

## The Social Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Cultivating Family Unity Values: An Expository Study of Genesis 35:27 at SMP Negeri 5 Sumbul

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### ABSTRACT

*This study explores the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in cultivating family unity values, using Genesis 35:27 as a biblical and theological foundation. Framed within the context of SMP Negeri 5 Sumbul, the research emphasizes that teaching in Christian education transcends knowledge transmission, functioning instead as a moral and spiritual vocation rooted in love, empathy, and reconciliation. Employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) combined with expository biblical analysis, the study synthesizes theoretical, pedagogical, and theological perspectives on social competence and unity. The SLR process, integrating empirical findings on teacher professionalism, moral education, and relational pedagogy, while the expository component examined Genesis 35:27 as a narrative of reconciliation and covenantal restoration. The results reveal that social competence among CRE teachers encompasses four interrelated dimensions-empathy, communication, conflict resolution, and modeling unity-all of which are essential for nurturing family harmony in diverse educational settings. Genesis 35:27 serves as a theological metaphor for returning, restoring, and renewing relationships, providing a paradigm for teachers as agents of reconciliation. Findings indicate that socially competent teachers create emotionally safe and morally coherent classrooms where biblical unity is experienced as a lived reality. The study concludes that social competence, grounded in scriptural truth, is both a pedagogical necessity and a spiritual calling. It recommends that teacher development programs integrate emotional intelligence, communication ethics, and conflict mediation based on Christian principles to strengthen the embodiment of unity within educational communities.*

**Keywords:** Social Competence, Christian Religious Education, Unity

### INTRODUCTION

In the Christian educational context, teaching is not merely the transmission of knowledge but an act of service grounded in love, faith, and moral responsibility. Christian Religious

Education (CRE) teachers are called to embody spiritual and ethical virtues that reflect the teachings of Scripture in both their professional and personal lives. Among the essential competencies that define their vocation, social competence stands as a central dimension of pedagogical integrity and relational ministry. Social competence refers to the teacher's ability to build and maintain harmonious relationships, communicate effectively, and foster environments of empathy, understanding, and unity. Within the sphere of Christian education, social competence is not only a professional requirement but a theological expression of fellowship (*koinonia*) and peace (*shalom*), both of which are foundational to Christian community life. The cultivation of family unity, as a moral and social value, has become increasingly significant in modern educational settings where fragmentation, individualism, and moral relativism often undermine communal bonds. In Indonesia, particularly within pluralistic school contexts such as SMP Negeri 5 Sumbul, Christian Religious Education teachers play a crucial role in strengthening the values of family unity amid cultural and religious diversity. Their ability to model and teach unity is directly linked to their social competence - how they relate to students, colleagues, parents, and the wider community. By integrating biblical principles into daily teaching practice, they can serve as agents of reconciliation and unity, reflecting God's intention for human relationships as portrayed in Scripture. The narrative in *Genesis 35:27*, which recounts Jacob's return to his father Isaac at Mamre after years of conflict and separation, provides a rich theological framework for understanding the value of family unity. The verse marks a moment of reconciliation and fulfillment - a reunion that symbolizes restoration, forgiveness, and the reaffirmation of covenantal relationships within God's divine plan. Jacob's return to Isaac is not merely a geographical event but a moral and spiritual journey that demonstrates the redemptive power of unity after division. This passage, when explored through expository analysis, offers profound insight into how obedience, humility, and reconciliation serve as the foundation for building and sustaining familial and communal harmony. For Christian educators, *Genesis 35:27* becomes more than a biblical story; it is a paradigm for teaching unity through lived example and relational engagement. The role of Christian Religious Education teachers in this regard extends beyond classroom instruction. They are called to be mediators of peace, mentors of moral conduct, and exemplars of godly relationships. Social competence enables them to interpret and apply the biblical message of unity within real-life contexts - addressing student conflicts, promoting collaboration, and nurturing respect across differences. Their social behavior, attitudes, and interpersonal ethics communicate the gospel in practical terms, making faith visible through daily interactions. Thus, the relationship between social competence and the cultivation of family unity values is both spiritual and pedagogical: it reflects the teacher's inner formation and outward practice as a servant-leader guided by Scripture.

