, emotional support functioned as a bridge between relational care and behavioral development. This practice resonates with the narrative of Genesis 18, where Abraham's hospitality extends beyond basic courtesy to encompass concern for the holistic well-being of his guests. By providing rest and nourishment, he addressed both physical and emotional needs. His actions reflect an integrated understanding of care that attends to the person as a whole. Teachers' willingness to listen and comfort students mirrors this holistic approach. Their support was not confined to academic performance but included attentiveness to emotional states. This expanded understanding of hospitality transformed everyday interactions into opportunities for relational affirmation. Observations indicated that such emotional attentiveness strengthened teacher-student relationships. Students responded with greater openness and respect, suggesting that hospitality nurtures mutual trust. This trust, in turn, contributed to more effective

teaching and learning processes. When emotional security was present, students demonstrated increased willingness to participate and engage cognitively. The alignment of emotional well-being with intellectual involvement underscores the interconnected nature of learning. Hospitality, therefore, emerges as a relational practice that supports both personal development and academic growth.

Hospitality as Proactive Service

Another important theme identified in the findings was hospitality as proactive service. Participants emphasized that genuine hospitality requires initiative rather than passive goodwill. It involves taking deliberate steps to establish and sustain relationships, rather than waiting for interaction to occur naturally. Teachers described making conscious efforts to approach students who appeared withdrawn or disengaged. Instead of assuming disinterest, they sought to understand underlying causes and offered encouragement. Similarly, they addressed misunderstandings promptly to prevent conflicts from escalating. Observational data reinforced these accounts. Teachers who practiced proactive engagement were more successful in maintaining positive classroom environments. During learning activities, they moved around the classroom, monitored progress, and provided gentle assistance when needed. Their presence signaled attentiveness and care, reducing students' hesitation to seek help. This readiness reflects a dynamic understanding of hospitality as an active commitment. Rather than reacting to problems after they arise, proactive teachers anticipated needs and responded early. Such responsiveness fostered a sense of stability and reassurance within the classroom. From a theological perspective, this approach parallels Abraham's urgency in serving his guests. His swift actions demonstrate that hospitality involves readiness and willingness to act without delay. The narrative underscores the importance of responsiveness as a defining feature of hospitable conduct. In educational settings, this readiness translates into sensitivity to emerging needs. Teachers who adopted a proactive stance were better equipped to identify signs of confusion, frustration, or disengagement among students. By intervening supportively, they prevented minor challenges from developing into significant obstacles. Proactive hospitality also extended beyond student interactions to collegial relationships. Teachers shared resources, offered encouragement to peers, and participated in collaborative initiatives. These practices contributed to a culture of mutual respect within the school. Such collaboration strengthened professional bonds and enhanced collective effectiveness. By supporting one another, teachers modeled the same relational values they sought to instill in students. Hospitality as proactive service underscores the importance of initiative in relational practice. It transforms care from a reactive response into an intentional strategy that sustains positive learning environments.

Hospitality as Modeling Christian Values

Participants unanimously agreed that hospitality reflects Christian identity. Teachers viewed their relational conduct as a living testimony of faith rather than a separate professional requirement. They interpreted Genesis 18:3-5 as a call to serve others willingly. This theological motivation reinforced consistency in behavior, even in challenging situations. Teachers noted that students often learn more from observed actions than from verbal instruction. This finding supports the concept that moral

