

Teaching with Faith and Compassion in Christian Education: A Biblical Reflection on Matthew 9:36 at SD Negeri Tumbang Korik

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ABSTRACT

Faith and compassion are central values in Christian Religious Education (CRE), particularly in contexts where students face social, emotional, and educational vulnerabilities. This study explores how teaching with faith and compassion, grounded in the biblical reflection of Matthew 9:36, is practiced and experienced at SD Negeri Tumbang Korik, Gunung Mas, a public elementary school with 37 Christian students and one CRE teacher. Matthew 9:36 portrays Jesus' compassionate gaze toward the crowds, emphasizing empathy, attentiveness, and pastoral concern as foundational attitudes in ministry and teaching. Drawing from this biblical perspective, the study examines how compassionate pedagogy becomes an integral expression of faith in classroom practice. Using a qualitative research design, the study integrates exegetical analysis of Matthew 9:36, a systematic literature review (SLR) on compassionate pedagogy and Christian education, and a simple semi-structured interview with the CRE teacher as contextual support. The exegetical analysis highlights compassion as an active response rooted in spiritual discernment, while the literature review synthesizes contemporary discussions on teacher professionalism, ethics of care, and faith-based education. Interview data provide insight into how compassion is embodied in daily teaching practices within a rural public-school context. The findings indicate that faith-informed compassion significantly enhances students' engagement, emotional security, and moral awareness. The study concludes that teaching with faith and compassion is not an optional pedagogical approach but a core dimension of Christian professionalism. When grounded in Scripture and expressed through consistent care and empathy, compassionate pedagogy contributes meaningfully to holistic student formation and reflects the redemptive character of Christian education.

Keywords: Faith, Christian Religious Education, Compassion

INTRODUCTION

Faith and compassion constitute two foundational pillars of Christian education, shaping not only the spiritual orientation of learners but also their moral sensitivity and relational character. In contemporary educational contexts, particularly within public schools, Christian Religious Education (CRE) faces the challenge of nurturing students' spiritual

growth while simultaneously addressing emotional, social, and ethical needs. This challenge becomes even more significant in rural and marginalized settings, where students often experience limited educational resources, socio-economic vulnerability, and emotional neglect. Within such contexts, the role of the Christian teacher extends beyond cognitive instruction toward pastoral care and compassionate engagement. Teaching is not merely an act of knowledge transmission but a form of ministry that reflects Christ's own attitude toward those who are vulnerable and in need. Matthew 9:36 provides a profound biblical foundation for understanding teaching as an expression of faith-driven compassion. The verse describes Jesus' response to the crowds: "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." This passage reveals a Christological model of leadership and instruction rooted in empathy, attentiveness, and deep concern for human suffering. Compassion (*splagchnizomai*) in this text is not passive sympathy but an active, transformative response that moves Jesus toward teaching, healing, and guiding others. In the context of Christian education, this verse invites educators to view students not merely as learners but as individuals with emotional, spiritual, and social needs that require pastoral sensitivity. In Indonesian public schools, Christian Religious Education operates within a pluralistic and often secular educational framework. Teachers are expected to fulfill curricular requirements while remaining sensitive to diverse religious environments. In such settings, compassion becomes a critical pedagogical virtue that enables teachers to engage students meaningfully without coercion or exclusivism. Faith-based compassion allows CRE teachers to embody Christian values through relational practices, respectful dialogue, and ethical consistency. This approach aligns with national educational goals that emphasize character formation, empathy, and social responsibility, while remaining faithful to biblical principles.

SD Negeri Tumbang Korik, located in Gunung Mas Regency, Central Kalimantan, represents a rural educational context where these challenges and opportunities intersect. The school serves a small Christian student population of 37 learners, guided by one Christian Religious Education teacher who carries significant responsibility for their spiritual and moral development. Students in this setting often come from families with limited access to formal religious instruction, making the school a primary space for encountering Christian values. Moreover, the socio-cultural context of the community, shaped by close-knit relationships and communal life, provides fertile ground for cultivating compassion as a lived practice rather than an abstract concept. Existing research has largely focused on doctrinal transmission, moral instruction, or general character education, with less attention given to compassion as a pedagogical competency grounded in biblical reflection. Furthermore, studies examining how a single CRE teacher navigates the dual role of educator and pastoral caregiver in rural public schools remain limited. This gap highlights the need for research that integrates biblical exegesis with educational practice, particularly in contexts where teachers function as moral exemplars and emotional anchors for students. This study seeks to address that gap by exploring how Matthew 9:36 informs faith-based and compassionate teaching practices in Christian Religious Education at SD Negeri Tumbang Korik. The research examines how the biblical vision of compassion shapes pedagogical approaches, teacher-student relationships, and students' moral awareness. By employing a biblical reflection

grounded in Matthew 9:36 and situating it within the lived educational context of a rural public school, this study aims to contribute to the discourse on holistic Christian education. Ultimately, it argues that teaching with faith and compassion is not an optional virtue but a theological and pedagogical imperative that enables Christian education to remain transformative, humane, and contextually relevant.

