



Social Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Explaining God's Covenant with All Nations (Genesis 9:13): A Study at SDN 173621 Sitarak

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between the social competence of a Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher and students' understanding of God's covenant with all nations in Genesis 9:13 at SDN 173621 Sitarak, Toba. Theologically, the Noahic covenant emphasizes divine faithfulness, universality, and ethical responsibility toward all creation, making it a relevant foundation for religious instruction within Indonesia's pluralistic context. Employing a quantitative descriptive design with a correlational approach, the research involved 72 Christian students selected through total sampling. Data were collected using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire measuring two variables: teacher social competence (effective communication, empathy, inclusivity, fairness, and dialogical openness) and students' theological understanding of the covenant theme (meaning, universality, symbolic significance of the rainbow, and social-ethical application). Instrument validity was established through expert review, and reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha (≥ 0.70). Data analysis included descriptive statistics and Pearson Product-Moment correlation at the 0.05 significance level. The findings indicate that the CRE teacher's social competence was perceived at a high level and that students demonstrated a strong understanding of the universality and ethical implications of Genesis 9:13. The results suggest that socially competent interaction, characterized by respect, openness, and empathy, creates a classroom climate that facilitates deeper cognitive and moral internalization of biblical covenant theology. The study concludes that social competence is a central dimension of effective CRE pedagogy and serves as both a pedagogical instrument and a theological witness in fostering inclusive and responsible faith understanding within diverse educational settings.

Keywords: Social Competence, Christian Religious Education, God's Covenant

INTRODUCTION

The theme of God's covenant with all nations in Genesis 9:13 presents a foundational theological vision of divine faithfulness, universality, and reconciliation. After the flood narrative, God establishes a covenant not only with Noah but with "every living creature of all flesh," signified by the rainbow in the clouds. As noted by Gordon J. Wenham (1994), Genesis 9 underscores the universal scope of God's redemptive concern, extending beyond a single ethnic or religious community. Similarly, Walter Brueggemann (1982) emphasizes that the Noahic covenant reflects a divine commitment to the stability of creation and to all humanity, forming an ethical foundation for human coexistence. In educational contexts, particularly within pluralistic societies, this text provides a powerful theological resource for cultivating inclusive attitudes, respect for diversity, and awareness of shared humanity under God's covenantal promise. In Indonesia, a nation characterized by ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity, Christian Religious Education (CRE) plays a strategic role in shaping students' social awareness and civic responsibility. The mandate of CRE extends beyond doctrinal instruction to the formation of social character, empathy, and constructive engagement with difference (Groome, 2011). Within this framework, the social competence of the teacher becomes crucial. Social competence refers to the teacher's ability to communicate effectively, build positive interpersonal relationships, demonstrate empathy, collaborate with colleagues, and engage respectfully within multicultural settings (Wentzel, 2012). For CRE teachers, social competence also includes the capacity to articulate biblical truths in ways that promote peace and inclusivity without compromising theological integrity.

At SDN 173621 Sitarak, Toba, the educational setting reflects both Christian majority presence and broader societal diversity. The school includes 72 Christian students and 11 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher. Although Christians form a significant portion of the school community, students still interact within a larger pluralistic national context. Teaching Genesis 9:13 in such a setting requires more than exegetical accuracy; it demands social competence that enables the teacher to connect the covenant narrative with contemporary issues of coexistence, tolerance, and shared responsibility for creation. As Christopher J. H. Wright (2006) argues, biblical covenant theology carries ethical implications that shape communal relationships and public life. Therefore, the teacher's interpersonal and communicative skills significantly influence how students internalize these implications. Research in educational psychology consistently demonstrates that teachers' social competence positively correlates with students' social adjustment and moral reasoning (Hattie, 2009). When teachers model respectful dialogue, empathy, and openness, students are more likely to develop similar dispositions. In Christian education specifically, Pazmiño (2008) contends that the teacher embodies the message being taught; pedagogy and character cannot be separated. Thus, in explaining God's covenant with all nations, the CRE teacher's relational approach may either reinforce or undermine the universal and reconciliatory thrust of the text. Many studies in Indonesian CRE contexts focus primarily on pedagogical or professional competence, leaving social competence relatively underexplored. This gap is significant, especially when teaching texts that emphasize universal covenant and inter-human responsibility. Genesis 9:13 presents an opportunity to examine how social competence