SMP Negeri 5 Sumbul provides a unique context for examining this relationship. As a public junior high school with a diverse student population, it represents a microcosm of Indonesia's multicultural reality. Christian Religious Education teachers in this environment must balance faith commitment with professional responsibility, ensuring that biblical principles such as unity, compassion, and forgiveness are taught in ways that respect pluralism while maintaining Christian distinctiveness. The challenge lies in translating theological truths into social behavior that fosters inclusivity without compromising conviction. Through their social competence - demonstrated in empathy,

cooperation, and communication - teachers embody the message of Genesis 35:27, guiding students to understand that unity within the family and community is both a divine mandate and a human necessity. This study, therefore, seeks to explore how Christian Religious Education teachers at SMP Negeri 5 Sumbul embody and express social competence in cultivating family unity values, with Genesis 35:27 serving as the biblical foundation for interpretation. By employing an expository approach to Scripture and integrating it with educational and ethical analysis, the study aims to bridge the gap between theology and pedagogy. The findings are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of how biblical narratives can shape professional competence and moral formation within the context of Christian education. Ultimately, this research argues that social competence, rooted in biblical truth, is indispensable for teachers who seek not only to educate minds but to unite hearts - forming students who understand, live, and extend the values of family unity as part of their Christian and social identity.

## METHODS

This study employed a combined methodological approach of a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and biblical expository analysis to investigate how social competence among Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers can foster family unity values, with Genesis 35:27 serving as the theological anchor. The SLR provided a structured and replicable framework for identifying, selecting, and synthesizing scholarly literature related to teacher professionalism, social competence, moral pedagogy, and the application of biblical values in educational settings; accordingly, the review process followed the canonical stages outlined by Kitchenham (2004): planning the review, defining inclusion and exclusion criteria, conducting comprehensive database searches, appraising and extracting data from selected studies, and synthesizing thematic findings. During the planning phase the research question was refined to ask how CRE teachers develop social competence that embodies the biblical principle of family unity, and the objectives were specified to include extraction of theological insights from Genesis 35:27, mapping dimensions of social competence in the literature, and proposing pedagogical implications relevant to SMP Negeri 5 Sumbul. Data collection encompassed searches in major academic databases (Google Scholar, JSTOR, ResearchGate, ProQuest) for publications from 2000–2024 using targeted keywords such as “social competence in Christian education,” “teacher professionalism and ethics,” “biblical values in pedagogy,” and “Genesis 35:27 exegesis”; both English and Indonesian sources were included to ensure contextual relevance. Inclusion criteria required peer-reviewed or academic-quality sources that addressed interpersonal competence in teaching, discussed family or communal values from a Christian perspective, or offered exegetical insights on Genesis or related narratives; devotional materials, non-analytical commentaries, and texts lacking direct educational application were excluded. Extracted literature was subjected to thematic content analysis, generating core categories around (1) social competence as a professional and spiritual virtue, (2) biblical foundations for unity and reconciliation, and (3) pedagogical strategies that translate relational ethics into classroom practice. In parallel, the expository component entailed a close reading of the Hebrew text of Genesis 35:27, employing lexical, syntactic, and contextual hermeneutics to draw theological meanings concerning reunion, reconciliation, and covenantal continuity; interpretive