METHODS

A qualitative approach, that integrates biblical reflection, a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), and simple field interviews in order to explore how faith-based compassion, as articulated in Matthew 9:36, informs teaching practices in Christian Religious Education (CRE) at SD Negeri Tumbang Korik, Gunung Mas, was selected because the research focuses on meaning-making, lived experiences, and pedagogical interpretation rather than numerical measurement. This design allows for a nuanced examination of how biblical values are embodied in educational practice within a rural public-school context. The first methodological component involved a biblical reflection on Matthew 9:36 using historical-contextual and lexical analysis. The verse was examined within its narrative setting in the Gospel of Matthew, paying particular attention to Jesus' perception of the crowds and the theological significance of compassion (*splagchnizomai*). Scholarly biblical commentaries and peer-reviewed theological studies published between 2000 and 2024 were consulted to ensure interpretive depth and academic reliability. This exegetical reflection aimed to identify key theological principles, such as pastoral sensitivity, attentiveness to human vulnerability, and faith-driven action, that could be translated into pedagogical values within Christian education. The second component consisted of a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) focusing on: compassionate pedagogy in Christian education, teacher professionalism and social competence, and character formation in public-school religious instruction. The review followed a structured process that included keyword identification ("Christian compassion," "faith-based pedagogy," "Christian Religious Education," "teacher empathy," and "biblical character education"). Only peer-reviewed journal articles and academic books published within the last ten years were included. From an initial pool of 61 sources, 24 were selected based on relevance, methodological rigor, and direct connection to the research focus. The findings from the literature were synthesized to identify dominant themes and pedagogical patterns related to compassionate teaching. To complement the textual and theoretical analysis, simple semi-structured interviews were conducted with the sole Christian Religious Education teacher at SD Negeri Tumbang Korik. The school serves 37 Christian students, making the CRE teacher a central figure in students' spiritual and moral formation. The interview explored the teacher's understanding of compassion in teaching, classroom strategies informed by faith, challenges in addressing students' emotional needs, and reflections on the relevance of Matthew 9:36 in daily pedagogical practice. The interview was conducted with informed consent and followed ethical principles of confidentiality and respect. Data from the biblical reflection, literature review, and interview were analyzed using thematic analysis. Recurring themes were identified and organized around three categories: biblical foundations of compassionate teaching, pedagogical expressions of faith and empathy, and contextual challenges in rural Christian education. This methodological approach ensured that the findings reflect both theological integrity and practical

educational realities, providing a comprehensive understanding of teaching with faith and compassion in the context of SD Negeri Tumbang Korik.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal that teaching with faith and compassion, when grounded in the biblical vision of Matthew 9:36, functions as a transformative pedagogical framework within Christian Religious Education (CRE) at SD Negeri Tumbang Korik, Gunung Mas. By integrating biblical reflection, systematic literature review, and interview data, the findings demonstrate that compassion is not merely an emotional disposition but a pedagogical posture shaped by theological conviction, professional responsibility, and contextual awareness. Matthew 9:36 presents Jesus as a teacher who perceives the condition of the people before addressing their needs, and this perception becomes the theological anchor for compassionate teaching practices in the classroom. In the context of SD Negeri Tumbang Korik, where 37 Christian students are guided by a single CRE teacher, compassion emerges as both a necessity and a calling, enabling education to respond to students' spiritual, emotional, and social realities. The exegetical reflection on Matthew 9:36 highlights that Jesus' compassion arises from His awareness of human vulnerability. The text describes the crowd as "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd," indicating a condition of moral confusion, emotional exhaustion, and spiritual disorientation. The Greek verb *spagchnizomai* conveys a deep, visceral compassion that moves beyond sympathy toward action. This theological insight has significant pedagogical implications. Compassion, in this sense, becomes an interpretive lens through which the teacher understands students' behavior, learning difficulties, and emotional responses. Rather than approaching education as a rigid transmission of religious content, the CRE teacher at SD Negeri Tumbang Korik interprets teaching as an act of shepherding, attentive to students' struggles and formative needs. Interview data reveal that the teacher consciously frames classroom interactions through patience, gentle correction, and relational attentiveness, recognizing that many students come from families with limited educational support and economic challenges. This mirrors the biblical portrayal of Jesus, who first "saw" the people before responding to them, suggesting that compassionate teaching begins with perception rather than instruction.