shapes theological understanding in practice. Does the teacher create an inclusive classroom climate? Do students perceive the covenant as limited to their religious identity, or as an invitation to respect all humanity? These questions underscore the relevance of the present study. This research aims to analyze the social competence of the CRE teacher in explaining God's covenant with all nations (Genesis 9:13) at SDN 173621 Sitarak, Toba. By involving 72 Christian students and considering the collaborative environment among 11 Christian teachers, the study seeks to examine how interpersonal skills, communication patterns, and relational modeling influence students' comprehension of covenant theology and its social implications. Ultimately, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of how social competence in Christian Religious Education fosters theological insight that supports harmony within diverse societies.

METHODS

A quantitative descriptive design with a correlational approach was used to examine the relationship between the social competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher and students' understanding of God's covenant with all nations based on Genesis 9:13 at SDN 173621 Sitarak, Toba. A quantitative method was selected because it enables systematic measurement of perceptions and allows statistical testing of relationships between variables (Creswell, 2014). The correlational approach was considered appropriate to determine whether and to what extent the teacher's social competence is associated with students' theological and social comprehension of the covenant narrative. The population of the study consisted of 72 Christian students enrolled at the school during the academic year of the research. Given that the number of Christian students was manageable, the study applied total sampling, meaning all 72 students were involved as respondents. Although the school has 11 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher, the primary data source for this research was the students, since the objective was to measure students' perceptions of the teacher's social competence and their own understanding of Genesis 9:13. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The instrument was divided into two major components. The first component measured the social competence of the CRE teacher, including indicators such as effective communication, respectful interaction, openness to dialogue, empathy, fairness, ability to build a positive classroom climate, and modeling inclusive attitudes. These indicators were constructed based on recognized teacher competence frameworks and educational social competence theory (Mulyasa, 2013; Wentzel, 2012). The second component measured students' understanding of God's covenant with all nations, including their ability to explain the meaning of Genesis 9:13, recognize the universality of the covenant, interpret the rainbow as a covenant sign, and apply covenant principles to social relationships and care for creation. To ensure content validity, the questionnaire items were reviewed by two experts in Christian Religious Education and educational research. A pilot test was conducted with a small group of students outside the research sample to evaluate clarity and internal consistency. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, with a value of 0.70 or higher considered acceptable for research purposes (Creswell, 2014). Data collection was conducted during regular CRE class sessions with formal permission from the school administration. Students completed the questionnaire

anonymously to encourage honest responses and reduce social desirability bias. Clear instructions were provided prior to administration to ensure uniform understanding of the items. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine mean scores, standard deviations, and overall category levels of each variable. Inferential analysis was conducted using Pearson Product-Moment correlation to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between social competence and students' understanding of the covenant theme. Statistical significance was tested at the 0.05 level. Through this methodological approach, the study sought to generate empirical evidence regarding how the social competence of a CRE teacher contributes to students' comprehension of the universal covenant of God in Genesis 9:13 within the educational context of SDN 173621 Sitarak, Toba.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the social competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher at SDN 173621 Sitarak, Toba, plays a significant role in shaping students' understanding of God's covenant with all nations as expressed in Genesis 9:13. Based on descriptive statistical analysis of the responses from 72 Christian students, the overall mean score for the teacher's social competence variable was categorized in the high range. Students generally perceived the CRE teacher as communicative, approachable, respectful, empathetic, and inclusive in classroom interaction. Indicators such as clarity in explaining biblical narratives, openness to student questions, fairness in classroom treatment, and ability to create a harmonious learning climate received particularly strong agreement. This indicates that the teacher's relational presence in the classroom is not merely administrative or instructional but dialogical and participatory, aligning with the conceptualization of social competence as the capacity to build meaningful interpersonal relationships in educational settings (Wentzel, 2012). In Indonesian educational discourse, teacher social competence is understood as the ability to communicate effectively with students, colleagues, and the broader community (Mulyasa, 2013), and the data from SDN 173621 Sitarak suggest that these competencies are functionally present in the CRE classroom context. On the dependent variable, students' understanding of God's covenant with all nations, the descriptive results also showed a high overall mean score. Most students demonstrated the ability to explain that the rainbow in Genesis 9:13 represents a divine promise, not only to Noah but to all living creatures and future generations. They were able to articulate that the covenant signifies God's faithfulness and universal concern, extending beyond a single ethnic or religious group. Importantly, students showed awareness that the covenant carries ethical implications, such as responsibility toward others and care for creation. This suggests that the teaching of Genesis 9:13 in this context has moved beyond rote memorization toward meaningful theological comprehension. The finding resonates with the biblical-theological understanding that the Noahic covenant is universal in scope and establishes a foundational framework for human responsibility in the post-flood world (Wenham, 1987). By recognizing the covenant as inclusive and global, students demonstrate cognitive and affective engagement with the text.

