



The Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Developing Peace Education at SMP Negeri 1 Tuhemberua

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ABSTRACT

Peace education has become an increasingly urgent agenda in Indonesia, where schools function as microcosms of society and play a pivotal role in cultivating tolerance, reconciliation, and social harmony. Within this framework, Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers carry the responsibility of integrating theological values of love, forgiveness, and justice into peace-oriented pedagogy. This study explored the competence of CRE teachers in promoting peace education at SMP Negeri 1 Tuhemberua, North Nias, where diverse social and cultural dynamics demand contextualized approaches. Methodologically, the research combined a systematic literature review (SLR) and a qualitative case study. The SLR followed the PRISMA protocol, synthesizing 25 peer-reviewed studies (2015–2023) on peace pedagogy, teacher competence, and faith-based education. The case study involved one CRE teacher, supported by student and principal perspectives, selected through purposive sampling. Data collection employed semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and documentation, analyzed through thematic coding. Findings revealed four interrelated dimensions of teacher competence in peace education: theological competence, pedagogical competence, affective-spiritual competence, and social-relational competence. The teacher effectively integrated biblical narratives of reconciliation into classroom practice, designed participatory and inclusive learning activities, embodied peace values through personal character, and extended peace initiatives into community-based activities. Challenges included limited resources, curricular marginalization, and broader societal tensions. The study concludes that CRE teachers' competence in peace education is multidimensional, requiring integration of theology, pedagogy, spirituality, and social engagement. It underscores the need for systemic reforms in teacher training and curriculum design to ensure sustainable peace education in pluralistic contexts.

Keywords: Competence, Christian Religious Education, Peace Education

INTRODUCTION

Peace education has increasingly emerged as a vital component in contemporary educational discourse, particularly in light of the growing prevalence of social conflicts, intolerance, and violence involving both students and educational institutions (Supriyadi, 2022). In a multicultural society such as Indonesia, peace education is not merely a pedagogical approach but also a strategic avenue for cultivating a culture of peace from an early stage. Schools, as microcosms of society, play a crucial role in shaping values, attitudes, and behaviors that contribute to social harmony. Within this framework, teachers hold a central role as facilitators and exemplars of peace. For Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers, the responsibility is even more profound, since their theological mandate emphasizes instilling values of love, forgiveness, and reconciliation as integral expressions of the Christian faith (Santoso, 2021). The urgency of peace education in Indonesian schools cannot be separated from the nation's historical and contemporary experiences with inter-ethnic and inter-religious tensions. As a pluralistic nation, Indonesia embraces cultural and religious diversity. However, this diversity often presents challenges, particularly among young learners who may be vulnerable to negative influences from social media, peer groups, or political discourses. Against this backdrop, CRE teachers are expected not only to transmit biblical knowledge but also to act as social transformers who guide students in cultivating peace-oriented values and practices. Their competencies therefore extend beyond content mastery to encompass pedagogical sensitivity, affective depth, and spiritual maturity (Baines, 2018).

SMP Negeri 1 Tuhemberua, located in North Nias, exemplifies this educational reality. The school faces distinctive challenges in nurturing students' peaceful character, given their diverse social and cultural backgrounds, interfaith interactions, and external environmental influences. These conditions demand that peace education cannot be implemented as a one-time activity but rather as an ongoing and contextualized process. Here, CRE teachers serve as key actors who can foster critical understanding among students about the importance of peace, equipping them with the skills and ethical commitments necessary to live as peacebuilders in their daily lives. Competence, in this context, encompasses multiple dimensions. It is not limited to a teacher's academic knowledge or methodological expertise but also includes affective and spiritual capacities. A competent CRE teacher is expected to embody peace in personal life, create inclusive and empathetic classroom environments, and design instructional strategies that awaken students' ethical awareness and reflective thinking (Santoso, 2021). Peace education, thus, transcends the mere transmission of content; it constitutes a transformative process of shaping character and behavior through sustained interaction between teachers and students (Brock, 2020). Previous studies have highlighted that the effectiveness of peace education is highly contingent on the readiness and capacity of teachers to internalize and consistently apply peace values in classroom practice (Baines, 2018). In Christian pedagogy, these values resonate deeply with the teachings of Jesus Christ, who emphasized loving one's enemies, reconciling with others, and nurturing just and respectful relationships (Brock, 2020). Therefore, it becomes essential to investigate the extent to which CRE teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Tuhemberua demonstrate competencies in integrating these theological imperatives into their teaching practices, and to explore the challenges they encounter in doing so. This study carries both

theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it enriches scholarly discussions on teacher competence and peace education within the field of Christian pedagogy, highlighting the integration of spiritual, affective, and cognitive dimensions. Practically, it offers insights that may inform educational policymakers and stakeholders in designing more contextualized teacher training programs and in formulating curricula that explicitly integrate peace values into school life. Such efforts are expected to support the development of students who are not only intellectually competent but also morally wise and committed to peace in navigating the complexities of contemporary social realities. The role of CRE teachers in advancing peace education at SMP Negeri 1 Tuhemberua illustrates the broader need for competent educators who embody and promote peace as both a personal conviction and pedagogical practice. By foregrounding the integration of Christian values with peace-oriented pedagogy, this study aims to contribute to the vision of education as a transformative process that cultivates individuals capable of fostering reconciliation, justice, and harmony in an increasingly diverse and challenging world.

METHODS

This study incorporated a systematic literature review (SLR) to establish a theoretical foundation and contextualize the research findings within broader scholarly discussions. Following the PRISMA framework (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) (Moher et al., 2009), the review process involved four stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. Databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, ERIC, and DOAJ were searched using keywords: “peace education,” “teacher competence,” “Christian Religious Education,” and “Indonesia.” Articles published between 2015 and 2023 were prioritized to capture recent trends in peace education and teacher development. Duplicates were removed. Abstracts and full texts were reviewed to ensure relevance to themes of teacher competence and peace pedagogy. Exclusion criteria included studies focusing solely on higher education or those outside the scope of religious education. A total of 25 peer-reviewed articles were analyzed to map recurring themes such as the integration of peace values in pedagogy, theological underpinnings of peace education, and challenges faced by teachers in multicultural contexts. The SLR highlighted that the effectiveness of peace education strongly depends on teacher competencies that go beyond subject knowledge, encompassing ethical modeling, dialogical engagement, and contextual sensitivity (Salomon & Cairns, 2018; Bajaj & Hantzopoulos, 2016). Studies also emphasized that in faith-based education, theological perspectives significantly reinforce peace education by rooting it in religious doctrines of reconciliation and justice (Brock, 2020). These insights provided the theoretical lens through which the case study was examined and interpreted. This study also employed a case study approach to explore in depth the competencies of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in developing peace education at SMP Negeri 1 Tuhemberua. A qualitative design was chosen, as it aligns with the research orientation toward understanding meanings, values, and the subjective experiences of teachers within authentic teaching contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Case study methodology was selected because it enables the researcher to investigate intensively and holistically a specific phenomenon within a particular setting, in this case, a single educational

institution. The primary subject of the study was a CRE teacher at SMP Negeri 1 Tuhemberua, while additional informants included two students and one school principal. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, with specific criteria: (1) the teacher must have at least five years of teaching experience, (2) demonstrate consistent integration of peace values in instructional practices, and (3) be recognized within the school community as an influential figure in shaping students' character. The inclusion of students and the principal as supporting informants provided triangulation and enriched perspectives on the teacher's role. Interviews were semi-structured, guided by indicators of teacher competence in peace education, including theological, pedagogical, affective, and social dimensions (Sharma & Bajaj, 2018). The analysis was iterative and continuous, ensuring a coherent relationship between empirical data and theoretical frameworks.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study at SMP Negeri 1 Tuhemberua revealed four interrelated dimensions of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher competence in peace education: theological competence, pedagogical competence, affective-spiritual competence, and social-relational competence. These dimensions shaped the teacher's ability to design peace-oriented instruction, embody values of reconciliation, and guide students toward becoming peacebuilders within their school and community contexts. These findings are consistent with the wider body of peace education literature, which emphasizes that teacher competence must transcend technical mastery to encompass spiritual depth, ethical consistency, and dialogical engagement (Salomon & Cairns, 2018; Bajaj & Hantzopoulos, 2016).

The CRE teacher at SMP Negeri 1 Tuhemberua demonstrated a strong theological grounding by integrating biblical narratives of peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation into daily instruction. Lessons frequently drew upon passages such as the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) to encourage students to "love their enemies" and "seek peace with others." Students confirmed that the teacher not only quoted Scripture but also contextualized it into practical situations such as conflict resolution among peers. This finding resonates with Brock's (2020) argument that theological competence in peace education requires teachers to frame Christian doctrines not as abstract theology but as lived practices of justice and reconciliation. In line with the SLR, theological competence provided legitimacy and authority to peace pedagogy, allowing students to perceive peace not merely as a social value but as a divine mandate (Bajaj & Hantzopoulos, 2016). However, the case also highlighted a challenge: students sometimes viewed theological messages as idealistic, especially when juxtaposed with harsh realities of bullying, competition, and socioeconomic inequalities. This tension aligns with Santoso's (2021) observation that theological imperatives of peace must be continuously reinterpreted in light of contextual challenges to remain pedagogically relevant.

