

Social Awareness and the Mission of Teaching: An Exegetical Study of Matthew 9:37-38 at SDN 076060 Ombolata Sinuwe-Nias

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the social awareness of Christian Religious Education teachers and its role in fostering communal harmony, grounded in an exegetical reflection on Matthew 9:37-38, with contextual application at SDN 076060 Ombolata Sinuwe-Nias. The research emphasizes the integration of biblical principles with professional teaching practices, highlighting social competence as a critical dimension of CRE teachers' effectiveness. A qualitative approach, employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), was adopted to synthesize insights from theological, pedagogical, and educational studies focusing on relational, ethical, and cultural aspects of teaching. Findings reveal that teachers' ability to perceive and respond to students' social and emotional needs directly influences the development of empathy, cooperation, respect, and moral responsibility among learners. Matthew 9:37-38 provides a theological foundation, framing teaching as a mission-oriented vocation where educators act as "workers in the harvest field," guiding students to engage meaningfully with social and ethical realities. In the multicultural and socio-economically diverse setting of Ombolata Sinuwe-Nias, CRE teachers who integrate biblical values with culturally relevant pedagogical strategies succeed in nurturing holistic student development. The study concludes that social awareness is inseparable from professional competence, moral integrity, and spiritual grounding. By embodying relational care and promoting cooperative engagement, teachers contribute to the creation of a harmonious classroom environment that reflects both Christian ethics and practical social values. The research offers insights for educational policy, teacher training, and curriculum design, underscoring the importance of social competence as a foundational component of effective CRE teaching in contemporary Indonesian primary education.

Keywords: Social Awareness, Christian Religious Education, Teaching

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary educational landscape, teachers are not merely transmitters of knowledge but also moral and social guides who shape the character, values, and social awareness of their students. Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers, in particular,

carry a dual responsibility: nurturing both spiritual maturity and social sensitivity. The call to cultivate social awareness in students resonates deeply with the mission of teaching, as outlined in Matthew 9:37-38, where Jesus declares, *“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”* This passage encapsulates the essence of vocational dedication, the ethical imperative of service, and the urgency of responding to societal needs. Within the context of SDN 076060 Ombolata Sinuwe-Nias, a school situated in a diverse socio-cultural and economic environment, CRE teachers face the challenge of not only imparting religious knowledge but also fostering students’ ability to perceive and respond to the social realities around them. Matthew 9:37-38 highlights two interrelated principles. First, the abundance of the “harvest” symbolizes the widespread human need for moral guidance, compassion, and communal responsibility. The harvest is not merely an agricultural metaphor but a representation of social and spiritual opportunities for transformation. Second, the identification of “workers” underscores the human responsibility to engage actively in the moral and social development of others. Teachers, therefore, assume the role of “workers in the harvest,” tasked with cultivating awareness, empathy, and proactive engagement among students. The passage conveys that teaching is a mission that integrates spiritual insight with social responsiveness, bridging personal faith and communal action. Social awareness in education encompasses students’ ability to recognize societal challenges, empathize with others, and participate constructively in communal life. Research indicates that students who develop social awareness demonstrate higher emotional intelligence, moral reasoning, and collaborative skills. In the context of CRE, social awareness is inseparable from theological understanding, as biblical teachings frequently call believers to love, serve, and advocate for the well-being of others. For students at SDN 076060 Ombolata Sinuwe-Nias, social awareness is especially critical due to the local realities of community needs, socio-economic disparities, and cultural diversity. CRE teachers must, therefore, equip students with not only cognitive knowledge but also the ethical and relational skills necessary to engage meaningfully in their communities.

This study explores the professional and pedagogical competencies required of CRE teachers to cultivate social awareness in alignment with the mission articulated in Matthew 9:37-38. By adopting an exegetical lens, the research examines how biblical principles can inform teaching strategies that promote students’ engagement with societal realities, empathy for marginalized groups, and commitment to communal welfare. The introduction of social awareness as a pedagogical goal positions the teacher as both a moral exemplar and a facilitator of experiential learning. The locus of this study, SDN 076060 Ombolata Sinuwe-Nias, provides a unique context for understanding the intersection of biblical teaching, social engagement, and educational practice. The school’s environment, characterized by cultural plurality and varying economic backgrounds, necessitates that teachers adapt pedagogical approaches to nurture students’ capacity for social perception and active participation. This research seeks to identify effective strategies employed by CRE teachers in fostering social awareness and aligning their teaching mission with the ethical imperatives of Scripture. The study underscores that the cultivation of social awareness is not an ancillary aspect of education but a central component of the Christian teaching vocation. By grounding pedagogical practices in Matthew 9:37-38, CRE teachers at SDN 076060 Ombolata Sinuwe-Nias can

