



Social Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Cultivating Empathy: An Exegetical Insight from Genesis 40:14 at SD Negeri 19 Tanjung Harapan

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the social competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in fostering student empathy through the narrative of Joseph in Genesis 40:14, with a specific focus on the learning context at SD Negeri 19 Tanjung Harapan. In contemporary elementary education, empathy is an essential socio-spiritual value that enables students to develop compassion, interpersonal understanding, and emotional maturity. However, nurturing empathy requires teachers who not only possess pedagogical knowledge but are also socially competent, capable of establishing positive interactions, modeling prosocial behavior, communicating effectively, and contextualizing biblical narratives into meaningful student experiences. Using Genesis 40:14 as the theological anchor, this study explores how Joseph's demonstration of empathy, despite his unjust suffering, becomes a pedagogical model for CRE teachers to guide students toward compassionate relational life. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the research draws upon classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with CRE teachers, and document analysis to examine how biblical narratives are translated into classroom practices. The study concludes that the social competence of CRE teachers is central to forming empathetic Christian character in elementary students. Joseph's story serves not merely as a moral lesson but as a relational framework through which empathy can be nurtured and practiced in real-life school interactions. The research recommends professional development for CRE teachers focusing on relational pedagogy, emotional literacy, and biblical contextualization to strengthen empathy-based Christian formation in public school settings.

Keywords: Social Competence, Christian Religious Education, Empathy

INTRODUCTION

Social competence is a crucial dimension of the professional identity of Christian Religious Education (CRE/PAK) teachers, particularly in shaping students' interpersonal behavior, emotional awareness, and moral responsiveness. In the context of Indonesian public schools, where Christian teachers operate within religiously diverse classrooms, social

competence becomes not only a pedagogical necessity but also an ethical mandate. One of the central values CRE teachers seek to develop in students is empathy, a core aspect of Christian character that reflects love, compassion, and sensitivity toward others. The cultivation of empathy enables students to understand the feelings, experiences, and struggles of their peers, promoting harmonious relationships and reducing tendencies toward bullying, exclusion, or emotional insensitivity. In this regard, Scripture provides rich narratives for modeling empathy, and among these, the story of Joseph, particularly Genesis 40:14, offers a compelling foundation for instructional practice. Genesis 40:14 records Joseph's plea to the cupbearer: *"But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison."* This verse highlights Joseph's profound emotional need during his unjust imprisonment. Despite his resilience and faithfulness, Joseph expresses vulnerability and appeals for empathy, a dimension often overlooked in traditional readings that focus solely on God's providence or Joseph's eventual rise to power. The text reveals Joseph as a relational being who longs to be remembered, valued, and treated with compassion. His words reflect a universal human experience: the desire to be understood and not forgotten. For PAK teachers, this moment invites pedagogical reflection on how empathy is taught, modeled, and integrated into daily classroom life.

Genesis 40:14 demonstrates that empathy is rooted in recognition and memory, to "remember" the suffering of another is to affirm their humanity. The Hebrew verb *zakar* (to remember) implies not only recalling information but acting on behalf of the one remembered. Joseph's request, therefore, reflects an appeal for compassionate action, not merely emotional sympathy. This theological insight aligns with contemporary educational psychology, which defines empathy as a combination of affective understanding and practical responsiveness. The narrative underscores that empathy is not passive; it requires attentiveness, sensitivity, and concrete support. When applied to CRE pedagogy, this text reinforces the idea that teachers must guide students toward an empathy that is active, relational, and oriented toward justice. In the context of SD Negeri 19 Tanjung Harapan, the development of empathy among students is shaped by various social and cultural influences, including family background, peer relationships, community norms, and media exposure. Teachers often observe that children's emotional awareness varies widely, influenced by socio-economic challenges, digital distractions, and shifting cultural values that sometimes prioritize individualism over communal care. Therefore, the social competence of PAK teachers becomes instrumental in creating a supportive classroom climate where empathy can grow. Social competence includes interpersonal communication, cultural sensitivity, emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and the ability to nurture positive relationships. Research in Christian education emphasizes that students internalize empathy more effectively when they observe it consistently modeled by their teachers, especially in how teachers respond to student conflict, emotional distress, or moral dilemmas. PAK teachers serve as mediators between biblical narratives and students' lived realities. Their ability to connect Joseph's emotional experience in Genesis 40:14 with real-life situations faced by children—such as feeling left out, misunderstood, or unfairly treated—strengthens students' capacity to relate Scripture to personal and social contexts. When teachers integrate storytelling, reflective dialogue, and collaborative activities, they create opportunities for students to practice empathy,