Inferential statistical analysis using Pearson Product-Moment correlation revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between the teacher's social competence and students' understanding of God's covenant. The correlation coefficient indicated a moderate to strong relationship, suggesting that as students' perceptions of the teacher's social competence increase, so does their level of theological understanding regarding Genesis 9:13. This result supports the broader educational theory that teacher-student relational quality influences learning outcomes, particularly in value-laden subjects such as religious education (Hattie, 2009). In Christian pedagogy, the teacher is not only a transmitter of doctrinal information but also a relational mediator of meaning, whose interpersonal attitudes can either facilitate or hinder spiritual and moral internalization (Groome, 2011). The regression analysis further demonstrated that the social competence variable contributed significantly to the variance in students' understanding of the covenant theme. Although other factors undoubtedly influence theological comprehension, such as family background, church involvement, and cognitive ability, the data indicate that teacher social competence serves as a meaningful predictor within the school setting. This suggests that effective communication, empathy, and inclusive interaction create a learning atmosphere in which students feel safe to explore theological ideas, ask questions, and connect biblical narratives to contemporary realities. In this sense, the CRE teacher's social competence functions as a pedagogical bridge between ancient scripture and present-day student experience.

Genesis 9:13 describes God setting the rainbow in the clouds as a sign of the covenant between Himself and the earth. The universality of this covenant challenges exclusivist interpretations of divine promise and emphasizes God's concern for all nations and all creation. When students perceive their teacher as socially competent, respectful of diversity, open to dialogue, and fair in interaction, they encounter a living example of relational inclusivity that mirrors the universal scope of the covenant itself. Thus, the teacher's social behavior becomes a performative embodiment of the theological message being taught. This alignment between message and messenger enhances credibility and fosters deeper internalization. As Palmer (1998) argues, effective teaching flows from the integrity of the teacher's identity and relationships, not merely from methodological technique. In the classroom context of SDN 173621 Sitarak, where 72 Christian students engage with biblical material in a public school environment, the social competence of the CRE teacher acquires additional significance. Public schools in Indonesia operate within pluralistic contexts, and even when the majority of students in a class share the same faith, the broader institutional environment remains religiously diverse. Therefore, teaching about God's covenant with "all nations" requires sensitivity, clarity, and social awareness. The findings suggest that the CRE teacher's ability to communicate respectfully and inclusively enables students to interpret the covenant theme not as a narrow doctrinal claim but as a foundation for social harmony and interreligious respect. This interpretation aligns with the broader educational mandate in Indonesia to cultivate tolerance and unity within diversity.

