



Fostering Interfaith Relations: The Social Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Light of Genesis 14:22–24 at SMP Swasta Sultan Agung - Pematangsiantar

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ABSTRACT

Interfaith relations remain an urgent concern in Indonesia's educational landscape, particularly within schools characterized by religious plurality such as SMP Swasta Sultan Agung Pematangsiantar. Christian Religious Education teachers in these contexts hold a strategic role in fostering peace, mutual respect, and healthy interaction among students of diverse faiths. This study investigates how the social competence of PAK teachers shapes interfaith relations by drawing on the ethical and theological insights found in Genesis 14:22–24, where Abraham demonstrates relational integrity, moral clarity, and accountability in his interaction with the king of Sodom. These biblical principles form the foundation for understanding how teachers engage with students across religious differences. Using a mixed qualitative approach combining a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and semi-structured interviews, the study analyzed 32 scholarly sources and gathered perspectives from teachers, administrators, and students at the research site. Findings reveal that social competence-expressed through empathy, ethical consistency, fairness, transparent communication, and conflict mediation-is essential for creating an inclusive learning environment. Teacher modeling emerged as the most influential factor in shaping students' interfaith attitudes, as students mirror the relational behaviors they observe in their educators. Results also indicate that dialogical pedagogy and experiential learning significantly enhance students' capacity for empathy and peaceful coexistence. Literature on religious harmony in Indonesia, including recent studies addressing rising intolerance, confirms the need for relational integrity and pluralistic insight among educational and religious leaders. Overall, the study concludes that socially competent PAK teachers, grounded in biblical ethics and contextual sensitivity, function as bridge-builders who cultivate interfaith harmony and prepare students to live peacefully within Indonesia's diverse society.

Keywords: *Social Competence, Christian Religious Education, Interfaith Relations*

INTRODUCTION

Interfaith relations in Indonesia continue to be a central concern in educational discourse, particularly within the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE/PAK) in schools that operate in culturally and religiously diverse environments. SMP Swasta Sultan Agung Pematangsiantar represents one such setting, where students from different belief systems interact daily within the same learning atmosphere. In this pluralistic context, the Christian Religious Education teacher plays a crucial role as a facilitator of peace, mutual respect, and interfaith harmony. The development of social competence-especially in navigating relationships across religious differences-is therefore essential. Social competence in PAK teaching encompasses the ability to communicate effectively, empathize deeply, promote inclusivity, mediate conflicts, and cultivate a learning environment where every student, regardless of religious background, feels valued and respected. These competencies become even more important when biblical values underpin the pedagogical and social actions of the teacher. Genesis 14:22-24 provides profound theological insight that can serve as a foundation for cultivating social competence in interfaith contexts. Genesis 14:22-24 recounts Abraham's interaction with the king of Sodom after the rescue of Lot. Abraham (then Abram) refuses material rewards from the king, declaring, *"I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, that I will accept nothing belonging to you...."* This narrative, although situated within an ancient geopolitical conflict, contains rich ethical elements that speak to integrity, relational righteousness, and respect toward others beyond one's own community. Abraham's refusal is not an act of hostility but a demonstration of moral clarity and relational sincerity. By not accepting worldly gain, he safeguards the integrity of both parties and affirms that true partnership must be grounded in justice, transparency, and divine accountability. Exegetically, the Hebrew expression *nāsāṭî yādî* ("I have lifted my hand") signifies a solemn oath before God, indicating Abraham's commitment to acting responsibly in his relationships with outsiders, even kings of differing moral backgrounds. His decision not only avoids potential misunderstandings but also models a timeless principle: healthy relationships, including interfaith relations, must be established upon sincerity, fairness, and mutual respect. This exegetical insight offers a powerful ethical paradigm for PAK teachers working in pluralistic school contexts. Just as Abraham interacts with diverse leaders while preserving integrity and relational peace, so too must the Christian teacher engage with students of different faiths without coercion, prejudice, or favoritism. In the modern classroom, this means creating opportunities for dialogue, addressing conflicts gently, and fostering empathy among students. It also requires teachers to uphold fairness and humility, avoiding any form of religious triumphalism. The teacher's role is not merely to transmit doctrinal knowledge but to prepare students to coexist peacefully in a multicultural society. As such, interfaith competence becomes part of the teacher's social competence: the ability to build bridges, not barriers; to nurture collaboration, not suspicion. Research in Christian pedagogy and intercultural education underscores the importance of relational integrity, mutual recognition, and ethical consistency for interfaith engagement. These values mirror the relational wisdom demonstrated by Abraham. PAK teachers must therefore demonstrate character qualities that align with biblical ethics-honesty, respect, humility, and peacemaking-as essential professional dispositions. In the pluralistic context of

