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Christian Teachers' Social Competence as a Foundation for Peace Culture in SD Negeri 050593 Nambiki: Insights from Philippians 4:2-3

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of Christian teachers' social competence as a foundational element in cultivating a culture of peace in SD Negeri 050593 Nambiki, Langkat, through a theological reflection on Philippians 4:2-3. Situated in a pluralistic public school context with a minority of nine Christian students and four Christian teachers, including one Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher, this research responds to the urgent need for peace-oriented education in socially diverse environments. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis to reveal how teachers' social interactions shape the school's peace culture. The findings indicate that Christian teachers' social competence is expressed through empathetic communication, inclusive collaboration, and restorative conflict mediation. These practices foster respectful relationships among students and teachers across religious and cultural boundaries. The study further reveals that students internalize peace values primarily through the consistent social modeling of teachers rather than through verbal instruction alone. However, the sustainability of peace culture remains challenged by the limited availability of structured institutional support and professional training in peace-based conflict resolution. This study concludes that Christian teachers' social competence, grounded in biblical reconciliation, serves as a vital pedagogical and spiritual foundation for nurturing a sustainable culture of peace in schools. The findings offer important implications for teacher formation, school policy development, and the integration of theological values into social competence frameworks within multicultural educational settings.

Keywords: Social Competence, Christian Religious Education, Peace Culture

INTRODUCTION

In pluralistic and socially dynamic school environments, the role of teachers extends far beyond academic instruction to include the responsibility of shaping social attitudes, ethical behavior, and relational harmony among students. In this broader educational mission, social competence becomes a crucial dimension of teacher professionalism, particularly for Christian teachers who are called not only to teach but also to model

values of peace, reconciliation, and mutual respect. Within Christian Religious Education (CRE), social competence is inseparable from the biblical mandate to live in harmony, to resolve conflict peacefully, and to nurture relationships grounded in love and responsibility. In public school contexts where Christians often constitute a minority, this competence becomes even more vital as a visible testimony of faith expressed through daily interaction. This study is situated in a unique educational context where only nine students are Christian, supported by four Christian teachers, including one CRE teacher. Such a setting presents both challenges and opportunities for cultivating a culture of peace through relational engagement and ethical example. In minority contexts, social competence is not merely a pedagogical skill but also a form of lived witness that shapes how Christian values are perceived and practiced within the wider school community. The limited number of Christian students intensifies the role of the CRE teacher as a relational bridge-builder, peace mediator, and moral exemplar among peers, colleagues, and students of diverse backgrounds. The theological foundation of this study is drawn from Philippians 4:2-3, where the Apostle Paul exhorts Euodia and Syntyche to “be of the same mind in the Lord” and urges the Christian community to assist in restoring unity. This short but powerful exhortation reveals that peace is not merely an abstract ideal but a communal responsibility, requiring intentional mediation, mutual humility, and shared commitment to harmony. Exegetically, the phrase “to be of the same mind” (*to auto phronein*) does not imply uniformity of opinion but calls for a shared orientation toward Christ that transcends personal conflict. Paul’s appeal to a “true companion” to help reconcile the disputing parties further emphasizes that peacebuilding is a socially mediated process, not an individual endeavor. Thus, peace in the Christian vision is sustained through relational competence, mutual support, and proactive intervention rooted in faith. When this biblical framework is applied to the educational context, especially within CRE, the teacher’s social competence becomes a practical extension of this Pauline theology of reconciliation. Social competence in this sense includes the ability to communicate effectively, to manage conflict constructively, to collaborate with colleagues, to respect diversity, and to foster inclusive relationships. For the CRE teacher, these skills are not neutral professional tools but theological expressions of faith in action. The classroom becomes a microcosm of communal life where disagreement, diversity, and difference are real, and where peace must be cultivated intentionally through everyday interaction. Many studies still emphasize cognitive achievement and instructional strategies while underestimating the spiritual-ethical dimensions of social competence, especially those rooted in biblical theology. This gap becomes evident when peace is treated merely as a behavioral outcome rather than as a spiritual and relational culture shaped by consistent modeling and ethical leadership. The case of a small Christian community within a public school setting offers a critical lens to examine how peace culture is not formed through numerical dominance or institutional power, but through relational integrity, communicative wisdom, and ethical consistency practiced by teachers. Therefore, this study seeks to explore how the social competence of Christian teachers, particularly the CRE teacher, functions as a foundation for cultivating a culture of peace in schools, viewed through the theological and relational lens of Philippians 4:2-3. Specifically, the research aims to: analyze the theological principles of peace and reconciliation embedded in Philippians 4:2-3; examine how these principles are embodied in the social interactions and professional practices of Christian teachers; and evaluate

