



Jesus' Social Sensitivity as a Pedagogical Model for Christian Teachers: An Exegetical and Contextual Study of Matthew 9:10-13 at SDN 08 Sisumut

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how Jesus' social sensitivity in Matthew 9:10-13 can serve as a transformative pedagogical model for Christian teachers working in pluralistic public-school settings, particularly at SDN 08 Sisumut. Through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), the study synthesizes insights from biblical exegesis, educational theory, and Christian pedagogy to identify core themes that inform socially responsive teaching. The exegetical analysis reveals three central dimensions of Jesus' ministry: inclusive social presence, ethical-empathic engagement, and justice-oriented corrective action. Jesus' willingness to share table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners demonstrates an intentional embrace of marginalized individuals, providing a paradigm for relational inclusion in contemporary classrooms. His statement, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice," highlights a compassionate understanding of human brokenness, offering educators a model of empathy that prioritizes restoration over punitive judgment. Furthermore, Jesus' prophetic critique of exclusionary attitudes underscores the necessity of moral courage in addressing unjust or discriminatory educational practices. The SLR findings show strong convergence between these biblical themes and modern theories of relational, culturally responsive, and justice-oriented pedagogy. When contextualized within SDN 08 Sisumut—a school marked by socio-economic diversity, varied learning capacities, and emotional challenges—this Christ-centered framework offers practical guidance for teachers seeking to cultivate dignity, belonging, and equitable learning. Importantly, the study argues that Christian teachers can embody Jesus' model not through explicit religious instruction but through character, compassion, fairness, and ethical professionalism, consistent with Indonesia's national teacher-competency standards. The study concludes that Jesus' social sensitivity provides a robust and contextually adaptable foundation for enhancing the social competence and moral impact of Christian educators in pluralistic school environments.

Keywords: Social Sensitivity, Christian Religious Education, Pedagogical Model

INTRODUCTION

Education in contemporary pluralistic contexts increasingly requires teachers to demonstrate not only pedagogical expertise but also deep social sensitivity that allows them to understand, serve, and respond compassionately to the diverse realities of their students. In Indonesia, particularly in public elementary schools such as SDN 08 Sisumut in Labuhan Batu Selatan, Christian teachers often navigate classrooms characterized by socio-economic diversity, fluctuating emotional needs, and cultural plurality. These conditions demand a pedagogical approach shaped by empathy, inclusivity, and a willingness to engage the marginalized. Within Christian educational thought, the ministry of Jesus offers a compelling template for such sensitivity. Among the Gospel narratives, Matthew 9:10-13 stands out as a profound illustration of Jesus' social awareness and relational engagement with those considered outsiders-tax collectors and sinners. The text not only narrates a meal shared in Matthew's house but also reveals the theological and ethical foundations of Christlike sensitivity, providing a formative model for the vocation of Christian teachers. The exegetical contours of Matthew 9:10-13 reveal a deliberate movement by Jesus toward those who existed at the periphery of religious and social acceptance. The phrase "as Jesus reclined at table" (Matt. 9:10) indicates not a casual encounter but an intentional act of fellowship; reclining (*katakeimai*) in first-century Mediterranean culture signified intimate association and communal belonging. Jesus' participation in this meal therefore communicated public affirmation of individuals deemed unworthy by the Pharisaic establishment (Keener, 1999). The narrative's setting in Matthew's own home highlights the transformative impact of Jesus' call—a call that not only redeems the individual but also redefines their social relationships (Hagner, 2002). When the Pharisees challenge Jesus' association with sinners, His response—quoting Hosea 6:6, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice"—functions as both a prophetic critique and a pedagogical declaration. The verb *ethelesa* ("I desire") in Matthew 9:13 underscores divine priority, revealing that mercy (*eleos*) stands at the center of God's relational economy, while ritual correctness occupies a secondary role (France, 2007). Jesus thus models an ethical framework grounded in compassion rather than exclusion, invitation rather than distance. This exegetical insight underscores that social sensitivity in Christian teaching is not optional; it is embedded in the very nature of God's mission. Within the educational sphere, Jesus' approach in Matthew 9:10-13 aligns strongly with contemporary theories emphasizing culturally responsive pedagogy, relationship-centered teaching, and the ethical imperative of inclusion. Educational research underscores that teachers who practice empathy, relational proximity, and recognition of student diversity contribute significantly to academic motivation, psychological safety, and character formation (Hattie, 2012). For Christian teachers, however, this relational responsibility extends beyond pedagogical technique; it is a spiritual vocation rooted in discipleship. Jesus' social sensitivity was never sentimental or passive—rather, it embodied an intentional, restorative engagement aimed at healing, transformation, and dignity. Such a paradigm calls Christian educators to move toward students in ways that affirm their worth, especially those who feel unseen or undervalued. In the context of SDN 08 Sisumut, where some students encounter financial hardship, fragile family structures, or emotional instability, adopting Jesus' model empowers Christian teachers to build inclusive learning environments that reflect the heart of God. Few studies explore its pedagogical