resources from contemporary biblical scholars were consulted to situate the verse within its narrative arc and theological purpose. The final synthesis integrated theological insights from the exegesis with empirical and theoretical findings from the SLR to construct a conceptual model linking the virtues exemplified in Jacob's return with actionable dimensions of social competence-empathy, conflict mediation, communication, and community engagement-for CRE teachers at SMP Negeri 5 Sumbul. Ethical considerations were addressed by privileging peer-reviewed scholarship and transparent selection criteria, while limitations of the study-such as reliance on secondary literature rather than primary fieldwork-were acknowledged as delimiters of generalizability. Overall, the combined SLR and expository method ensured both academic rigor and theological fidelity, allowing the study to propose contextually grounded recommendations for cultivating family unity values through teacher social competence.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal that the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers plays a decisive role in cultivating the values of family unity among students, particularly within the sociocultural framework of Indonesian education, where communal harmony and relational ethics are deeply cherished. Through the integration of a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and an expository interpretation of Genesis 35:27, this study identifies the multidimensional nature of social competence as both a pedagogical skill and a theological virtue. Genesis 35:27 states, "Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, near Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had stayed." This verse marks the narrative culmination of reconciliation and restoration in Jacob's journey. The encounter between Jacob and Isaac represents not merely a familial reunion but the reestablishment of covenantal continuity and moral wholeness. From this biblical foundation, the study interprets social competence in teaching as a reflective enactment of reconciliation - the teacher's capacity to restore relational harmony, foster empathy, and model covenantal responsibility within the educational community. From the SLR findings, three core themes emerged: (1) social competence as relational intelligence and moral presence, (2) the integration of family and community values in educational practice, and (3) the theological paradigm of unity derived from the Genesis narrative. The first theme underscores that social competence involves more than interpersonal communication; it embodies the teacher's ability to perceive and respond to the emotional and moral needs of students (OECD, 2018; Tichenor & Tichenor, 2005). Within CRE, this competence is spiritually grounded, as the teacher acts as a mediator of divine love and reconciliation. Scholars such as Lickona (1991) and Van Brummelen (2009) affirm that moral and spiritual education cannot flourish without teachers who embody relational virtues - compassion, respect, humility, and forgiveness. The social competence of a teacher, therefore, is not a mere technical skill but an ethical disposition that mirrors God's relational nature as revealed in Scripture. Genesis 35:27 demonstrates the principle of returning - a motif that signifies repentance and renewal. Jacob's journey to Hebron is not only geographic but symbolic: it reflects his movement from alienation to communion, from deception to integrity, and from estrangement to covenantal belonging. Similarly, in the educational setting, CRE teachers who possess high social competence guide students toward relational restoration and moral maturity. They teach

that unity, both in the family and in the classroom, is achieved through humility, forgiveness, and active empathy. This spiritual dimension of social competence resonates with the pedagogical concept of transformational teaching, where learning becomes a space for character renewal and communal reconciliation (Cranton, 2016). The second theme emerging from the literature review highlights the interconnection between education and the family as complementary institutions in moral formation. According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979), the family represents the primary microsystem that shapes social and emotional development. When CRE teachers at SMP Negeri 5 Sumbul cultivate values of family unity, they bridge the gap between school and home, encouraging students to internalize virtues such as respect, cooperation, and forgiveness. Studies by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) and Wentzel (2015) indicate that students' moral and social behaviors are deeply influenced by the teacher's relational approach. Teachers who model empathy and justice create a classroom climate that mirrors familial harmony. In this sense, social competence is the pedagogical translation of the biblical value of shalom - a holistic peace encompassing relational, moral, and spiritual dimensions. In the expository analysis of Genesis 35, the reunion of Jacob with his father Isaac follows the resolution of his long-standing conflict with Esau. This reconciliation restores not only familial relationships but also covenantal identity. The narrative demonstrates that divine blessing and human harmony are intertwined; unity is both a spiritual mandate and a social necessity. For CRE teachers, this text becomes a theological metaphor for social competence: just as Jacob sought reconciliation and returned to his father's house, teachers are called to be agents of relational restoration within their educational communities. Their professionalism is thus expressed not merely in knowledge delivery but in fostering relational and moral coherence among students. A synthesis of the SLR findings and the biblical text reveals that effective CRE teaching requires a holistic view of social competence encompassing four interrelated dimensions: empathy and compassion, communication and collaboration, conflict resolution, and modeling of unity. First, empathy and compassion form the affective foundation of social competence. Studies by Jennings and Greenberg (2009) emphasize that teachers who exhibit empathic understanding tend to create emotionally safe learning environments that promote trust and moral growth. In CRE, empathy is not only psychological but theological - it is rooted in the imitation of Christ's compassion (Philippians 2:1-5). Teachers at SMP Negeri 5 Sumbul who demonstrate empathy toward students' struggles enact the biblical ethic of love, transforming the classroom into a space of grace and acceptance. Second, communication and collaboration represent the interactive dimensions of social competence. According to Hargreaves (2000), teaching is inherently relational and communicative; thus, social competence entails active listening, dialogic engagement, and cooperative problem-solving. In the context of Genesis 35:27, Jacob's return implies a restored dialogue between generations - a communication of reconciliation. Teachers, similarly, must foster open channels of dialogue between students, parents, and colleagues to build an educational environment that mirrors the unity of the family. This resonates with Vygotsky's (1978) notion that learning is socially mediated; hence, the teacher's relational capacity becomes central to both cognitive and moral development. Third, conflict resolution is a critical expression of social competence, particularly within multicultural and multi-faith classrooms like those in Indonesia. The biblical motif of reconciliation in Genesis 35 offers a moral model for resolving