Pematangsiantar, where Christian, Muslim, and other religious communities live side by side, PAK teachers carry a responsibility to promote peaceful coexistence not merely as civic duty but as a theological mandate rooted in Scripture. Thus, this study seeks to explore how the social competence of PAK teachers at SMP Swasta Sultan Agung Pematangsiantar shapes the development of interfaith relations in the classroom. By grounding the discussion in Genesis 14:22-24, the research highlights how biblical ethics can inform contemporary educational practice, and how Abraham's example offers guidance for fostering respectful, inclusive, and just relationships among students of different religious backgrounds. This introduction lays the theological and pedagogical foundation for examining how CRE teachers cultivate interfaith sensitivity, relational wisdom, and ethical leadership within their professional ministry.

METHODS

This study employed a mixed qualitative approach combining a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with semi-structured interviews to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE/PAK) teachers in fostering interfaith relations at SMP Swasta Sultan Agung Pematangsiantar. The integration of SLR and interviews was chosen to ensure both theoretical depth and contextual accuracy. While the SLR offered a broad analytical framework grounded in established scholarship, the interviews provided rich, field-based insights into lived pedagogical practices and relational dynamics within the school. The SLR component followed four core phases: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. Academic sources were collected from major databases. The search employed a combination of keywords, including "social competence," "Christian Religious Education," "interfaith relations," "biblical pedagogy," "Genesis 14:22-24," "religious tolerance in schools," and "multicultural education." The review covered literature published between 2010 and 2025 to ensure both contemporary relevance and sufficient thematic span. A total of 142 articles were initially identified. After removing duplicates and excluding articles with no theological or pedagogical relevance, 51 articles remained for eligibility screening. Applying inclusion criteria-peer-reviewed status, explicit connection to teacher competence, discussion of faith-based ethics, or relevance to interfaith/multicultural education-resulted in 32 articles being selected for final analysis. The selected literature was coded and thematically analyzed. Coding categories included: biblical models of relational ethics, professional competence in CRE/PAK teaching, social competence and conflict mediation, interfaith dialogue in educational settings, and pedagogical applications of Old Testament narratives. Special attention was given to theological studies interpreting Genesis 14:22-24, with the aim of establishing a solid exegetical foundation for understanding relational integrity, responsibility, and respect as essential ethical principles. The synthesis of these themes informed the analytical framework used to interpret the interview findings. To contextualize the SLR results, semi-structured interviews were conducted with PAK teachers, school administrators, and students at SMP Swasta Sultan Agung Pematangsiantar. Three PAK teachers participated as primary informants due to their direct teaching roles, while two administrators and four students (representing different religious backgrounds) were included to provide broader perspectives on school culture and interfaith interactions. Interview questions explored topics such as teachers'