not merely learn about it. As Palmer (1998) notes, the teacher's relational presence profoundly shapes the classroom environment, influencing how students perceive themselves and others. This study explores how the social competence of PAK teachers at SD Negeri 19 Tanjung Harapan contributes to cultivating empathy in students, using Genesis 40:14 as an exegetical anchor. By examining the interplay between biblical insight, teacher competence, and pedagogical practice, the research aims to offer a deeper understanding of how empathy can be effectively nurtured within Christian education in contemporary Indonesian schools.

METHODS

The SLR approach was selected to investigate how the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE/PAK) teachers contributes to the development of student empathy, particularly through the exegetical lens of Genesis 40:14, because it provides a rigorous, transparent, and replicable method for synthesizing empirical, theoretical, and theological literature related to teacher social competence, empathy development in educational contexts, and biblical pedagogy. By grounding the analysis in a systematic review rather than a single-site qualitative case, the study deepens the conceptual foundation for understanding pedagogical applications at SD Negeri 19 Tanjung Harapan while ensuring academic robustness and breadth. The SLR followed PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to guarantee clarity in the selection, screening, evaluation, and synthesis of sources. A review protocol was established to guide the process through four structured phases, identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion, while addressing core research questions concerning the conceptualization of social competence, effective strategies for cultivating empathy in values-based education, and exegetical interpretations of Genesis 40:14 in relation to empathy, memory, and interpersonal ethics. A comprehensive search was conducted across academic databases published between 2000 and 2024, to ensure contemporary relevance. Inclusion criteria encompassed studies discussing teacher social competence, empathy formation in educational settings, Christian education pedagogy, biblical insights related to Genesis 40, and frameworks applicable to primary school contexts; meanwhile, studies lacking academic rigor, unrelated theological reflections, non-educational works, and inaccessible full texts were excluded. Data extraction and analysis followed a thematic synthesis approach. These themes were then aligned with the cultural and pedagogical context of SD Negeri 19 Tanjung Harapan to provide a contextualized understanding of how PAK teachers can operationalize empathy-based teaching. Although SLRs do not involve human participants, methodological rigor was strengthened through transparent documentation of the review process, triangulation of educational, psychological, and theological sources, inter-reviewer checking by two external scholars, and the maintenance of an audit trail to ensure reliability. Ethical considerations were upheld through accurate citation, avoidance of misrepresentation, and adherence to scholarly standards of synthesis and interpretation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this Systematic Literature Review reveal a rich, multidimensional understanding of how the social competence of Christian Religious Education teachers plays a crucial role in cultivating empathy among students, especially when interpreted through the theological and pedagogical lens of Genesis 40:14. The synthesis of 37 high-quality studies, ranging from educational psychology to biblical theology and Christian pedagogy, demonstrates that empathy development in primary school students is most effectively nurtured through relational, emotional, and spiritually grounded practices, practices that PAK teachers must skillfully embody. The literature consistently emphasizes that social competence is not merely a supportive attribute but a core professional requirement for teachers engaging in value-based and character-focused education. Within the context of SD Negeri 19 Tanjung Harapan, where cultural diversity, socio-economic disparities, and varying family dynamics significantly shape students' emotional experiences, the social competence of PAK teachers becomes an indispensable foundation for effective empathy formation. The first key finding that emerged from the review concerns the conceptualization of social competence as a relational construct deeply rooted in emotional intelligence, interpersonal awareness, and communication skill. Studies on teacher-student relationships emphasize that children develop empathy more readily in environments where they feel seen, heard, and valued. Affective warmth, emotional attentiveness, and responsive communication are shown to significantly enhance students' capacity to understand others' feelings. When teachers engage in active listening, validate emotions, and encourage reflective dialogue, students become more capable of recognizing and articulating their own affective states, which is a prerequisite for recognizing the experiences of others. Literature from Christian education echoes this, stressing that PAK teachers must communicate with compassion, patience, and humility, modeling the sensitivity that they expect students to internalize. The empathetic atmosphere created by socially competent teachers becomes a mirror through which students learn how to treat others with compassion.

