



Fostering Social Solidarity: The Role of Christian Religious Education Teachers' Social Competence at SMK Swasta 2 Delimasari (Genesis 47:12)

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ABSTRACT

The development of social solidarity among students is a critical objective in Christian Religious Education (CRE), particularly in vocational school settings where collaboration and communal responsibility are essential. This study investigates the role of CRE teachers' social competence in fostering social solidarity at SMK Swasta 2 Delimasari, with reference to the biblical example of Joseph in Genesis 47:12. Employing a qualitative research design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis involving 27 CRE teachers. Thematic analysis revealed that teachers' relational engagement, collaborative learning strategies, and community-oriented projects significantly contribute to the cultivation of empathy, cooperation, and ethical behavior among students. Relational engagement strengthened trust and rapport between teachers and students, facilitating positive peer interactions. Collaborative learning activities enhanced negotiation, teamwork, and peer mentoring, fostering social cohesion within the classroom. Community-oriented projects provided practical experiences for students to apply biblical principles in real-life contexts, reinforcing both moral and social development. Furthermore, the integration of biblical teachings into pedagogical practice enabled students to understand solidarity as a spiritual and ethical imperative, not merely a social skill. Despite challenges such as time constraints and varying student engagement, the study underscores the importance of intentionally developing teachers' social competence to promote sustainable social solidarity. The findings have implications for teacher training, professional development, and curriculum design in Christian education, highlighting the necessity of equipping educators with the skills and strategies to model and instill prosocial behaviors effectively.

Keywords: *Christian Religious Education, social competence, social solidarity, vocational school*

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary educational discourse, the role of teachers extends far beyond the mere transmission of subject matter; it involves the cultivation of students' social awareness,

character formation, and relational skills essential for thriving in a diverse society (Sitohang & Sitopu, 2025). Within Christian Religious Education (CRE), these expectations are even more profound because teachers are tasked not only with academic instruction but also with nurturing spiritual virtues that reflect biblical values such as love, empathy, and mutual support (Lewar & Simbolon, 2025). As society grows increasingly pluralistic and interconnected, the ability of CRE teachers to model and teach *social competence* becomes critical for fostering *social solidarity* among students a skill set that Christian communities have long identified as central to communal life and ethical living (Lewar & Simbolon, 2025). Social competence in the educational context is recognized as the set of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills that enable teachers to communicate effectively, empathize with students, interact positively with families and colleagues, and create inclusive learning environments (Debora Sitohang & Elisamark Sitopu, 2025). These competencies include emotional intelligence, conflict management, collaborative communication, and culturally responsive engagement all of which contribute to a classroom climate where students feel understood, respected, and valued (Sitohang & Sitopu, 2025; Lewar & Simbolon, 2025). Educators with higher levels of social competence are reported to foster positive learning environments that support not only academic success but also students' social and moral development (Oka, 2025). Among the primary reasons social competence is foundational in Christian education is its direct alignment with core biblical principles. For instance, the life of Joseph exemplifies relational virtues such as empathy, forgiveness, and communal care themes central to Genesis 47:12, which recounts Joseph's provision for his family during famine, encouraging believers to embody generosity and solidarity toward others (Lubis & Panjaitan, 2025). Interpreting such narratives pedagogically, socially competent CRE teachers translate theological concepts into lived experiences that shape students' understanding of communal responsibility and mutual support. By bridging scriptural insights with everyday social interactions, these teachers help students internalize the value of solidarity not merely as doctrine but as practical ethical behavior. Research on religious education underscores that when teachers exhibit strong social competence, they significantly enhance students' relational skills, sense of belonging, and moral reasoning (Lewar & Simbolon, 2025). For example, effective teacher–student relationships rooted in empathy and mutual respect have been shown to nurture students' spiritual and character development, reinforcing the idea that quality human interaction is integral to holistic education (Lewar & Simbolon, 2025). In addition, studies show that educators with social competence are adept at managing classroom dynamics, resolving conflicts constructively, and promoting collaborative engagement all of which are essential for fostering solidarity among diverse student populations (Sitohang & Sitopu, 2025). The cultivation of social competence among teachers remains a challenge in many educational settings. Pressures related to curriculum demands, standardized testing, and administrative responsibilities often leave limited time for teachers to develop relational and emotional competencies (Oka, 2025). Furthermore, teacher preparation programs may prioritize instructional methodologies over relational skill development, resulting in graduates who are strong subject-matter experts but less equipped to navigate complex social interactions in the classroom. Such gaps underscore the need for intentional professional development that emphasizes social competence as a core component of teacher professionalism. In vocational secondary schools such as SMK Swasta 2 Delimasari, teachers encounter unique relational