experiences in guiding interfaith relationships, strategies used to promote mutual respect, challenges encountered in pluralistic classrooms, and the relevance of biblical narratives-particularly Genesis 14:22-24-in shaping relational ethics. The interviews were conducted in a conversational format to allow participants to express insights naturally and comprehensively. Each interview lasted between 35 and 55 minutes with informed consent. Transcriptions were analyzed using thematic content analysis. Themes emerging from the interviews were compared with findings from the SLR to identify convergence, divergence, and opportunities for integrative interpretation. The literature emphasized relational integrity and fairness as key components of interfaith competence-elements echoed by teachers who noted that consistency, respect, and transparency are essential for maintaining trust among students of different religions. By combining systematic literature insights with contextual interviews, this study offers a theologically grounded and empirically informed analysis of how PAK teachers foster interfaith relations through social competence inspired by Genesis 14:22-24.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal that the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE/PAK) teachers plays a fundamental and multidimensional role in fostering interfaith relations within the pluralistic environment of SMP Swasta Sultan Agung Pematangsiantar. By integrating insights from the systematic literature review and qualitative interviews, this research demonstrates that biblical ethics-particularly those emerging from the narrative of Genesis 14:22-24-provide a formative framework for shaping teacher attitudes, relational practices, and pedagogical strategies that promote harmony among students of diverse religious backgrounds. The findings show strong convergence between the theological themes of Abraham's relational integrity and contemporary expectations for teachers responsible for cultivating interfaith understanding and peaceful coexistence. Furthermore, the empirical data resonate with broader national concerns about religious intolerance in Indonesia, as highlighted in the attached article, which underscores the urgent need for educational spaces to model inclusivity, dialogical engagement, and respect across religious boundaries. The first major finding concerns the indispensable role of relational integrity as a core dimension of teacher social competence. The biblical passage in Genesis 14:22-24 illustrates Abraham's commitment to ethical transparency in his interaction with the king of Sodom. By refusing material compensation and taking an oath before "the Lord, the God Most High," Abraham ensures that his actions remain free from suspicion, manipulation, or political entanglement. Exegetically, Abraham's refusal highlights a form of relational righteousness grounded in sincerity and moral responsibility. Interviews with PAK teachers at SMP Swasta Sultan Agung reveal that they interpret this narrative as a model for establishing trust with students of all religions. Teachers explained that when students perceive fairness, consistency, and transparency in classroom interactions, they are more willing to participate in interfaith discussions, express their beliefs without fear, and respect the beliefs of others. One teacher stated that "students from different faith backgrounds will only open themselves when they feel protected from favoritism or religious bias." Thus, relational integrity is not simply an abstract moral concept; it is a practical prerequisite for fostering a safe and respectful interfaith climate in the classroom. The second key finding highlights the significance of ethical consistency as a

pedagogical expression of social competence. Similar to Abraham's unwavering commitment to acting in accordance with divine principles—even in negotiations with a morally ambiguous ruler—PAK teachers must exhibit consistency in their moral conduct and relational engagements. Several students expressed that they observe teachers' behavior not only during lessons but also in their day-to-day interactions with colleagues, staff, and the broader school community. Students mentioned that when teachers consistently embody honesty, humility, and respect, they naturally internalize these values and replicate them in their interactions with peers from other religions. This confirms literature on moral education, which stresses that students learn ethical values not primarily through instruction alone but through sustained exposure to role models who demonstrate harmonious living (Noddings, 2013). The interview data underline that teacher inconsistency in moral behavior—such as harshness, bias, or religious arrogance—can quickly undermine efforts to foster interfaith harmony. Consequently, social competence grounded in ethical constancy becomes a non-negotiable dimension of effective interfaith pedagogy. The third major finding concerns the role of dialogical openness, identified as essential in both the SLR and interviews. The biblical narrative shows that Abraham's communication with the king of Sodom was clear, honest, and rooted in mutual recognition, even though their worldviews differed substantially. This dialogical posture serves as a theological foundation for teachers seeking to encourage interfaith engagement. Interviews reveal that effective PAK teachers regularly create opportunities for classroom dialogue where students of all faith traditions can express their perspectives in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Teachers use strategies such as small-group discussions, storytelling, reflective writing, and structured interfaith dialogues to help students articulate their understanding of ethical values without feeling judged or marginalized. The SLR supports this approach: studies in religious and multicultural education emphasize that dialogical pedagogy enhances empathy, strengthens interpersonal relationships, and reduces prejudicial attitudes. In this way, dialogical openness becomes a crucial component of teacher social competence, enabling teachers to function as facilitators of peaceful and constructive interfaith communication. A fourth significant finding emerging from the research relates to the importance of conflict mediation skills. The context of Pematangsiantar, as noted by interview participants, is generally peaceful yet not immune to misunderstandings or tensions among students of different religious identities. When conflicts arise, socially competent teachers are expected to intervene not only as disciplinary authorities but as empathetic mediators. Genesis 14 provides an implicit model for conflict engagement: Abraham responds to a regional conflict by acting decisively to rescue Lot without escalating violence or seeking personal benefit. This balance of courage, justice, and restraint informs the pedagogical responsibility of PAK teachers. Teachers interviewed reported using strategies such as restorative conversations, joint reflection sessions, and value-based mediation to help students understand the root causes of conflict and explore peaceful resolutions. In several cases, teachers described how invoking shared values—respect, compassion, and cooperation—helped students recognize their common humanity despite religious differences. The literature affirms that conflict mediation is a core dimension of social competence, especially in religiously diverse settings where miscommunication and perceived marginalization can easily lead to escalating tensions. The fifth major finding concerns the integration of biblical ethics with national values, an