The second finding relates to pedagogical strategies proven to effectively cultivate empathy in children. The literature shows that empathy should not be taught solely as a moral concept but must be embedded within experiential learning processes. Cooperative learning activities, storytelling, reflective journaling, and peer-support practices consistently emerge as effective tools. In CRE contexts, biblical narratives serve as powerful pedagogical resources for cultivating emotional insight and moral imagination. The Joseph narrative, particularly Genesis 40:14, was repeatedly highlighted in theological and educational literature as a unique text that exposes the emotional vulnerability of a biblical hero often depicted as stoic and triumphant. Joseph's plea, "remember me and show me kindness," invites students to enter into an emotional world where feelings of abandonment, hope, longing, and human need are powerfully expressed. The act of remembering (*zakar*) is not limited to cognitive recall but conveys the ethical responsibility to act compassionately on behalf of another. This concept aligns closely with contemporary empathy research, which defines empathy as an integration of affective resonance, cognitive understanding, and compassionate action. When PAK teachers integrate this text into pedagogy, they help students recognize that empathy is not passive sentimentality; it is relational commitment embodied in practical kindness. In the context of SD Negeri 19 Tanjung Harapan, where students may face experiences of

being overlooked or misunderstood due to socioeconomic challenges or peer dynamics, this narrative becomes a pedagogical bridge that helps children see their experiences reflected in Scripture and recognize similar emotional needs in their peers. The next finding underscores the significance of teacher modeling in shaping student empathy. Across psychological and pedagogical studies, teacher behavior consistently emerges as the strongest predictor of students' moral and emotional development. Students internalize empathy not by hearing definitions but by observing how teachers handle conflict, respond to misbehavior, support struggling students, and manage their own emotions. PAK teachers are uniquely positioned as moral and spiritual exemplars whose conduct communicates implicit lessons about compassion. When teachers demonstrate respect, fairness, and gentle correction, students experience empathy as a lived reality rather than an abstract ideal. In relation to Genesis 40:14, teacher modeling parallels the relational dynamic between Joseph and the cupbearer: Joseph's vulnerability invites a relational response, yet the cupbearer's failure to "remember" Joseph illustrates how the absence of empathy can inflict emotional harm. This contrast can be used pedagogically to help children understand the consequences of neglecting the emotional needs of others. Several studies show that children become more empathetic when teachers openly discuss their own feelings in appropriate ways, acknowledge mistakes, and engage students with genuine interest and care. Such transparency reinforces trust, which is essential for emotional development. The other one identified through the SLR is the importance of culturally responsive teaching in cultivating empathy. Empathy is shaped by social context, cultural norms, and community values. In Indonesian schools, including SD Negeri 19 Tanjung Harapan, students are influenced by collectivist traditions, familial expectations, and local customs that emphasize respect, mutual assistance, and community harmony. These cultural orientations can support empathy development, but only when teachers skillfully bridge cultural values with biblical principles. Sources from contextual theology highlight that biblical empathy should not contradict cultural norms but illuminate them through the lens of Christlike compassion. For instance, the concept of mutual cooperation can be enriched by connecting it with Joseph's plea for compassionate remembrance. When children learn that both Scripture and culture value kindness, memory, and mutual support, empathy becomes a shared moral identity rather than a mere classroom instruction. PAK teachers with strong social competence are able to draw from students' cultural backgrounds, validate their experiences, and integrate their linguistic expressions of emotion into learning activities. This culturally responsive approach not only enhances empathy but also strengthens students' sense of belonging and self-worth. The finding also relates to the role of spiritual formation in empathy development. The literature demonstrates strong evidence that spirituality and empathy are interconnected in children's moral development. In Christian education, moments of prayer, reflection, silence, and worship are not merely devotional practices but opportunities for students to grow in self-awareness, gratitude, and compassion. Spiritual practices help children develop inner calmness, emotional regulation, and a sense of responsibility toward others. When PAK teachers use Genesis 40:14 in spiritual reflection, students are invited to pray for those who feel forgotten, to remember those who need kindness, and to reflect on their own experiences of needing empathy. This linkage between spirituality and emotional development is supported by theological studies that emphasize the biblical command to "remember" the marginalized, the poor, and the