formation occurs through modeling. When teachers embody hospitality, they provide tangible examples of compassion and respect. Students, in turn, internalize these values through daily interaction. The cumulative effect of hospitable practices was a noticeable transformation in classroom atmosphere. Students appeared more relaxed, cooperative, and engaged. Teachers reported fewer disciplinary issues and greater willingness among students to seek clarification or express concerns. Hospitality thus contributed to a learning environment characterized by trust and openness. These outcomes align with research indicating that supportive teacher-student relationships enhance academic motivation and social adjustment (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). The integration of Genesis 18:3-5 into professional reflection enriched teachers' understanding of their roles. Rather than viewing hospitality as optional kindness, they recognized it as a core responsibility aligned with their faith. This integration bridged theological values with educational practice. Abraham's narrative provided a conceptual framework for interpreting relational interactions as spiritual service. Teachers reported that reflecting on biblical hospitality deepened their commitment to fairness, empathy, and attentiveness. Despite positive outcomes, teachers acknowledged challenges such as time constraints and workload pressures. Maintaining relational attentiveness required intentional effort. Participants noted that hospitality does not necessarily demand additional time but rather a shift in attitude. Simple gestures, greetings, listening, encouragement, proved impactful. This insight reinforces the understanding that hospitality is rooted in disposition rather than resources. The findings suggest that hospitality serves as a practical manifestation of social competence. It integrates empathy, fairness, communication, and collaboration into daily practice. Teachers who intentionally practiced hospitality demonstrated stronger relational skills and more effective classroom management. Thus, hospitality can be conceptualized as an applied dimension of social competence within CRE settings. The study reveals that hospitality supports a relational pedagogy where learning occurs within a framework of trust and mutual respect. By embodying Abraham's example, teachers transform classrooms into communities rather than mere instructional spaces. Hospitality, therefore, emerges as both a theological virtue and an educational strategy that enhances social competence and promotes holistic learning.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore how hospitality, as illustrated in Genesis 18:3-5, is embodied as an expression of social competence among Christian teachers at SMP Negeri Satu Atap 3 Tewah. The findings demonstrate that hospitality is not merely a cultural courtesy or personality trait but a meaningful relational practice that shapes the educational environment and strengthens teacher-student interactions. Through qualitative inquiry involving ten Christian teachers, this research reveals that hospitality functions as a lived pedagogy, one that integrates empathy, inclusivity, attentiveness, and proactive care into daily teaching practices. Teachers who consciously practiced hospitality exhibited heightened relational awareness, recognizing students as individuals with emotional and social needs beyond academic performance. This attentiveness fostered trust and openness, creating classroom environments where students felt safe to participate and express themselves. Such findings affirm that social competence in education is deeply relational and cannot be separated from the quality of interpersonal engagement within

the classroom. Hospitality, therefore, becomes a concrete manifestation of social competence that nurtures meaningful connections and promotes collaborative learning. Moreover, the study highlights that hospitality contributes to inclusive engagement. Teachers who embraced hospitable attitudes intentionally created space for all students to belong, ensuring fairness in participation and support. This inclusivity reflects Abraham's openness in welcoming strangers without discrimination, demonstrating that biblical hospitality transcends familiarity and invites relational connection. In the educational context, this principle translated into practices that minimized exclusion and strengthened cooperation among students. Another significant insight is the role of hospitality in providing emotional support. Teachers who listened attentively and responded with empathy fostered deeper relationships with students. These relationships enhanced students' confidence and willingness to engage in learning activities. Emotional support, as observed in this study, is not an additional responsibility but an integral dimension of effective teaching. By addressing students' holistic needs, teachers contributed to a learning atmosphere characterized by mutual respect and understanding. The proactive nature of hospitality also emerged as a defining feature. Teachers did not wait for relational problems to surface but took initiative in building connections and resolving tensions. This proactive engagement reflects Abraham's readiness to serve his guests and underscores the importance of intentionality in relational practice. Hospitality, in this sense, becomes an active commitment rather than a passive disposition. Participants viewed hospitality as an expression of their Christian identity. Their actions were motivated not solely by professional expectations but by theological conviction. Genesis 18:3-5 provided a framework for understanding relational service as a spiritual responsibility. This integration of faith and practice reinforced consistency in behavior and enhanced the authenticity of teacher-student relationships. Teachers demonstrated that hospitality is achievable through simple yet meaningful gestures. Greetings, attentive listening, and equitable treatment proved sufficient to cultivate a welcoming environment. This finding suggests that hospitality does not depend on additional resources but on intentional relational posture. Hospitality emerges as a vital dimension of social competence in Christian Religious Education. It bridges theological values with educational practice, transforming classrooms into communities of care and respect. By embodying the spirit of Genesis 18:3-5, teachers at SMP Negeri Satu Atap 3 Tewah demonstrated that relational openness and proactive care significantly enhance the quality of learning interactions. This study underscores the importance of integrating biblical virtues into professional conduct, affirming that hospitality enriches not only spiritual formation but also educational effectiveness.

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