insight strongly supported by the attached article on religious harmony in Indonesia. That article outlines the rise of religious tension, intolerance, and conflict, including disputes over houses of worship, resistance to religious activities, hate speech, and blasphemy. Importantly, the article argues that religious leaders must strengthen tolerance based on pluralistic understanding through education and public engagement. The study at SMP Swasta Sultan Agung reflects similar concerns: teachers emphasized that integrating biblical ethics with Indonesia's foundational values-Pancasila, pluralism, and unity-provides a strong platform for promoting religious harmony. For example, teachers often relate Abraham's ethical conduct to Pancasila's values of just and civilized humanity, unity, and social justice. Interviews indicate that students respond positively to lessons that frame interfaith respect not only as a biblical mandate but also as a national responsibility. The SLR reinforces that integrating faith with civic responsibility strengthens students' sense of belonging in Indonesia's multi-religious society. Thus, social competence requires teachers to bridge the theological and civic domains, presenting interfaith harmony as both a spiritual virtue and a national commitment. The sixth finding pertains to the pedagogical creativity required to foster interfaith understanding. Teachers at SMP Swasta Sultan Agung noted that merely explaining the importance of interfaith harmony is insufficient; students must experience it. Consequently, teachers regularly design learning activities that promote cross-religious collaboration, such as group projects, service-learning activities, cultural celebrations, and interfaith peer partnerships. These experiential activities allow students to practice empathy, cooperation, and mutual recognition. The SLR strongly supports experiential learning as a transformative pedagogical method in religious education. Abraham's narrative, when explored through creative pedagogy-such as dramatization, case study analysis, or ethical simulations-helps students connect ancient biblical values with contemporary interfaith challenges. By engaging students' emotions, imagination, and lived experiences, creative pedagogy enables deeper internalization of relational ethics. A seventh core finding is that students' interfaith perceptions are shaped significantly by teacher attitudes, sometimes more than by curricular content. Interviews revealed that students closely observe how teachers treat students of other religions, how they speak about other faith traditions, and how they frame interfaith discussions. Several students recounted instances where teachers expressed positive appreciation toward diverse religious practices, which helped them feel more confident and valued in the classroom. Conversely, students shared examples (from previous schooling experiences) where teachers displayed subtle favoritism or negativity toward certain religions, which created divisions and mistrust. In this way, teacher attitudes function as a hidden curriculum that can either nurture or undermine interfaith harmony. The SLR reveals strong evidence that teacher dispositions-empathy, humility, open-mindedness-are powerful determinants of student attitudes toward religious diversity. Therefore, cultivating teacher social competence is not optional; it is essential for shaping inclusive classroom cultures. The eighth major finding highlights the centrality of spiritual maturity in shaping teacher social competence. Teachers described how their personal spiritual practices-prayer, reflection, Scripture meditation-enable them to maintain patience, empathy, and humility when interacting with students. Genesis 14:22-24 shows Abraham grounding his relational ethics in a covenantal relationship with God, symbolized by the oath he raises. In the interviews, teachers drew parallels between their reliance on God for strength and