how such socially competent practices contribute to the formation of a peace-oriented school culture among students. The significance of this research lies in its integrative approach, bringing together biblical exegesis and educational practice to demonstrate that peace culture in schools is not merely built through policy and discipline, but through lived relational competence grounded in spiritual convictions. By highlighting the role of Christian teachers as agents of peace in a minority context, this study contributes to the discourse on Christian education, peace education, and teacher social competence within pluralistic school environments.

METHODS

A qualitative case study design was implemented to explore how the social competence of Christian teachers functions as a foundation for cultivating a culture of peace at SD Negeri 050593 Nambiki-Langkat, viewed through the theological lens of Philippians 4:2-3. A case study approach was selected because it allows for an in-depth, contextualized understanding of complex social and spiritual phenomena within a bounded educational setting. The research context involved nine Christian students and four Christian teachers, including one Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher, situated within a pluralistic public school environment. The qualitative approach was considered appropriate to capture lived experiences, relational dynamics, and meaning-making processes related to peacebuilding and social interaction in everyday school life. Data were collected using three primary techniques to ensure methodological rigor and triangulation: semi-structured interviews and non-participant classroom and school-environment observations. Interviews were conducted with the CRE teacher and three other Christian teachers to explore their understanding of social competence, experiences in interrelational communication, conflict management practices, collaboration with colleagues of different backgrounds, and their interpretation of peace in light of Christian faith and Philippians 4:2-3. Observations focused on everyday teacher–student interactions, collegial relationships, classroom climate, conflict resolution processes, and patterns of communication that reflected peace-oriented behavior. All interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were coded using open coding to identify recurring patterns related to social communication, reconciliation, collaboration, empathy, and peace-oriented practices. These initial codes were then grouped into axial categories such as relational communication, conflict mediation, collaborative engagement, inclusive attitude, and ethical consistency. The final stage integrating these empirical themes with the exegetical insights derived from Philippians 4:2-3 to construct a coherent interpretation of how social competence operates theologically and practically in cultivating peace culture. This methodological framework enabled the study to capture both the theological foundations and the lived educational realities of Christian teachers' social competence as an instrument for nurturing a culture of peace within a pluralistic school environment.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal that the social competence of Christian teachers at SD Negeri 050593 Nambiki functions as a central foundation for cultivating a culture of

peace, both in daily classroom interactions and in the broader relational life of the school. From the integrated analysis of interviews, observations, and documents, it is evident that peace culture does not emerge through formal regulations alone but is formed through consistent relational modeling, ethical communication, conflict mediation, and collaborative engagement practiced by Christian teachers, particularly the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher. These empirical findings are in strong theological continuity with Philippians 4:2-3, where peace and unity are presented not as abstract ideals but as relational responsibilities that require intentional social mediation, humility, and cooperative commitment in the Lord. The first dominant theme that emerged is peace-oriented communication as the core expression of social competence. Observations in classrooms and teacher-student interactions consistently showed that Christian teachers prioritized respectful language, patient listening, and emotionally controlled responses when addressing students. Even in moments of classroom disruption or interpersonal tension among students, teachers avoided confrontational tones and instead employed dialogical approaches that encouraged students to express feelings, reflect on consequences, and seek mutual understanding. This communicative posture reflects a theological alignment with Paul's exhortation in Philippians 4:2 to "*be of the same mind in the Lord,*" where unity is cultivated not through coercion but through spiritually grounded communication. Interviews confirmed that teachers consciously viewed peaceful communication as an expression of Christian faith in action. One teacher stated that speaking calmly and empathetically was not merely a pedagogical strategy but an ethical responsibility rooted in their understanding of Christ's peace. This finding underscores that social competence in Christian education is deeply moral and spiritual, not merely technical. The next theme is constructive conflict mediation as a practical embodiment of reconciliation theology. Given the pluralistic nature of the school environment, conflicts among students are inevitable. However, the way Christian teachers responded to these conflicts demonstrated a consistent orientation toward restoration rather than punishment. Observations documented multiple instances where students involved in disputes were invited into guided dialogue rather than immediately subjected to disciplinary sanctions. The CRE teacher in particular played a mediating role, helping students articulate grievances, recognize personal responsibility, and move toward mutual forgiveness. This practice aligns closely with Philippians 4:3, where Paul invites a "true companion" to assist in reconciling Euodia and Syntyche. Empirically, this suggests that peace culture in the school is sustained through intentional third-party mediation rooted in relational care, not through authoritarian enforcement. Theologically, the teacher's role mirrors Paul's vision of communal responsibility in preserving unity. Peace is thus understood as a shared moral task, not a passive condition. The next theme concerns collaborative inter-teacher relationships as the structural backbone of peace culture. Interviews with the four Christian teachers revealed that they maintained close collegial communication, regularly sharing experiences, challenges, and moral concerns related to student behavior and classroom climate. This collaborative ethos extended beyond Christian teachers to include respectful cooperation with teachers of other religious backgrounds. Observations in staff interactions reflected mutual respect, openness, and a willingness to resolve misunderstandings through conversation rather than through bureaucratic escalation. Such collaboration contributes significantly to the school's peaceful climate, as students implicitly observe how adults