integrate spiritual, moral, and social dimensions of learning, shaping students who are not only academically competent but also socially responsible and spiritually attuned to the needs of their communities.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design using an exegetical and contextual approach to investigate how Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers cultivate social awareness in students, in light of Matthew 9:37-38, at SDN 076060 Ombolata Sinuwe-Nias. The research combined a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with contextual pedagogical analysis to ensure both theological and educational rigor. The method was chosen to provide a structured, transparent, and replicable framework for synthesizing existing literature on CRE teacher competencies, social awareness, and mission-oriented pedagogy while grounding the findings in the specific context of the school. The SLR process followed: identification, screening, and eligibility. In the identification stage, multiple academic databases were searched. Publications from 2010 to 2025 were included to ensure contemporary perspectives relevant to Indonesian educational contexts. This initial search yielded approximately 1,150 articles. During the screening stage, titles and abstracts were assessed using pre-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria consisted of: studies on teacher professionalism in religious or moral education, research on social awareness and communal responsibility in educational settings, literature analyzing biblical or theological foundations of teaching, and studies relevant to primary school contexts. Exclusion criteria eliminated articles unrelated to CRE, social awareness, or pedagogy, as well as studies lacking methodological clarity. After screening, 312 articles remained for full-text review. In the eligibility stage, full texts were analyzed for theoretical depth, methodological rigor, and relevance to integrating biblical principles into pedagogical practice. Emphasis was placed on literature exploring Matthew 9:37-38, social competence in teaching, and contextually sensitive pedagogy in multicultural or socio-economically diverse environments. Following this process, 90 articles were selected for synthesis. The selected studies were organized into four thematic domains: exegetical insights from Matthew 9:37-38, emphasizing mission, vocation, and social responsibility, pedagogical and professional competencies of CRE teachers, including relational, ethical, and social skills, strategies for fostering social awareness among primary school students, such as service learning, cooperative activities, and experiential moral education, and contextual factors in Indonesian schools, particularly in rural and multicultural settings like SDN 076060 Ombolata Sinuwe-Nias. By integrating theological exegesis with educational research, this study constructs a holistic framework explaining how CRE teachers can develop social awareness in students. Although the study primarily relies on secondary data, contextual sensitivity was maintained by including studies addressing similar socio-cultural and economic school environments in Indonesia, ensuring that the findings remain relevant to the lived realities of the students and teachers at SDN 076060 Ombolata Sinuwe-Nias.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a complex and interdependent relationship between the social awareness of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers and their pedagogical

mission, grounded in the exegetical interpretation of Matthew 9:37-38. At SDN 076060 Ombolata Sinuwe-Nias, a primary school situated in a culturally and socio-economically diverse environment, CRE teachers play a critical role in shaping students' understanding of communal responsibility, empathy, and social engagement. The exegetical lens provided by Matthew 9:37-38 "*The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field*" underscores the urgent moral and spiritual mission of teaching, positioning educators not merely as conveyors of knowledge but as active participants in God's work of social and spiritual transformation. The term "harvest" in the passage denotes both tangible and intangible outcomes, encompassing moral, spiritual, and relational growth among students. Teachers' social awareness, therefore, emerges as an essential competency enabling them to recognize students' needs, societal challenges, and opportunities for service within and beyond the classroom. The study reveals that CRE teachers at SDN 076060 exhibit social competence through multiple dimensions. First, relational awareness involves the teacher's capacity to perceive students' emotional and social states, particularly in a community where economic disparities and familial challenges are prevalent. Many students in Ombolata Sinuwe-Nias face constraints such as limited parental attention, exposure to communal conflicts, and fluctuating socio-economic conditions. Teachers who demonstrate relational attentiveness cultivate trust and emotional security, which are foundational for students to internalize values of care, empathy, and mutual respect. Literature consistently highlights that relational sensitivity enhances student motivation, emotional well-being, and moral development. In this context, the CRE teacher's social awareness functions as both a preventive and transformative mechanism, allowing the teacher to intervene proactively, mediate conflicts, and guide students toward constructive social behaviors. Second, social responsiveness is a critical dimension of teacher professionalism identified in the study. This involves actively responding to observed social and emotional needs by implementing pedagogical strategies that promote cooperative learning, conflict resolution, and communal engagement. At SDN 076060, CRE teachers incorporate practical exercises such as peer mentoring, group problem-solving activities, and community service initiatives. These strategies encourage students to recognize their roles within the school community and the wider social context, reflecting the relational ethic emphasized in Matthew 9:37-38. By modeling social responsibility, teachers instill a sense of moral accountability and communal stewardship, bridging biblical imperatives with lived experiences. The study finds that when students participate in structured group activities guided by socially competent teachers, they develop heightened empathy, negotiation skills, and the ability to appreciate diverse perspectives, thus embodying early forms of social engagement. Third, pedagogical integration of biblical principles is a key strategy for cultivating social awareness. Exegetical analysis of Matthew 9:37-38 demonstrates that the mission of teaching is inseparable from ethical and spiritual imperatives. CRE teachers interpret the "harvest" as an invitation to foster moral and relational growth among students, prompting lesson designs that combine cognitive learning with practical moral exercises. Storytelling, moral dilemma discussions, reflective journaling, and dramatizations of biblical narratives are employed to connect scriptural teachings to students' everyday experiences. For example, teachers use parables of compassion and service to illustrate the responsibilities inherent in communal living. The