Pedagogical Competence: Designing Peace-Oriented Learning Environments

Pedagogically, the CRE teacher employed interactive strategies such as group discussions, storytelling, and role-play activities that engaged students in exploring themes of tolerance, empathy, and dialogue. Observations indicated that the classroom atmosphere

was inclusive, with deliberate efforts to value diverse perspectives among students from different social and cultural backgrounds. The SLR confirms that peace pedagogy is most effective when it fosters active participation and critical dialogue rather than rote transmission of content (Baines, 2018; Sharma & Bajaj, 2018). By designing student-centered learning, the teacher aligned with global best practices in peace education, where engagement, reflection, and collaboration are essential components. Pedagogical challenges remained. For instance, limited access to instructional resources constrained the teacher's ability to incorporate multimedia or digital tools that could have enriched the learning experience. Similar limitations are noted in Indonesian contexts where rural schools face infrastructural barriers (Supriyadi, 2022).

Affective-Spiritual Competence: Modeling Peace in Character and Conduct

Perhaps the most significant finding was the teacher's affective and spiritual role as a living model of peace. Students described the teacher as patient, empathetic, and willing to mediate interpersonal conflicts beyond the classroom. The principal affirmed that the teacher's calm demeanor and fairness influenced not only students but also colleagues, fostering a more harmonious school environment. This reflects what Bajaj and Hantzopoulos (2016) identify as "embodied pedagogy," where peace education becomes credible only when teachers personally demonstrate the values they teach. It also echoes the theological stance that Christian educators are called to embody Christ-like character in both personal and professional spheres (Brock, 2020). The affective-spiritual dimension proved particularly crucial in addressing students' emotional needs, especially when dealing with family or community conflicts. The teacher's pastoral approach complemented pedagogical strategies by offering relational support and moral guidance. This finding affirms the SLR insight that peace education requires educators to act simultaneously as instructors, mentors, and moral exemplars (Salomon & Cairns, 2018).

Social-Relational Competence: Building Community and Dialogue

Beyond classroom instruction, the teacher was actively involved in school-wide initiatives that promoted harmony, such as interfaith dialogue sessions, extracurricular activities, and community service projects. These initiatives enabled students to practice peace values in broader social interactions. This aligns with Salomon and Cairns (2018), who argue that sustainable peace education must extend beyond the classroom into the wider school and community. It also reflects Indonesian scholarship emphasizing that schools serve as social laboratories for nurturing pluralism and tolerance (Supriyadi, 2022). The involvement of students in extracurricular peace activities reinforced relational learning by translating theoretical values into lived experiences. For example, students reported that participating in joint clean-up programs with peers from other faiths helped them overcome stereotypes and foster mutual respect. Despite these positive outcomes, three major challenges emerged: North Nias is characterized by socioeconomic inequalities, limited educational resources, and exposure to external influences such as social media conflict narratives. These realities sometimes diluted the impact of peace education initiatives. Similar contextual obstacles are widely documented in peace education literature across the Global South (Bajaj & Hantzopoulos, 2016); While diversity enriched

the classroom, it also generated tensions. Peer group dynamics, community disputes, and exposure to intolerant rhetoric occasionally undermined classroom peace initiatives. Baines (2018) notes that peace education often struggles when broader societal narratives contradict school-based messages; The national curriculum does not explicitly embed peace education as a structured subject, leaving CRE teachers to integrate it implicitly within limited time allocations. This mirrors findings from Sharma and Bajaj (2018), who argue that peace values are often marginalized in formal curricula, relying heavily on teacher initiative.