manage differences. In light of Philippians 4:3, where Paul refers to coworkers whose names are written in the Book of Life, this collegial unity reflects a theology of shared vocational responsibility. The social competence of Christian teachers thus operates not only in vertical relationships with students but also in horizontal relationships with colleagues, reinforcing peace as a communal culture rather than an individual virtue.

The other key theme is inclusive social engagement in a minority Christian context. With only nine Christian students in the school, the Christian teachers occupy a minority position. However, rather than retreating into exclusivity, they demonstrated inclusive social engagement that actively fostered interreligious respect and mutual cooperation. Observations revealed that Christian teachers consistently encouraged students to appreciate religious and cultural differences while emphasizing shared moral values such as honesty, kindness, and cooperation. This inclusive posture significantly contributes to peace culture, as it prevents social polarization and nurtures mutual understanding. Theologically, this reflects the spirit of Philippians 4:2-3 in which unity in the Lord does not negate difference but calls for relational harmony grounded in shared commitment to Christ's reconciling work. Inclusive engagement becomes a concrete expression of Christian social competence in a pluralistic school setting. The other concerns the CRE teacher as a symbolic and functional agent of peace. Although only one CRE teacher serves the Christian students, the data show that this teacher's role extends beyond formal religious instruction to encompass spiritual mentoring, moral mediation, and relational guidance. Students often sought the CRE teacher not only for religious learning but also for personal guidance in moments of emotional distress or interpersonal difficulty. This relational accessibility reinforces the CRE teacher's function as a moral anchor and peace catalyst within the school. Interviews revealed that the CRE teacher consciously interpreted this role through the lens of Philippians 4:2-3, understanding mediation, encouragement, and relational care as integral to the Christian vocation. Theologically, the CRE teacher embodies the Pauline vision of a co-laborer who actively sustains unity within the community of faith, even in a limited numerical presence. An other important finding is the internalization of peace values by students through social modeling. Observation of student behavior indicated that many students gradually adopted patterns of respectful communication, cooperative problem-solving, and tolerance toward differences. Rather than being shaped primarily through direct moral instruction, these behavioral patterns were formed through continuous exposure to peace-oriented teacher conduct. Students imitated how teachers spoke, corrected mistakes, and responded to conflict. Interviews with students revealed that they perceived Christian teachers as patient, fair, and caring, even when disciplining. This confirms that social competence operates most powerfully through modeling, consistent with social learning theory, and theologically resonates with the Pauline call for believers to live in a way that exemplifies the peace of Christ within communal life. The next theme highlights institutional support and its limitations in sustaining peace culture. Document analysis showed that the school formally promotes character education and peaceful behavior through general regulations and moral education programs. The explicit integration of peace theology into school policy remains limited. As a result, much of the peace culture depends heavily on the personal commitment and social competence of individual teachers rather than on a fully institutionalized framework. Christian teachers

expressed a desire for more structured support, such as conflict resolution training and collaborative reflection spaces. This indicates that while personal social competence is foundational, institutional reinforcement is necessary for long-term sustainability. Theologically, this tension reflects the reality that peace is both a spiritual gift and a communal discipline that requires structural embodiment.