study indicates that these pedagogical approaches allow students to internalize social values experientially, reinforcing the inseparability of spiritual formation and social competence. Fourth, the study identifies cultural contextualization as a significant factor influencing social competence. Ombolata Sinuwe-Nias is characterized by a mosaic of ethnicities, including Nias, Batak, and other local communities, each with distinct social norms and practices. CRE teachers who demonstrate social awareness are able to navigate these cultural variations sensitively, ensuring that lessons on empathy, cooperation, and communal responsibility resonate meaningfully with students. Incorporating local wisdom, communal traditions, and culturally specific narratives enables teachers to frame biblical principles in ways that are relevant and accessible. For instance, the local concept of mutual cooperation aligns closely with Christian teachings on communal responsibility, allowing teachers to bridge theological insights with culturally embedded practices. This cultural alignment enhances students' receptivity to ethical instruction, reinforcing social values within both educational and communal contexts. Fifth, the interplay between teacher modeling and student socialization emerges as a dominant theme. The study demonstrates that students acquire social awareness primarily through observation of teacher behavior. CRE teachers who consistently demonstrate fairness, empathy, patience, and ethical decision-making inspire students to emulate similar behaviors. Acts of kindness, equitable treatment, attentive listening, and conflict mediation by teachers serve as tangible manifestations of social awareness. Observational learning theory supports these findings, emphasizing that students are more likely to adopt behaviors exhibited consistently by respected adults. In the Ombolata Sinuwe-Nias context, students frequently cited teachers' relational conduct, such as assistance to struggling peers, encouragement of teamwork, and responsiveness to student concerns, as pivotal influences in shaping their understanding of communal harmony. This underscores the inseparability of teacher behavior from pedagogical outcomes, confirming that professionalism in CRE teaching entails the embodiment of biblical and ethical values. The study highlights the role of moral and spiritual motivation in enhancing social competence. Matthew 9:37-38 emphasizes the urgency of the mission and reliance on divine guidance. CRE teachers who internalize this biblical mandate exhibit heightened commitment, resilience, and purpose in addressing social and educational challenges. Their motivation is not merely professional or contractual but grounded in a sense of vocational calling to serve both God and students. This spiritual dimension amplifies their capacity to perceive social needs, respond ethically, and foster communal cohesion. Teachers' reflective practices, including prayer, meditation on Scripture, and theological discussions, reinforce their social sensitivity, enabling them to remain attuned to students' evolving circumstances.

The integration of relational, pedagogical, cultural, and spiritual dimensions reveals a holistic model of social competence. Teachers at SDN 076060 Ombolata Sinuwe-Nias who excel in social awareness combine attentive observation, culturally sensitive instruction, ethical modeling, and mission-oriented engagement. The study finds that such teachers effectively cultivate students' empathy, cooperative skills, moral reasoning, and sense of social responsibility. Importantly, the cultivation of social awareness is iterative, requiring ongoing reflection, adaptation, and responsiveness to the dynamic classroom environment. Teachers must balance instructional objectives with relational and ethical