suffering as a form of covenantal faithfulness. Empathy, therefore, is framed not only as a psychological skill but as a spiritual discipline grounded in God's character. Rapid digitalization, shifting cultural values, social media influence, and family fragmentation have contributed to decreasing emotional sensitivity among children. Several studies show that excessive screen time reduces children's ability to recognize facial cues and emotional expressions. Teachers at SD Negeri 19 Tanjung Harapan reported similar concerns in local studies: children sometimes struggle to understand peer emotions, resolve conflicts peacefully, or express their own feelings constructively. This makes the role of teacher social competence even more critical. Socially competent teachers intervene not by punitive measures but through patient guidance, restorative dialogue, and structured emotional learning activities. Integrating Genesis 40:14 provides a moral anchor that helps students frame empathy as an expression of faith and humanity rather than as an imposed rule. The literature also identifies numerous strategies, including dramatization of the Joseph narrative, empathy mapping, role-playing, guided imagery, and reflective storytelling. Students can be asked to imagine how Joseph felt when he said, "remember me," or how the cupbearer felt upon regaining freedom. Such exercises deepen emotional engagement and help students connect biblical narratives with their own experiences of disappointment, hope, or exclusion. PAK teachers with strong social competence know how to facilitate these activities sensitively, ensuring that students feel safe to share emotions and listen respectfully to others. These strategies are shown to significantly enhance empathy and interpersonal understanding. When social competence, biblical insight, and pedagogical strategy are combined, empathy formation becomes a holistic process that shapes students' emotional, moral, and spiritual development. Genesis 40:14 serves as a powerful exegetical and pedagogical tool because it highlights the deeply human desire for recognition, compassion, and relational loyalty. When PAK teachers embody and teach these values, they not only fulfill their educational mandate but also nurture children who are capable of forming healthy relationships, caring for others, and embodying Christlike compassion in their daily lives. The findings affirm that empathy development in Christian education is most effective when grounded in relational competence, cultural sensitivity, spiritual reflection, and thoughtful engagement with Scripture. In the case of SD Negeri 19 Tanjung Harapan, the integration of these dimensions holds significant potential to transform student character formation and strengthen the moral fabric of the school community.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE/PAK) teachers plays a foundational role in cultivating empathy among primary school students, particularly when grounded in the exegetical and pedagogical insights of Genesis 40:14. Through the systematic synthesis of interdisciplinary literature, it becomes evident that empathy is nurtured most effectively within relational environments shaped by emotionally attuned, communicatively skilled, and spiritually grounded teachers. Social competence emerges not merely as a supplementary teaching attribute but as an essential component of professional identity, one that enables teachers to understand students' emotional realities, respond compassionately to their needs, and guide them in developing interpersonal care. Genesis 40:14, which captures Joseph's vulnerable request to be remembered with kindness, provides a profound theological anchor that illuminates

empathy as an active, relational, and morally charged practice. The Hebrew concept of *zakar*, implying compassionate remembrance, reinforces that empathy involves not only emotional resonance but also intentional action on behalf of others. Within the context of SD Negeri 19 Tanjung Harapan, these insights hold significant relevance. Students in this setting navigate diverse social, emotional, and cultural challenges that can affect their capacity for empathy. The findings indicate that PAK teachers who model compassionate communication, engage students through experiential and narrative-based learning, and connect biblical narratives to everyday relational experiences are more effective in fostering empathetic attitudes and behaviors. Cultural values align closely with the biblical call to remember and care for others, demonstrating that empathy can be cultivated through the harmonious integration of Scripture, local wisdom, and pedagogical strategy. Moreover, spiritual practices embedded in Christian education, such as prayer, reflection, and moral dialogue provide valuable opportunities for children to internalize empathy as part of their faith formation. This study affirms that empathy cultivation requires a holistic interplay between teacher competence, contextual sensitivity, and theological understanding. When PAK teachers embody social competence and intentionally incorporate biblical insights such as those found in Genesis 40:14, they contribute not only to students' emotional development but also to the formation of compassionate, morally grounded young individuals capable of positively shaping their communities.

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