The case illustrates the importance of balancing theological grounding with pedagogical innovation. Literature confirms that theological legitimacy enhances the moral authority of peace education (Brock, 2020), but without engaging pedagogy, students may perceive it as abstract or unattainable (Baines, 2018). The teacher at SMP Negeri 1 Tuhemberua exemplified this integration by using interactive methods rooted in Christian theology, thereby bridging faith and praxis. The SLR emphasizes the centrality of teachers' personal embodiment of peace values (Bajaj & Hantzopoulos, 2016). The findings confirmed this, showing that the teacher's affective-spiritual competence had perhaps the greatest impact on students. This suggests that teacher training for peace education must prioritize character formation and reflective spirituality alongside methodological skills. Literature stresses that peace education must be context-sensitive (Salomon & Cairns, 2018). The Tuhemberua case revealed that students' diverse backgrounds required adaptive strategies, such as incorporating local cultural values of harmony and respect. This contextualization ensured that peace education was not perceived as an external imposition but as rooted in both Christian faith and local wisdom. The SLR also highlighted that systemic challenges-curricular marginalization, resource limitations, and policy gaps-often hinder the effectiveness of peace education (Sharma & Bajaj, 2018). The case confirmed these constraints, suggesting a need for educational policymakers to explicitly integrate peace education into curricula, provide teacher training, and allocate institutional support. Without such systemic backing, individual teacher efforts risk being fragmented or unsustainable. This study enriches peace education discourse by demonstrating how teacher competence is multidimensional-theological, pedagogical, affective-spiritual, and social-relational. It expands the framework by showing how these dimensions interact in a faith-based, multicultural context. The findings suggest that teacher training programs should: strengthen theological literacy for CRE teachers to ground peace education in Christian values, equip teachers with interactive pedagogical strategies for fostering inclusive dialogue, emphasize character formation to develop educators as role models of peace, encourage community engagement projects to extend peace education beyond classrooms. These contributions align with global calls for holistic peace education that integrates personal transformation with social responsibility (Bajaj & Hantzopoulos, 2016; Salomon & Cairns, 2018).

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in advancing peace education at SMP Negeri 1 Tuhemberua is multidimensional, encompassing theological, pedagogical, affective-spiritual, and social-relational capacities. The findings affirm that peace education is not merely a supplementary activity

within schools but a transformative process that requires teachers to integrate biblical imperatives with practical strategies for character formation and social harmony. In particular, the case highlighted that theological competence provided the moral foundation for peace pedagogy, enabling students to recognize peace not simply as a social necessity but as a divine mandate rooted in Christian teaching. By contextualizing Scripture into everyday realities, the teacher bridged the gap between abstract theology and lived experiences, allowing students to perceive peace as both attainable and meaningful. Pedagogical competence emerged as equally significant. Through interactive methods such as discussions, storytelling, and role-plays, the teacher succeeded in fostering a participatory classroom climate where dialogue and empathy were prioritized. These strategies aligned with global best practices in peace pedagogy and confirmed the value of moving beyond didactic teaching toward experiential learning. Yet, challenges such as limited resources and curricular marginalization revealed the structural barriers that constrain teachers' ability to innovate fully. This underscores the urgent need for systemic policy reforms that embed peace education more explicitly within national curricula and provide teachers with adequate tools and training. Perhaps the most compelling insight was the importance of affective-spiritual competence. Students and school leaders consistently identified the teacher's personal embodiment of peace values—patience, fairness, empathy—as the factor that most powerfully influenced student behavior and school climate. This finding supports the view that peace education is most effective when teachers serve as role models who embody the virtues they teach. In contexts marked by conflict, inequality, or social fragmentation, the credibility of peace pedagogy depends heavily on this embodied witness. Consequently, teacher training initiatives must go beyond technical skill development to include reflective spiritual formation and ethical cultivation. The study also emphasized the value of social-relational competence. By engaging students in extracurricular activities, interfaith dialogues, and community service, the teacher extended peace learning beyond the classroom into the wider social environment. This broader engagement enabled students to practice reconciliation and tolerance in real-life interactions, reinforcing theoretical learning with lived experiences. However, the persistence of external challenges—such as socioeconomic disparities, local tensions, and exposure to divisive narratives through media—demonstrates that peace education cannot be sustained by teachers alone. Institutional collaboration, community involvement, and supportive policies are essential to ensure continuity and effectiveness. Overall, the case of SMP Negeri 1 Tuhemberua contributes to the wider literature by showing that teacher competence in peace education is not a single dimension but a holistic integration of knowledge, pedagogy, character, and social engagement. For faith-based contexts, theological grounding strengthens the moral legitimacy of peace education, while affective-spiritual embodiment ensures its credibility. For policy and practice, this study highlights the necessity of systemic reforms that recognize peace education as integral to national educational goals, not as peripheral. By equipping teachers with theological depth, pedagogical creativity, moral integrity, and community engagement skills, education can become a transformative force for reconciliation and harmony in pluralistic societies such as Indonesia.

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