implications for Christian teachers within Indonesian public-school settings. Existing research frequently discusses social sensitivity in general educational terms without grounding it firmly in biblical exegesis or contextualizing it within specific school environments. This study aims to address this gap by offering an exegetical analysis of Matthew 9:10-13 and examining how its theological themes can inform the professional identity and practices of Christian teachers in SDN 08 Sisumut. By integrating exegetical insights with educational theory, the study seeks to construct a holistic pedagogical model that equips Christian teachers to embody Christlike social sensitivity—an approach that nurtures dignity, fosters belonging, and strengthens holistic learning.

METHODS

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology to examine how Jesus' social sensitivity in Matthew 9:10-13 can be developed into a pedagogical model for Christian teachers at SDN 08 Sisumut, Labuhan Batu Selatan. The SLR approach was selected because it provides a structured, transparent, and replicable method for synthesizing scholarly insights across biblical studies, educational theory, and Christian pedagogy (Booth, 2016). The method unfolded through three interconnected phases: planning, conducting, and reporting. In the planning phase, the research objective was defined as identifying how the exegetical meaning of Matthew 9:10-13, particularly Jesus' relational engagement with marginalized individuals, can inform professional teaching practices grounded in empathy, inclusion, and social sensitivity. A review protocol was formulated, outlining the research questions, key concepts, inclusion and exclusion criteria, search strategy, and analytical procedures, ensuring methodological rigor and minimizing subjectivity (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). In the conducting phase, the literature search was carried out across multiple databases. The search employed combinations of keywords such as "Matthew 9:10–13," "Jesus' social sensitivity," "compassionate pedagogy," "Christian teachers," "inclusive education," and "religious education in Indonesia." To ensure comprehensive and relevant coverage, inclusion criteria required that sources discuss exegetical or theological interpretations of Matthew 9:10–13 or related passages involving Jesus' social engagement, examine pedagogical theories on empathy, inclusive teaching, or social responsiveness, explore Christian teacher identity or religious education practice, and relate to Indonesian or Southeast Asian educational contexts. Only peer-reviewed articles, academic books, dissertations, and credible theological commentaries published between 1990 and 2024 were included. Devotional writings, non-academic sermons, and materials lacking methodological clarity were excluded to maintain scholarly integrity. The initial search identified 168 sources; after removing duplicates and screening abstracts, 72 were selected for full-text review. A final total of 39 sources met all criteria and were included for synthesis. The analysis followed thematic coding procedures, enabling the identification of recurring concepts such as Jesus' engagement with marginalized groups, the meaning of mercy in Matthew 9:13, culturally responsive teaching, relational pedagogy, and the spiritual identity of Christian educators (Charmaz, 2014). These themes were then compared, aligned, and integrated to build a conceptual framework linking biblical exegesis with pedagogical application. Special attention was given to the historical-cultural background of Matthew 9:10–13 in order to ensure that educational implications were grounded in accurate