The systematic literature review reinforces this exegetical finding by emphasizing that compassion is a core component of effective Christian pedagogy. Contemporary scholarship consistently argues that faith-based education loses its transformative power when it neglects relational engagement and emotional awareness. Studies on Christian education highlight that students internalize moral and spiritual values more deeply when teachers demonstrate empathy, consistency, and care. In rural contexts especially, where schools often function as extended social communities, the teacher's role expands to include pastoral and emotional dimensions. The CRE teacher at SD Negeri Tumbang Korik embodies this expanded role, serving not only as an instructor but also as a trusted adult who listens to students' concerns, mediates conflicts, and provides encouragement. The literature indicates that such relational pedagogy aligns with Christ-centered teaching models, where authority is exercised through service rather than control. This alignment between biblical theology and educational theory underscores that compassion is not an optional add-on but an essential expression of Christian professionalism. Interview

findings further illustrate how compassionate teaching shapes students' learning experiences and moral awareness. The teacher reported that many students initially perceive religious instruction as abstract or disconnected from their daily lives. However, when biblical lessons are delivered through compassionate engagement, students become more receptive and reflective. For instance, when discussing biblical narratives, the teacher intentionally connects scriptural themes to students' emotional experiences, such as feelings of fear, loneliness, or failure. This approach resonates with the compassionate gaze of Jesus in Matthew 9:36, who recognizes the inner condition of the people rather than merely addressing external behavior. As a result, students begin to associate faith not only with doctrinal knowledge but with care, understanding, and relational responsibility. Several students reportedly show increased openness in sharing personal challenges, indicating that compassionate teaching fosters trust and emotional safety within the classroom.

A significant theme emerging from the findings is that compassion enhances the teacher's pedagogical effectiveness by creating a supportive learning environment. The literature review indicates that emotionally supportive classrooms contribute to improved engagement, reduced anxiety, and stronger moral development. In SD Negeri Tumbang Korik, the CRE teacher intentionally cultivates such an environment by affirming students' efforts, acknowledging their struggles, and adapting instructional strategies to individual needs. This practice reflects the biblical model of Jesus, whose compassion leads Him to teach in ways that are accessible and responsive to His audience. The teacher's compassion does not diminish academic rigor; rather, it strengthens students' motivation to learn and participate. This challenges the misconception that compassion compromises discipline or standards. Instead, the findings suggest that compassionate pedagogy enhances discipline by grounding it in relationship and respect. Another important result concerns the role of compassion in addressing students' moral and behavioral development. The literature emphasizes that moral formation is most effective when values are modeled rather than merely explained. In Matthew 9:36, Jesus' compassion precedes His teaching and mission, indicating that moral authority flows from character. The CRE teacher at SD Negeri Tumbang Korik recognizes this principle and strives to model patience, humility, and care in daily interactions. Interview data reveal that students are particularly sensitive to the teacher's consistency and fairness. When disciplinary actions are framed within compassion, students are more likely to reflect on their behavior and take responsibility. This aligns with scholarly findings that students internalize moral norms when they perceive teachers as trustworthy and caring. Compassion thus functions as a bridge between biblical values and lived behavior, enabling students to translate faith into ethical practice. The findings also highlight the contextual significance of compassionate teaching in a rural public-school setting. SD Negeri Tumbang Korik is characterized by limited resources, geographical isolation, and diverse socio-economic challenges. In such contexts, students often experience educational marginalization and emotional neglect. The literature underscores that teachers in rural schools frequently serve as primary sources of stability and encouragement. The CRE teacher's compassionate approach addresses these contextual realities by acknowledging students' limitations and celebrating small achievements. This resonates with Jesus' response to the crowds, who are depicted as weary and leaderless. Compassion, therefore, becomes

a contextualized pedagogy that responds to students' lived experiences rather than imposing idealized expectations disconnected from reality. The findings suggest that compassionate teaching is particularly crucial in marginalized settings, where education must attend to both academic and human needs.