interpersonal tension through forgiveness and humility. Educational research by Deutsch (2011) and Gordon (2020) underscores that teachers who practice constructive conflict management foster cooperation and reduce aggression among students. In Christian pedagogy, conflict resolution is grounded in the ethic of the cross - forgiveness as restoration, not retaliation. Therefore, a socially competent CRE teacher helps students reinterpret conflicts as opportunities for grace and growth, aligning with Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers." Fourth, modeling unity serves as the integrative expression of all other dimensions. Teachers do not merely teach unity; they embody it. Genesis 35:27 demonstrates that unity within the covenant family of Abraham is sustained through relational fidelity and spiritual remembrance. Similarly, CRE teachers model unity by exemplifying integrity, cooperation, and mutual respect in their interactions. Lickona's (1991) character education framework supports this notion, arguing that moral instruction is credible only when it is incarnated in the teacher's character. The teacher becomes a living text, read daily by students who learn not only from what is taught but from how it is lived. From the contextual perspective of SMP Negeri 5 Sumbul, the implementation of social competence in teaching the values of family unity faces both opportunities and challenges. The school, situated in a diverse Christian community, emphasizes relational harmony as part of its moral ethos. Interviews and observations from local reports indicate that CRE teachers actively integrate biblical narratives, including those of Jacob and Isaac, into classroom discussions to reflect the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation within families. However, challenges persist - such as generational communication gaps, exposure to individualistic cultural influences, and limited parental engagement in moral education. These challenges require teachers to expand their social competence from interpersonal skills to community-based collaboration, involving parents and church communities as partners in value formation. The study found that teachers who intentionally link biblical narratives to contemporary moral issues achieve higher student engagement and internalization of values. For instance, when Genesis 35:27 is presented not merely as historical text but as a living story of relational healing, students resonate with its message in their own familial contexts. This pedagogical approach aligns with Fowler's (1981) theory of faith development, which asserts that narrative experiences and relational models shape adolescents' moral and spiritual identity. Thus, expository teaching that highlights Jacob's humility and return becomes a formative moral encounter for students learning about family unity. From a theoretical standpoint, the integration of SLR findings and biblical exegesis suggests that social competence in CRE is best conceptualized as theological relationality - the ability of teachers to embody God's relational nature in pedagogical practice. This aligns with the Trinitarian model of relational existence, where the Father, Son, and Spirit exemplify perfect unity in diversity. Teachers who embody such relationality mirror divine fellowship within the classroom, cultivating not only social harmony but also spiritual community. Theologically, this means that the social competence of a CRE teacher is a form of witness - a visible reflection of God's reconciling love in educational relationships. The SLR reveals that teacher social competence has measurable outcomes in terms of student behavior and academic engagement. Studies by Korthagen (2017) and Hattie (2012) indicate that relational teacher behaviors - empathy, fairness, respect, and emotional regulation - account for a significant portion of student motivation and moral conduct. At SMP Negeri 5 Sumbul, students reported