In dialogue with Philippians 4:2-3, the findings demonstrate that peace is not merely the absence of open conflict but the presence of intentional relational labor. Paul's exhortation to reconciliation, mutual support, and shared mission is mirrored in the daily practices of Christian teachers who engage in patient communication, conflict mediation, collaborative cooperation, and inclusive engagement. The empirical data confirm that peace culture in schools is nurtured through relational consistency rather than coercive control. Social competence thus functions as the practical bridge between Pauline theology and everyday educational life. These findings expand the discourse on teacher competence by emphasizing that social competence in Christian education is inherently theological, ethical, and relational. It integrates communication skill, empathy, moral courage, and spiritual discernment into a unified professional identity. Peace is not treated merely as a behavioral outcome but as a communal virtue shaped through shared responsibility and relational mediation, consistent with the theology of Philippians. The findings affirm that Christian teachers, especially in minority contexts, serve as strategic peace agents within pluralistic schools. Their social competence enables them to navigate difference without antagonism, discipline without hostility, and leadership without domination. This positions Christian education not as a separatist enclave but as a constructive moral presence within the wider school community. The results demonstrate that the social competence of Christian teachers at SD Negeri 050593 Nambiki functions as a living foundation for a culture of peace. Through peace-oriented communication, constructive conflict mediation, collaborative collegiality, inclusive social engagement, spiritual mentorship by the CRE teacher, and consistent moral modeling, peace becomes a lived reality rather than an abstract slogan. The integration of these empirical findings with Philippians 4:2-3 confirms that peace in Christian education is a relational vocation sustained through shared commitment, moral integrity, and sustained social competence.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the social competence of Christian teachers plays a decisive role in cultivating a culture of peace in a pluralistic school environment, as reflected in the lived practices of teachers and interpreted through the theological lens of Philippians 4:2-3. In the context of SD Negeri 050593 Nambiki, where Christian students form a small minority and are served by four Christian teachers including one Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher, peace culture is not shaped by institutional dominance or formal regulation alone but is built through consistent relational modeling, ethical communication, and constructive conflict mediation. The findings affirm that peace in education is fundamentally relational and communal, not merely procedural. Peace-oriented communication, marked by patience, empathy, and respect, emerges as the most visible expression of teachers' social competence. Through this communication, teachers reduce tension, prevent escalation of conflict, and foster mutual understanding among students of diverse backgrounds. This practice resonates deeply with Paul's

exhortation for believers to “be of the same mind in the Lord,” which emphasizes spiritual alignment expressed in relational harmony rather than enforced uniformity. The study shows that conflict mediation is a central form of peace ministry in the school context. Christian teachers, especially the CRE teacher, function as mediators who bridge differences, restore broken relationships, and guide students toward personal responsibility and reconciliation. This role mirrors the communal responsibility emphasized in Philippians 4:3, where reconciliation is not left solely to the disputing parties but is supported by the wider community. Thus, peace is understood as a shared moral task, sustained through cooperation and relational courage. Another significant conclusion is that peace culture is strengthened through collegial collaboration and inclusive engagement. The cooperative relationships among Christian teachers and their respectful interaction with colleagues of other faiths model unity amid diversity for students. This inclusive posture prevents the formation of social boundaries based on religious identity and instead nurtures a school climate defined by mutual respect, cooperation, and shared responsibility. In a minority context, this inclusive social competence becomes a powerful witness to the reconciling values of the Christian faith. The study also confirms that students internalize peace values primarily through social modeling rather than through verbal instruction alone. The consistent example of patient discipline, fair treatment, and caring guidance demonstrated by Christian teachers shape students’ behavior, attitudes, and interpersonal patterns. Peace thus becomes a lived habit formed through daily observation and interaction, not merely a moral concept taught in the classroom. The findings also point to the need for greater institutional reinforcement. While personal commitment and spiritual conviction are foundational, sustainable peace culture requires organizational support through conflict resolution training, structured reflection forums, and policy frameworks that explicitly promote peace-oriented values. Without such institutional backing, the long-term continuity of peace culture remains highly dependent on individual teachers’ personal capacities. In conclusion, this study affirms that the social competence of Christian teachers is a foundational instrument for nurturing a culture of peace in schools. Grounded in the theology of reconciliation in Philippians 4:2-3, social competence integrates communication skills, moral integrity, empathy, and collaborative spirit into a unified professional and spiritual vocation. Peace in education is therefore not merely a program to be implemented, but a relational vocation to be embodied. Christian teachers, through their daily interactions, emerge as authentic agents of peace who transform ordinary school life into a living testimony of reconciliation, harmony, and responsible communal life.

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