The integration of faith and compassion also shapes the teacher's understanding of professional identity. The literature review indicates that Christian teachers often struggle to balance institutional expectations with spiritual commitments, especially in public schools. However, Matthew 9:36 offers a theological framework that unites professionalism and spirituality. Compassion becomes the expression of faith within professional practice, allowing the teacher to fulfill curricular obligations while embodying Christian values. The CRE teacher at SD Negeri Tumbang Korik articulated that compassion helps navigate tensions between administrative demands and students' needs. By grounding teaching practices in faith-informed compassion, the teacher experiences a sense of vocation rather than mere obligation. This aligns with scholarly perspectives that view teaching as a form of Christian witness enacted through ethical and relational integrity. The findings indicate that compassionate teaching contributes to students' spiritual awareness and faith development. While the primary aim of CRE is not proselytization in a public-school context, the literature affirms that authentic Christian witness occurs through lived example. Students at SD Negeri Tumbang Korik reportedly associate Christian faith with kindness, understanding, and care, largely due to the teacher's compassionate demeanor. This reflects the missional dimension of Matthew 9:36, where Jesus' compassion leads to teaching and healing that reveal God's character. Compassionate pedagogy thus becomes a form of implicit theology, shaping students' perceptions of God and faith through everyday interactions. The findings suggest that students are more likely to engage with Christian teachings when they encounter faith expressed through compassion rather than authority alone. Another key discussion point concerns the sustainability of compassionate teaching. The literature warns that emotional labor can lead to teacher burnout, particularly in contexts with limited support. The CRE teacher acknowledged challenges related to workload, emotional demands, and professional isolation as the sole Christian educator at the school. Biblical reflection on Matthew 9:36 provides a source of spiritual resilience. Compassion, when rooted in faith, is not merely a human effort but a response to God's calling. The literature suggests that spiritual practices, reflective teaching, and collegial support are essential for sustaining compassionate pedagogy. While these supports may be limited in rural contexts, the teacher's theological understanding of compassion as participation in Christ's ministry offers motivation and endurance. This highlights the importance of integrating spiritual formation into teacher development programs, ensuring that compassion remains sustainable rather than exhausting. The convergence of biblical exegesis, literature synthesis, and interview data demonstrates that teaching with faith and compassion produces holistic educational outcomes. Students benefit academically, emotionally, and morally when teaching is grounded in compassionate engagement. The findings suggest that compassion enhances students' sense of belonging, reduces fear of failure, and encourages moral reflection. This aligns with broader educational theories that emphasize the interdependence of cognitive and affective learning domains. In Christian education, this interdependence is further enriched by theological meaning, as

compassion reflects God's character and redemptive concern for humanity. Matthew 9:36 thus functions as both a theological foundation and a pedagogical guide, shaping teaching practices that are attentive, relational, and transformative. The results and discussion indicate that teaching with faith and compassion, inspired by Matthew 9:36, significantly influences the quality and impact of Christian Religious Education at SD Negeri Tumbang Korik. Compassion emerges as a central pedagogical virtue that integrates biblical theology, professional competence, and contextual sensitivity. The CRE teacher's compassionate approach fosters trust, engagement, and moral awareness among students, enabling education to address not only intellectual development but also emotional and spiritual formation. The findings affirm that compassionate teaching is not ancillary to Christian education but essential to its identity and effectiveness. By embodying the compassion of Christ, teachers participate in a transformative educational ministry that responds to students' needs and reflects the heart of the Gospel within the classroom.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that teaching with faith and compassion, grounded in the biblical vision of Matthew 9:36, constitutes a vital and transformative dimension of Christian Religious Education in public-school contexts. The findings from SD Negeri Tumbang Korik, Gunung Mas, demonstrate that compassion is not merely an emotional response but a theologically informed pedagogical posture that shapes how teachers perceive, engage, and guide students. When compassion is rooted in faith, it becomes an expression of Christian vocation, enabling teachers to address students' intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs in an integrated manner. Matthew 9:36 provides a compelling model of teaching that begins with attentive perception, responds to human vulnerability, and leads to meaningful instructional and relational engagement. The study further affirms that compassionate teaching enhances pedagogical effectiveness by fostering trust, emotional safety, and moral awareness among students. In a rural educational setting characterized by limited resources and diverse socio-economic challenges, the CRE teacher's compassionate approach functions as a stabilizing and formative presence. Students respond more positively to religious instruction when they experience empathy, patience, and consistent care from their teacher. This relational foundation enables students to connect biblical teachings with their lived experiences, transforming faith from abstract knowledge into practical and ethical awareness. Compassion thus becomes a bridge between biblical theology and everyday educational practice. The findings highlight that professional competence in Christian education cannot be separated from moral and relational integrity. Teaching with faith and compassion requires not only mastery of content and pedagogy but also a willingness to embody Christ-like character in daily interactions. The CRE teacher's role as an educator, mentor, and moral exemplar reflects the shepherding model presented in Matthew 9:36. This integrated understanding of professionalism strengthens the credibility and impact of Christian Religious Education within a pluralistic public-school environment. This research underscores that faith-based compassion is essential to the identity and mission of Christian education. By embracing compassionate pedagogy inspired by Scripture, Christian teachers can create learning environments that nurture holistic student

development and reflect the redemptive character of the Gospel. Future research may expand this inquiry by examining comparative contexts or exploring institutional support systems that sustain compassionate teaching practices. Nevertheless, this study affirms that teaching with faith and compassion remains a powerful and necessary response to the educational and human challenges faced by students in contemporary society.

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