interpretation rather than generalized moralization (France, 2007). In the reporting phase, the findings were compiled into a narrative synthesis, with emphasis on contextualizing biblical and educational insights for SDN 08 Sisumut, which serves a socio-economically diverse student population in Labuhan Batu Selatan. This contextualization involved examining how principles derived from Jesus' social sensitivity can be realistically embodied by Christian teachers who function within a pluralistic public-school environment. The SLR process enhanced the reliability of the study by ensuring systematic data collection, transparent selection, and rigorous thematic analysis, thereby providing a robust foundation for developing a Christ-centered model of socially sensitive pedagogy.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The systematic literature review and exegetical inquiry into Matthew 9:10-13 reveal a constellation of theological, social, and pedagogical constructs that illuminate Jesus' social sensitivity as a transformative model for Christian educators. When examined in dialogue with contemporary educational studies, three dominant themes emerge: the inclusivity of Jesus' social presence, the ethical-empathic orientation of His relational posture, and the corrective, justice-focused dimension of His teaching practice. These themes, when contextualized within the daily realities of SDN 08 Sisumut, generate a robust interpretive framework for Christian teachers seeking to embody a socially sensitive pedagogy in pluralistic school environments. Each theme is discussed below, integrating biblical scholarship, educational theory, and implications for the locus. The first major theme arising from both the exegetical findings and the literature is Jesus' intentional social proximity to individuals and groups marginalized within the first-century Jewish socio-religious hierarchy. Matthew 9:10 describes Jesus reclining at the table "with tax collectors and sinners," a phrase most scholars interpret as evidence of His willingness to inhabit social spaces avoided by the religious elite (Hagner, 1993). As Luz (2001) notes, Jesus deliberately crosses boundaries that were policed by purity codes, thereby redefining the meaning of holiness in relational rather than exclusionary terms. This boundary-crossing posture-far from incidental-constitutes a core dimension of Jesus' pedagogical agenda. In educational research, such inclusive presence parallels what Noddings (2013) describes as an "ethic of care," wherein the teacher's willingness to enter the student's social world becomes foundational to effective teaching. Teachers who practice social sensitivity cultivate relational environments where students feel welcomed, valued, and understood. In this sense, Jesus' inclusive table fellowship models the necessity of relational proximity as a prerequisite for pedagogical influence.

SDN 08 Sisumut operates within a culturally diverse region of Labuhan Batu Selatan, where students come from various family backgrounds, socio-economic conditions, and religious affiliations. Literature describing rural Indonesian public schools (e.g., Priyanto, 2020) indicates that such diversity often intersects with academic disparities, behavioral challenges, and socio-emotional needs. Therefore, Christian teachers in this setting must anchor their professionalism in a relational praxis that mirrors Jesus' inclusivity. Practically, this may include: Engaging constructively with students labeled as "difficult." Jesus' table fellowship demonstrates that proximity-rather than avoidance-is a transformative pedagogical resource. Affirming students' dignity, regardless of academic

performance or social background. Building trust with parents and guardians from diverse socio-religious identities without compromising Christian integrity. Reducing classroom stigma by avoiding labeling practices. The literature consistently shows that teachers' relational openness correlates positively with student engagement, classroom climate, and moral development (Wentzel, 2014). When Christian educators at SDN 08 Sisumut intentionally create inclusive learning spaces, they reflect the ethos of Matthew 9:10 and embody pedagogical practices that promote equitable learning opportunities.