challenges due to the diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds of students. The vocational context not only emphasizes technical skills but also requires students to collaborate, communicate, and navigate real-world social contexts competence that are best nurtured within environments where teachers model and reinforce prosocial behaviors. In this context, CRE teachers have a unique opportunity to shape not only students' faith formation but also their capacity to act as socially responsible citizens who contribute to community well-being. Fostering social solidarity among students is increasingly important in addressing broader societal issues such as social fragmentation, intolerance, and individualism. When schools provide spaces for students to engage empathetically with peers from diverse backgrounds, they help cultivate a generation of learners who value cooperation, mutual care, and collective flourishing. In line with Christian pedagogical aims, CRE teachers' social competence can thus serve as a bridge between religious values and civic virtues, encouraging students to embody solidarity as both a spiritual and social practice. While existing studies have highlighted the role of teacher social competence in enhancing academic outcomes and classroom climates (Oka, 2025; Sitohang & Sitopu, 2025), there remains limited empirical research on how these competencies specifically contribute to social solidarity in Christian vocational school settings. Consequently, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining how CRE teachers at SMK Swasta 2 Delimasari exercise social competence to nurture solidarity among students, grounded in the biblical example of Joseph's compassionate leadership. Through this investigation, the study aims to contribute to both educational theory and practice by illuminating effective strategies for integrating social competence into Christian education that prepares students for meaningful participation in church, school, and community life.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers' social competence in fostering social solidarity at SMK Swasta 2 Delimasari. A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate because it allows for an in-depth understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and practices of teachers within their real-life educational context (Creswell, 2022). By capturing the lived experiences of participants, qualitative research facilitates rich, contextualized insights into how social competence manifests in classroom interactions and teacher-student relationships. The research population consisted of all CRE teachers at SMK Swasta 2 Delimasari, totaling 27 individuals. These participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on teachers who have a minimum of three years of teaching experience and who are actively involved in classroom and extracurricular activities that promote student interaction and community engagement. This sampling strategy ensured that participants had sufficient exposure to both formal and informal contexts in which social competence could influence student solidarity (Patton, 2015). Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to share their experiences and perspectives in their own words while providing the flexibility to probe deeper into specific areas of interest, such as conflict resolution, collaborative learning, and moral guidance. Classroom observations were used to triangulate interview data and provide insight into the practical application of social competence in teacher-student interactions. Additionally, school records and

lesson plans were reviewed to understand how teachers integrate social competence objectives into their curricula and extracurricular programs (Maxwell, 2022). The interviews were conducted individually and lasted approximately 45-60 minutes each, while classroom observations spanned four weeks, covering a variety of lessons and social activities. All interviews and observations were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy. Field notes were also maintained to capture non-verbal cues and contextual details that complemented the primary data. Data analysis followed an inductive thematic approach, where transcripts, observation notes, and documents were coded for recurring patterns and themes related to social competence and student solidarity (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Thematic categories were refined iteratively, and member checking was conducted with participants to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. Ethical considerations were strictly observed, including obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and allowing participants to withdraw at any time without consequence. This methodological framework allowed the study to capture both the subjective experiences of CRE teachers and observable classroom behaviors, providing a holistic understanding of how social competence contributes to fostering social solidarity among students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social competence is widely recognized as a core dimension of effective teaching in Christian Religious Education (CRE). It encompasses teachers' abilities to empathize, communicate, manage conflicts, and foster collaborative learning environments (Sitohang & Sitopu, 2025). In this study, CRE teachers at SMK Swasta 2 Delimasari demonstrated high levels of social competence, which they applied both inside and outside the classroom. These abilities were essential for creating a culture of solidarity among students, in alignment with biblical teachings, particularly Genesis 47:12, which underscores the importance of sharing and communal care in times of need (Lubis & Panjaitan, 2025). Teachers reported that their relational skills such as listening attentively, understanding students' individual needs, and mediating disputes significantly influenced student interactions. One teacher explained, "When I actively listen to students' concerns, they feel respected and are more willing to help each other" (Interview, Participant 5, 2025). Observations confirmed that classrooms led by socially competent teachers displayed more cooperative behaviors, mutual support, and peer mentoring compared to classes where teachers were less relationally engaged. This finding aligns with the existing literature emphasizing that social competence in teachers enhances not only the quality of student relationships but also the ethical and spiritual development of learners (Lewar & Simbolon, 2025). In particular, CRE teachers serve as role models for emulating biblical virtues such as empathy, fairness, and generosity, transforming abstract religious concepts into tangible social behaviors.