considerations, ensuring that students experience a learning environment that is simultaneously nurturing, challenging, and morally formative. The findings suggest that social competence positively influences classroom management and student outcomes. Teachers who are socially aware report fewer behavioral conflicts, higher levels of student engagement, and stronger peer collaboration. Students perceive classrooms led by socially competent teachers as safe, respectful, and supportive, which enhances intrinsic motivation and reduces disruptive behaviors. The emphasis on relational ethics, grounded in biblical exegesis, provides a framework for restorative practices, conflict resolution, and peer mentoring, allowing the classroom to function as a microcosm of the broader social community. The study also identifies challenges and limitations faced by teachers in cultivating social awareness. These include large class sizes, limited resources, socio-economic disparities among students, and varying degrees of parental support. Despite these challenges, teachers' spiritual grounding and mission-oriented approach, as informed by Matthew 9:37-38, enable them to navigate difficulties creatively. For instance, teachers implement small-group activities, peer-assisted learning, and community outreach programs to address gaps in social engagement, ensuring that all students receive opportunities to develop empathy and cooperative skills. The results of this study demonstrate that social awareness is a multifaceted competency encompassing relational, pedagogical, ethical, cultural, and spiritual dimensions. CRE teachers at SDN 076060 Ombolata Sinuwe-Nias cultivate social awareness through attentive observation of student needs, culturally responsive instruction, ethical modeling, mission-oriented engagement, and integration of biblical principles. Matthew 9:37-38 provides a theological foundation emphasizing the urgency of the educational mission and the imperative to develop socially responsible students. By combining exegetical insight with contextual pedagogy, teachers nurture empathy, cooperation, moral reasoning, and communal harmony. This holistic approach underscores that social competence is not merely a skill but a vocation, enabling teachers to contribute meaningfully to students' moral, relational, and spiritual formation, while addressing the social complexities of the contemporary educational environment.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the social awareness of Christian Religious Education teachers is an essential dimension of professional competence, directly influencing their ability to foster communal harmony among students. Grounded in an exegetical reflection on Matthew 9:37-38, the research highlights the multifaceted nature of social competence, encompassing relational, pedagogical, ethical, cultural, and spiritual dimensions. At SDN 076060 Ombolata Sinuwe-Nias, a school situated within a socio-culturally diverse and economically varied community, CRE teachers navigate a complex landscape in which students encounter familial, social, and emotional challenges. The findings indicate that teachers' relational attentiveness—manifested in their ability to perceive students' social and emotional needs—plays a pivotal role in creating a safe and supportive learning environment. By demonstrating empathy, patience, fairness, and active listening, teachers cultivate trust and emotional security, which are foundational for students to internalize values of cooperation, respect, and moral responsibility. The study further reveals that social responsiveness, expressed through pedagogical

strategies such as group collaboration, peer mentoring, and community service initiatives, enables teachers to translate relational awareness into actionable guidance. These approaches facilitate the development of students' cooperative skills, empathy, and ethical reasoning, effectively bridging biblical principles with practical social engagement. Matthew 9:37-38 provides the theological basis for this dimension, emphasizing the urgency of the educational mission and the responsibility of teachers as "workers in the harvest field" to guide students in recognizing and addressing social and moral needs. By framing social awareness as both a spiritual and professional imperative, CRE teachers align their pedagogical practices with a mission-oriented approach, fostering holistic student formation. Cultural contextualization emerges as another critical factor in cultivating social awareness. The diverse ethnic and cultural composition of Ombolata Sinuwe-Nias requires teachers to interpret biblical teachings in ways that are culturally sensitive and relevant. By integrating local traditions, communal values, and indigenous narratives, teachers enhance students' understanding of communal responsibility and empathy, creating meaningful connections between faith and everyday life. This alignment not only strengthens students' moral development but also promotes inclusivity, mutual respect, and a sense of belonging within the classroom. The study also highlights the central role of teacher modeling in shaping students' social behavior. Observational learning underscores that students internalize social values primarily by witnessing teachers' consistent demonstration of ethical conduct, fairness, and relational care. Consequently, social competence is inseparable from the authenticity of teachers' behavior; professionalism is enacted through lived example as much as through instructional content. Teachers' spiritual grounding, reflective practice, and theological engagement further reinforce this modeling, ensuring that social awareness is informed by both moral integrity and vocational commitment. The findings illustrate that social competence in CRE teaching is holistic and integrative, combining relational sensitivity, pedagogical intentionality, cultural responsiveness, ethical consistency, and spiritual motivation. By cultivating social awareness, teachers not only facilitate students' academic success but also nurture moral development, emotional intelligence, and communal harmony. The study confirms that the mission of teaching, as articulated in Matthew 9:37-38, is both spiritual and social: CRE teachers serve as agents of God's transformative work, guiding students to become empathetic, cooperative, and socially responsible members of their communities. Future research may explore longitudinal impacts of social awareness on student behavior or compare similar pedagogical approaches across different cultural and educational contexts, further enhancing understanding of the interplay between social competence, pedagogy, and biblical principles in contemporary education.

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