Ethical–Empathic Sensitivity as the Center of Jesus' Relational Pedagogy

The next uncovered is Jesus' ethical-empathic orientation, expressed in His compassionate interpretation of human brokenness. Matthew 9:12-13 reveals Jesus' response to the Pharisees' critique: *"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick... I desire mercy, not sacrifice."* Here, Jesus employs the metaphor of the physician, signaling His understanding of the human condition not in moralistic but in restorative categories. His reference to Hosea 6:6 further situates His ministry within the broader Old Testament critique of hollow religiosity divorced from compassion (Davies & Allison, 1991). In modern educational literature, empathy is increasingly recognized as a critical competency in effective teaching (Cooper, 2011). Empathic educators are able to perceive the emotional, cognitive, and contextual realities of their students, enabling them to adopt instructional practices that respond appropriately to varied needs. Empathy also strengthens classroom management by transforming correction from punitive control to restorative guidance (Gregory & Evans, 2020). Christian teachers in SDN 08 Sisumut face a spectrum of student challenges, including: socio-economic hardship, learning difficulties, emotional instability, family-related stress, limited academic resources. Empathy-as modeled by Jesus-requires teachers to see these challenges not as disruptions but as opportunities for ministry-oriented intervention. Jesus' physician metaphor reminds Christian teachers that their authority functions not to condemn but to heal, guide, and strengthen. Practical pedagogical implications include: implementing empathetic discipline, focusing on dialogue, understanding root causes, and guiding students toward responsibility rather than shame. Designing differentiated instruction that considers students' varying readiness levels. Providing socio-emotional support, especially to students who feel marginalized. Cultivating patient, non-reactive communication, especially during conflict. Integrating reflective listening during student counseling moments. Educational scholarship affirms that teachers who practice empathy contribute to improved student motivation, reduced classroom conflict, and stronger teacher–student bonds (Cornelius-White, 2007). Theologically, such practices align with the Christlike ethic of mercy articulated in Matthew 9:13.

Jesus' Corrective Voice and Justice-Oriented Pedagogy

The third theme emerging from the findings is Jesus' corrective teaching stance, which challenges oppressive or exclusionary structures embedded within the religious and social systems of His time. His statement *"Go and learn what this means"* (Matt. 9:13) is not only a rebuke to the Pharisees but an invitation to deeper theological reflection. Jesus thus operates as a moral educator who critiques unjust norms while offering a

transformative moral vision grounded in divine compassion. Biblical scholars such as Keener (1999) argue that Jesus' critique of the Pharisees should not be understood as hostility toward Jewish religious tradition but rather as a prophetic call to realign religious practice with God's covenantal intent. Jesus challenges the misuse of religious categories that marginalize vulnerable individuals while reinforcing systems of privilege. Educational theory affirms the importance of such a justice-oriented teaching posture. Freire (1993) describes educators as agents who "name the world" critically, exposing practices that hinder human flourishing. Socially sensitive teachers do not simply adapt to inequities—they work to transform them. This includes critiquing harmful stereotypes, resisting discriminatory practices, and advocating for equitable access to learning resources. In the context of SDN 08 Sisumut, Jesus' corrective voice calls Christian teachers to identify and respond to structural challenges such as: unequal academic expectations for students from poor households, subtle biases in classroom grouping or participation patterns, the overuse of punitive discipline, stereotypical assumptions about students' abilities, lack of support for students experiencing learning difficulties. Teachers may not have the authority to reform systemic inequities at the district level, but they can exercise moral agency within their classrooms. Thus, practical implications include: using fair and transparent assessment practices avoiding favoritism, addressing bullying and social exclusion through firm restorative interventions, advocating for vulnerable students including those with limited resources, modeling moral courage in confronting discriminatory attitudes among peers, promoting classroom norms grounded in mutual respect, dignity, and justice. The literature repeatedly affirms that justice-oriented educators contribute to more equitable classroom cultures and improved academic outcomes (Shields, 2010). When Christian teachers embody Jesus' corrective sensitivity, they participate in redemptive educational practices that reflect the Kingdom ethic present in Matthew 9:13. The finding of the three major themes—Jesus' inclusive social presence, ethical-empathic sensitivity, and justice-oriented corrective voice—yields a coherent framework for Christian public-school teachers. This framework does not impose religious indoctrination (which is prohibited in the Indonesian public-school context) but empowers teachers to embody the moral, relational, and ethical qualities that Jesus exemplifies. A close reading of Matthew 9:10-13 suggests that Jesus' pedagogy is fundamentally relational, morally transformative, and grounded in compassion. His teaching emerges not merely through verbal instruction but through lived engagement. This resonates strongly with contemporary theories emphasizing the "hidden curriculum" of teacher behavior (Schubert, 2020)—that students learn as much from a teacher's character and manner as from their formal lessons. For SDN 08 Sisumut, this implies that Christian teachers' witness is communicated through: their integrity, fairness, warmth toward students, patience in conflict, humility, consistency in ethical conduct. These qualities shape a classroom ethos that mirrors Jesus' ministry without proselytizing.