Teacher Strategies for Fostering Social Solidarity

The study revealed that CRE teachers employ various strategies to cultivate social solidarity. These strategies can be categorized into three main approaches: relational engagement, collaborative learning, and community-oriented projects. Relational engagement involves direct interaction with students in ways that promote trust, respect,

and emotional support. Teachers intentionally use personal storytelling, one-on-one mentoring, and active listening to build rapport. For example, teachers referenced biblical narratives such as Joseph's management of resources during famine to model empathy and communal responsibility. This approach resonates with social learning theory, which posits that students learn behaviors through observation and imitation of influential role models (Bandura, 2023). Through relational engagement, teachers reinforce pro-social values, encouraging students to act considerately toward their peers. Collaborative learning, such as group discussions, peer teaching, and cooperative assignments, was widely used to enhance solidarity. Observations indicated that when students are placed in mixed-ability groups, they learn to negotiate, share resources, and support each other's understanding. Teachers play a facilitative role, guiding interactions and ensuring equitable participation. As one participant noted, "Group projects allow students to experience firsthand what it means to depend on one another and work toward a common goal" (Interview, Participant 12, 2025). This practice mirrors findings in educational psychology that cooperative learning fosters social cohesion and reduces relational conflicts among students (Johnson & Johnson, 2022). CRE teachers also implemented school-wide or community service projects to connect classroom learning with real-life applications. Examples include charity drives, environmental campaigns, and peer support programs. These initiatives reinforced biblical teachings and provided tangible experiences of solidarity. The integration of service-learning not only strengthened students' empathy but also encouraged collective responsibility. Observational data confirmed that students participating in these projects exhibited higher levels of initiative, cooperation, and moral reasoning, demonstrating the practical impact of teachers' social competence on fostering communal values.

The Role of Biblical Foundations in Shaping Teacher Competence

A unique aspect of this study is the integration of biblical principles into social competence development. Teachers explicitly linked Genesis 47:12 to their pedagogical practice, using Joseph's example to illustrate the importance of generosity, stewardship, and solidarity. For instance, in classroom discussions, teachers would ask students to reflect on how Joseph's actions promoted the welfare of his family and community, then relate it to contemporary acts of kindness and cooperation. This practice illustrates the dual function of CRE teachers: nurturing both social skills and spiritual virtues. Teachers observed that when students understood the biblical basis for solidarity, they were more motivated to act empathetically. This finding supports earlier studies highlighting that religious narratives can provide powerful moral frameworks that shape students' social behavior (Lewar & Simbolon, 2025; Lubis & Panjaitan, 2025). Linking biblical stories to contemporary social issues enhanced students' critical thinking and moral reasoning. For example, discussions around equitable sharing, resource management, and ethical decision-making encouraged students to consider the consequences of their actions on peers and the broader community. The alignment of social competence strategies with scriptural teachings thus reinforces the holistic development of students, integrating cognitive, emotional, and spiritual dimensions.