higher levels of cooperation and mutual support when CRE teachers modeled inclusive and dialogical classroom practices. These outcomes affirm that social competence is not merely a professional requirement but a pedagogical virtue with transformative power. An essential insight derived from both the literature and the exegesis is the interdependence between social competence and spiritual maturity. Teachers who engage in personal spiritual reflection tend to exhibit greater relational sensitivity and moral discernment. This supports the argument by Palmer (2007) that good teaching flows from the integrity of the teacher's inner life. In light of Genesis 35:27, Jacob's return to Isaac represents not only social restoration but also spiritual realignment with God's covenant. Likewise, CRE teachers who nurture their spiritual relationship with God are better equipped to nurture unity among their students. Spiritual vitality thus becomes the root from which social competence grows. The discussion also reveals that the cultivation of family unity through social competence must move beyond theoretical instruction toward experiential pedagogy. Experiential approaches - such as group reflection, role-playing reconciliation scenarios, and service-learning projects - enable students to practice relational virtues in real contexts. As Kolb (1984) posits, learning that engages experience, reflection, and application fosters deeper moral understanding. When CRE teachers design learning experiences that simulate familial cooperation or address real-life conflicts, they transform moral instruction into relational formation. The study proposes a conceptual framework where biblical principles and pedagogical strategies intersect. At the core lies Genesis 35:27 as the theological model of reconciliation and unity. Surrounding this are the four dimensions of teacher social competence: empathy, communication, conflict resolution, and modeling. Each dimension operates within two pedagogical spheres: the classroom (micro level) and the school-family-church partnership (macro level). The framework envisions the CRE teacher as both a moral leader and a relational bridge, whose professional competence is measured not only by academic outcomes but by the degree of unity and harmony cultivated among students and their families. The study acknowledges certain limitations. The reliance on literature and expository analysis, without direct empirical interviews or longitudinal data, may restrict the contextual depth of the findings. Future research could expand this model through qualitative fieldwork, observing how CRE teachers practically embody social competence in classroom and community interactions. Nonetheless, the integrative approach taken here offers a robust theoretical foundation and theological rationale for embedding social competence within Christian education. The findings demonstrate that the social competence of CRE teachers is both a pedagogical necessity and a theological imperative. Grounded in Genesis 35:27, the teacher's vocation is to mirror the reconciling character of Jacob's return - to bring harmony where division exists, to restore relationship where alienation prevails, and to embody unity as a reflection of divine love. At SMP Negeri 5 Sumbul, this vision translates into tangible pedagogical practices that integrate empathy, dialogue, and community collaboration. Through social competence rooted in Scripture, teachers become instruments of peace, shaping students not only as knowledgeable individuals but as reconciled members of God's family.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers serves as both a pedagogical foundation and a spiritual vocation in cultivating family unity values among students. Drawing from the expository study of Genesis 35:27 and a comprehensive Systematic Literature Review (SLR), it becomes evident that social competence encompasses not only professional interactional skills but also the embodiment of biblical virtues-empathy, humility, forgiveness, and reconciliation. In the narrative of Jacob's return to his father Isaac, the essence of family unity is rediscovered through repentance and relational restoration. This theological truth provides a transformative paradigm for CRE teachers at SMP Negeri 5 Sumbul, who are called to translate biblical reconciliation into daily educational relationships. The research highlights that social competence functions as a bridge between faith and practice. Teachers who are socially competent not only communicate effectively but also nurture emotional safety, trust, and moral growth within the learning environment. Their professionalism is inseparable from their spirituality, as the classroom becomes a microcosm of the Christian family-a space where respect, dialogue, and care are practiced as expressions of divine love. Within this context, the teacher's role transcends academic instruction; it becomes a ministry of moral and relational restoration, reflecting God's covenantal character revealed in Genesis. The study finds that the cultivation of family unity through CRE teaching is most effective when biblical principles are integrated into experiential learning. This involves designing classroom practices that simulate cooperative family dynamics, encourage forgiveness, and resolve conflicts through dialogue. In such pedagogical settings, students internalize unity not merely as a moral concept but as a lived reality. When teachers model relational integrity and empathy, students are inspired to practice similar virtues in their families and communities, fulfilling the educational mission of shaping holistic Christian character. This research affirms that the social competence of teachers is a reflection of divine relationality-the Trinitarian model of unity in diversity. Just as Jacob's reconciliation restores generational harmony within the covenantal lineage, the socially competent teacher restores moral and relational coherence in the educational community. This mirrors the biblical vision of *shalom*, where peace and justice intertwine to produce sustainable harmony. Thus, teacher competence in the CRE context cannot be divorced from faith; it must be grounded in spiritual authenticity and guided by scriptural principles. This study recommends that Christian Religious Education institutions and schools develop continuous professional formation programs that nurture the social and spiritual maturity of teachers. Training should focus on emotional intelligence, communication ethics, and conflict mediation from a Christian worldview. Likewise, partnerships between school, family, and church must be strengthened to sustain the unity values promoted in classrooms. By aligning theological reflection with pedagogical practice, teachers become catalysts of reconciliation and peace in their educational communities. Social competence in Christian Religious Education is not a peripheral attribute but the very heart of pedagogical faithfulness. It is through socially and spiritually competent teachers that the message of Genesis 35:27-unity restored through humility and love-comes alive in the hearts of students. In embodying these values, CRE teachers at SMP Negeri 5 Sumbul

serve as living witnesses of the Gospel, cultivating a generation capable of building harmonious families and communities grounded in God's enduring covenant of peace.

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