Because SDN 08 Sisumut serves a multi-religious student population, Christian teachers must navigate the complexities of expressing faith-based moral formation in a nonreligious classroom setting. The literature suggests that moral identity expressed through behavior—not explicitly religious discourse—is the most effective and contextually appropriate form of influence in such environments (Lovat, 2019). Jesus' model gives Christian teachers a template for embodying faith implicitly through compassion, fairness,

service, and justice. Indonesia's national policy on teacher professionalism (UU No. 14/2005) highlights four core competencies: pedagogic, personality, professional, and social. Remarkably, Jesus' actions in Matthew 9:10-13 align with these competencies: His interactions reveal deep understanding of human learning and transformation, His character reflects integrity, humility, and empathy, He engages with diverse groups with clarity of purpose, and He builds inclusive, respectful, and compassionate relationships. Thus, Jesus' social sensitivity is not merely a theological ideal but a practical embodiment of standards expected of Indonesian public-school teachers. Interviews and field reports about rural Indonesian schools often highlight persistent challenges such as absenteeism, lack of learning motivation, and insufficient parental involvement (Mustakim, 2021). Jesus' social presence offers a framework for: engaging disengaged learners, building rapport with families, creating trauma-sensitive classroom practices, and nurturing resilience in students who face socio-economic pressures. Christian teachers can influence school culture by practicing: open communication with colleagues, collaborative problem-solving, non-defensive conflict management, and servant-hearted leadership. Jesus' emphasis on mercy establishes a relational climate that encourages cooperation rather than competition among teachers. The results of this study highlight Jesus' social sensitivity in Matthew 9:10-13 as an integrated pedagogical paradigm comprising inclusivity, empathy, and prophetic justice. Applied to SDN 08 Sisumut, these themes demonstrate that Christian teachers are called not only to instruct academically but to cultivate classrooms marked by compassion, fairness, and moral courage. Such a pedagogy does not violate public-school regulations but enriches the moral and humanistic dimensions of education. Jesus' model thus provides a robust, contextually adaptable framework for strengthening teachers' social competence and ethical character in pluralistic educational environments.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that Jesus' social sensitivity in Matthew 9:10-13 offers a profoundly relevant and transformative pedagogical model for Christian teachers working within pluralistic public-school contexts such as SDN 08 Sisumut in Labuhan Batu Selatan. The exegetical reading of the passage reveals three intertwined dimensions-inclusive presence, ethical-empathic engagement, and justice-oriented correction-each of which contributes to a holistic framework for socially responsive teaching. Jesus' willingness to share table fellowship with marginalized individuals provides a paradigm for relational inclusion, reminding teachers that effective pedagogy begins with the courage to welcome and embrace every student regardless of background, behavior, or perceived ability. His compassionate reinterpretation of human brokenness through the physician metaphor models an empathetic posture that prioritizes healing, restoration, and understanding rather than blame or punitive judgment. Likewise, His prophetic critique of the Pharisees' exclusionary attitudes underscores the necessity of moral courage in challenging unjust, discriminatory, or harmful educational practices. Within the context of SDN 08 Sisumut, where students exhibit diverse socio-economic conditions, varied learning capacities, and complex emotional needs, these Christ-centered principles provide a workable and ethically grounded framework for shaping teacher behavior. Christian teachers can embody Jesus' model not through overt

religiosity but through the integrity of their character, the compassion of their relationships, and the fairness of their instructional approaches. Such embodiment aligns naturally with Indonesia's national teacher-competency standards, especially those emphasizing social competence, personality maturity, and ethical professionalism. By integrating inclusivity, empathy, and justice into everyday practice, teachers cultivate classrooms that promote dignity, belonging, and academic growth for all students. This study concludes that Jesus' social sensitivity is not merely a theological concept but a practical pedagogical resource capable of enriching the moral and relational fabric of contemporary education. For Christian teachers at SDN 08 Sisumut, embracing this model empowers them to become compassionate caregivers, ethical guides, and transformative agents within their school community. In doing so, they contribute not only to students' academic development but also to their holistic formation as individuals worthy of respect, care, and opportunity.

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