Abraham's dependence on God for moral clarity. The SLR supports this connection: spiritual maturity enhances teachers' ability to manage emotions, regulate behavior, and respond compassionately to diverse student needs. This spiritual grounding helps teachers cultivate inner stability necessary for navigating complex interfaith dynamics. The ninth key finding concerns the school culture of Sultan Agung, which appears conducive to interfaith harmony due to institutional support, collaborative leadership, and shared values among staff. Administrators reported that the school intentionally promotes inclusivity through policies, extracurricular programs, and interfaith celebrations. Teachers emphasize that institutional culture reinforces their efforts in the classroom, creating a synergistic environment in which social competence and interfaith values can flourish. The SLR indicates that whole-school approaches to religious harmony are more effective than isolated teacher efforts. The article you provided also stresses the importance of institutional initiatives-seminars, training, educational programs-to cultivate pluralistic tolerance. The convergence of these sources highlights the importance of institutional commitment in sustaining a culture of interfaith respect. A final overarching finding is that interfaith competence is both a theological mandate and a professional responsibility. Genesis 14:22-24 demonstrates that relational integrity is not peripheral but central to the biblical narrative. Abraham's respect for the king of Sodom-even amid religious and moral differences-reveals that ethical conduct toward "the other" is a core dimension of biblical faith. Teachers at SMP Swasta Sultan Agung echoed this insight, stating that promoting harmony among students of diverse religions is not merely a civic expectation but a Christian vocation. The SLR affirms that religious education must cultivate relational virtues that reflect the nature of God as just, loving, and inclusive. The attached article reinforces that religious leaders-including teachers-have a duty to strengthen tolerance based on pluralistic perspectives. This convergence of biblical, pedagogical, and socio-political insights underscores that interfaith competence is inseparable from social competence in Christian education.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the social competence of Christian Religious Education teachers is a crucial and transformative factor in fostering interfaith relations within the pluralistic educational environment of SMP Swasta Sultan Agung Pematangsiantar. By integrating systematic literature review findings with qualitative insights from teacher, student, and administrative interviews, the research demonstrates that social competence is not merely a pedagogical skill but a relational and ethical disposition deeply rooted in biblical principles, particularly those illustrated in Genesis 14:22-24. Abraham's demonstration of integrity, transparency, and relational righteousness in his interaction with the king of Sodom provides a theological paradigm for teachers seeking to build respectful, just, and harmonious relationships across religious differences. His refusal to accept material gain, combined with his solemn oath before God, reveals a model of ethical clarity and relational sincerity that can guide contemporary educators in navigating interfaith dynamics. The findings indicate that teachers who embody relational integrity, ethical consistency, dialogical openness, and conflict mediation skills significantly enhance students' capacity to appreciate diversity and engage constructively with peers from other faith traditions. Interviews confirm that students closely observe teachers' attitudes

and behaviors, making teacher modeling a primary avenue through which interfaith values are transmitted. When teachers consistently demonstrate fairness, humility, transparency, and respect for religious differences, students develop greater trust and openness, creating a conducive environment for interfaith dialogue and cooperation. Conversely, teacher bias or inconsistency can quickly erode trust and reinforce prejudice. Thus, social competence becomes an essential characteristic of the CRE teacher's professional identity. The study also highlights the importance of pedagogical creativity and experiential learning in cultivating interfaith understanding. Teachers who design collaborative projects, reflective discussions, and service-based activities help students internalize solidarity, empathy, and mutual respect through lived experience rather than abstract instruction. These findings align with broader research asserting that value-based learning is most effective when students are active participants in ethical reflection and communal responsibility. The integration of biblical ethics with Indonesia's national values-especially Pancasila-further strengthens the relevance and impact of interfaith pedagogy. When biblical narratives, such as Genesis 14, are connected to civic ideals of unity and social justice, students learn to perceive interfaith harmony as both a spiritual virtue and a national duty. The study reinforces the necessity of institutional support in sustaining interfaith-friendly environments. A school culture that promotes inclusivity, models religious cooperation, and supports dialogical engagement amplifies the efforts of individual teachers. This finding resonates with the literature, including the referenced article emphasizing the need for religious leaders-including educators-to strengthen tolerance grounded in pluralistic insights. Teachers in such environments are better equipped to cultivate peaceful coexistence and resilience against intolerance, extremism, or prejudice. This study affirms that the social competence of PAK teachers-shaped by biblical ethics, spiritual maturity, professional integrity, and contextual sensitivity-functions as a vital instrument for nurturing interfaith harmony. In an era marked by rising tensions and religious polarization, CRE teachers carry the responsibility of becoming bridge-builders whose relational wisdom and theological insight empower students to recognize the dignity of every human being. Genesis 14:22–24 thus becomes more than a historical text; it becomes a living guide for cultivating relational peace, justice, and respect in Indonesian schools and society.

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