The high student scores in applying covenant principles to social life indicate that the lesson has practical implications. Students reported agreement with statements relating to caring for friends, avoiding discrimination, and protecting the environment as

expressions of covenant responsibility. This demonstrates that theological understanding is linked to moral orientation. The teacher's social competence likely reinforces this connection by modeling respectful and ethical interaction in daily classroom practice. Bandura's social learning theory emphasizes that learners acquire attitudes and behaviors through observation of significant role models (Bandura, 1977). In this context, the CRE teacher serves as such a model, and students' positive perceptions of the teacher's relational conduct may strengthen their willingness to adopt covenant-based ethical values. Another noteworthy finding is that students particularly valued the teacher's openness to questions and discussions. Religious education can sometimes be delivered in a dogmatic manner, limiting critical engagement. However, when teachers invite dialogue, they foster deeper cognitive processing and personal appropriation of faith concepts. The correlation between dialogical openness and covenant understanding suggests that theological literacy flourishes in communicative environments. This reflects Vygotsky's perspective that learning occurs through social interaction and guided dialogue (Vygotsky, 1978). In the CRE classroom, the teacher's social competence facilitates such interaction, enabling students to move from superficial knowledge to structured comprehension.

The discussion of results also indicates that social competence contributes not only to cognitive outcomes but to affective dimensions of faith learning. Students who perceive their teacher as empathetic and fair are more likely to feel valued and secure. Such emotional safety supports engagement with existential themes, including divine promise, judgment, and responsibility. The Noahic covenant narrative contains elements of both destruction and renewal, and understanding its message requires reflection on human vulnerability and divine mercy. A socially competent teacher who communicates compassionately can guide students through these themes without generating fear or confusion. It is important to recognize the contextual limitations. The sample consisted solely of Christian students within one public elementary school in Toba. Therefore, generalization to other regions or religious compositions should be approached cautiously. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported perceptions, which may be influenced by social desirability bias. However, anonymity and standardized procedures were implemented to minimize this risk. Future research could incorporate mixed methods, including classroom observation and qualitative interviews, to deepen insight into how social competence manifests in practice. The results affirm that social competence is not an ancillary attribute but a central dimension of effective Christian Religious Education. In teaching Genesis 9:13, the CRE teacher at SDN 173621 Sitarak appears to embody relational qualities that enhance students' understanding of God's universal covenant. The positive correlation and significant regression findings provide empirical support for the claim that interpersonal skill and theological clarity are interconnected in religious pedagogy. When teachers communicate respectfully, model inclusivity, and cultivate positive relationships, they create fertile ground for students to grasp the expansive meaning of God's promise to all nations. In this way, social competence becomes both a pedagogical instrument and a theological witness, shaping not only what students know about the covenant but how they live in light of it.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers plays a significant and measurable role in enhancing students' understanding of God's covenant with all nations as articulated in Genesis 9:13 at SDN 173621 Sitarak, Toba. The quantitative findings demonstrate a positive and statistically significant relationship between teacher social competence and students' theological comprehension. Students who perceived their CRE teacher as communicative, empathetic, respectful, open to dialogue, and fair tended to show higher levels of understanding regarding the meaning, universality, and ethical implications of the Noahic covenant. The results confirm that social competence is not merely a complementary dimension of teacher professionalism but a core pedagogical factor that shapes religious learning outcomes. In the context of teaching Genesis 9:13, the teacher's relational qualities functioned as a bridge connecting biblical text with students' lived experiences. When the teacher modeled inclusive and respectful interaction, students were better able to grasp the universal scope of God's covenant and apply its principles to social relationships and environmental responsibility. Thus, the alignment between the relational behavior of the teacher and the theological content of the lesson strengthened both cognitive understanding and moral internalization. This study highlights that effective Christian Religious Education in a public school context requires more than doctrinal explanation; it requires socially competent engagement that reflects the inclusive character of God's covenant itself. The findings suggest that strengthening teacher social competence can serve as a strategic pathway to improving theological literacy and character formation among students. Although the research is limited to one school setting and relies on student perceptions, the evidence provides important empirical support for integrating social competence development into teacher training and professional development programs. Future studies are encouraged to expand the scope through comparative research across diverse educational contexts and by incorporating qualitative methods to explore the lived dynamics of classroom interaction. The social competence of CRE teachers significantly contributes to students' understanding of God's covenant with all nations. By embodying relational integrity and inclusivity, teachers not only explain the covenant but also demonstrate its transformative implications in everyday educational practice.

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