Teacher-Student Relationships as a Vehicle for Solidarity

The data highlighted that strong teacher-student relationships were critical for fostering solidarity. Teachers who demonstrated consistent support, fairness, and understanding created classroom climates in which students felt safe to express opinions, share struggles, and assist peers. Interviews indicated that students were more willing to collaborate and resolve conflicts amicably when they perceived teachers as approachable and empathetic. Relational trust promoted by socially competent teachers extended beyond academic interactions. Teachers observed that students often mediated minor disputes among themselves, emulating behaviors modeled by teachers. This peer-led solidarity underscores the ripple effect of teacher competence, suggesting that social skills can propagate through the student body when guided by ethical and relational modeling (Sitohang & Sitopu, 2025). Key barriers included time constraints due to curriculum pressures, varying levels of student engagement, and occasional resistance to cooperative learning. Some students initially struggled with collaborative tasks due to differences in personality, motivation, or prior social experience. Teachers mitigated these challenges by providing structured guidance, scaffolding group activities, and offering individual support where necessary. Another challenge involved aligning biblical teachings with diverse student perspectives. Teachers reported needing sensitivity when interpreting scriptures to avoid imposing rigid moral judgments while still emphasizing the importance of solidarity. This balance required reflective practice and ongoing professional development to maintain effectiveness. The findings of this study have several implications for educational practice. They underscore the importance of integrating social competence development into teacher training programs, particularly for CRE educators. Training should emphasize relational skills, conflict resolution, and strategies for fostering collaborative and community-oriented behaviors. Schools should provide opportunities for teachers to model social competence through structured mentoring, cooperative projects, and community engagement programs. By embedding these practices into the school culture, teachers can influence student behavior not only in the classroom but also in broader social contexts. Integrating biblical narratives with social skill development offers a model for holistic education that nurtures cognitive, emotional, and spiritual growth. Teachers can use scriptural examples to contextualize ethical lessons, making abstract concepts meaningful and actionable for students. This approach enhances the relevance of CRE in contemporary schooling, fostering graduates who are both socially responsible and morally grounded. This study confirms that CRE teachers' social competence is a critical factor in fostering social solidarity among students. Teachers' relational skills, collaborative teaching strategies, and community-oriented initiatives collectively contribute to an educational environment where empathy, cooperation, and ethical behavior are cultivated. The alignment of these practices with biblical teachings further enhances their impact, providing both moral and social frameworks for student development. Future research could explore longitudinal impacts of teacher social competence on students' social and spiritual outcomes, as well as comparative studies across different vocational and general education contexts. Additionally, examining professional development models that effectively enhance teacher social competence could provide practical guidance for schools aiming to strengthen student solidarity.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the pivotal role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers' social competence in fostering social solidarity among students at SMK Swasta 2 Delimasari. The findings demonstrate that teachers who exhibit high levels of empathy, effective communication, conflict management, and relational engagement create classroom environments conducive to collaboration, mutual support, and ethical behavior. Such teachers serve not only as knowledge transmitters but also as moral exemplars who embody the virtues emphasized in biblical narratives, particularly Genesis 47:12. By modeling compassion, fairness, and communal responsibility, teachers enable students to internalize the value of solidarity and translate it into practical action within both school and community contexts. The strategies employed by CRE teachers including relational engagement, collaborative learning, and community-oriented projects proved effective in cultivating students' social skills and moral reasoning. Relational engagement strengthened teacher-student trust and rapport, encouraging students to interact respectfully and cooperatively. Collaborative learning promoted negotiation, teamwork, and peer mentoring, reinforcing social cohesion and shared responsibility. Meanwhile, community-oriented projects provided opportunities for students to apply biblical principles to real-world scenarios, fostering a sense of purpose and connectedness beyond the classroom. These approaches illustrate how social competence, when intentionally developed and applied, can significantly enhance both the social and spiritual formation of students. The integration of biblical foundations into pedagogical practice reinforced the moral and ethical dimensions of social competence. By using Joseph's example as a model for generosity, stewardship, and empathy, teachers helped students understand that social solidarity is not merely a social skill but also a reflection of spiritual values. This alignment of pedagogy with scripture enhances the relevance and impact of CRE, providing students with concrete examples of how faith informs daily interactions and community engagement. Despite the positive outcomes, challenges such as time constraints, varying student engagement levels, and the need for sensitive interpretation of biblical teachings were observed. Addressing these challenges requires ongoing professional development, reflective practice, and institutional support to ensure that teachers are equipped to foster social competence consistently and effectively. This study affirms that CRE teachers' social competence is essential for cultivating a culture of social solidarity. By integrating relational skills, cooperative learning, community engagement, and biblical principles, teachers can nurture students who are empathetic, morally responsible, and socially connected. The implications extend beyond vocational school contexts, suggesting that socially competent educators are instrumental in shaping ethically aware and community-oriented citizens. Therefore, educational stakeholders should prioritize the development of teacher social competence as a core component of both teacher training programs and ongoing professional practice, ensuring that the cultivation of social solidarity remains a central goal of Christian education.

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