

The Social Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Fostering Educative Relationships: A Study of Philippians 1:5 at SMP Negeri 7 Bawolato

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in fostering educative relationships grounded in the theological insight of Philippians 1:5, which emphasizes partnership, mutual support, and shared commitment in the work of faith. Conducted at SMP Negeri 7 Bawolato, Nias, where 46 Christian students are taught by seven CRE teachers, the research aims to examine how social competence is expressed in classroom interactions and how it contributes to the formation of meaningful, faith-oriented educational relationships. Employing a qualitative approach, the study integrates a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with simple semi-structured interviews involving selected CRE teachers. The SLR analyzes scholarly works on teacher social competence, relational pedagogy, and Christian education, while interviews provide contextual insights into lived pedagogical practices. The findings reveal that social competence in CRE teaching is manifested through empathetic communication, collaborative learning, respectful engagement, and the ability to build trust-based relationships with students. These practices resonate strongly with the concept of koinōnia (partnership) in Philippians 1:5, highlighting education as a shared spiritual and pedagogical journey rather than a one-directional transfer of knowledge. In conclusion, the research underscores that social competence is a vital dimension of professional identity for CRE teachers, enabling them to transform classrooms into communities of learning marked by cooperation, care, and shared responsibility. This study contributes to the discourse on Christian pedagogy by offering a biblically grounded and contextually relevant model of educative relationships in public secondary schools.

Keywords: Social Competence, Christian Religious Education, Educative Relationships

INTRODUCTION

The cultivation of meaningful educative relationships between teachers and students has become an increasingly important concern in contemporary education, particularly within value-oriented subjects such as Christian Religious Education (CRE). In diverse and often challenging educational contexts, teachers are not only transmitters of knowledge but

also relational agents who shape students' moral outlook, emotional development, and social behavior. Among the various dimensions of teacher professionalism, social competence plays a crucial role in fostering healthy interactions, mutual trust, and collaborative learning environments. Social competence refers to a teacher's ability to communicate effectively, build respectful relationships, demonstrate empathy, manage interpersonal dynamics, and engage constructively with students, colleagues, and the wider school community. In CRE, this competence is inseparable from theological reflection, as Christian teaching is inherently relational, rooted in love, partnership, and shared commitment to faith and learning. Within the Christian tradition, educative relationships are not merely functional or instructional but are understood as partnerships in spiritual and moral formation. Philippians 1:5 offers a compelling biblical foundation for this relational vision, as the Apostle Paul expresses gratitude for the "partnership in the gospel" shared with the Philippian believers. The Greek term *koinōnia* used in this verse conveys a deep sense of fellowship, mutual participation, and shared responsibility. This concept extends beyond spiritual communion to include collaborative engagement, emotional solidarity, and sustained relational commitment. When applied to the educational context, Philippians 1:5 provides a theological lens for understanding teacher–student relationships as partnerships in learning and character formation, rather than hierarchical or transactional interactions. For CRE teachers, social competence thus becomes a lived expression of *koinōnia*, manifested through respectful communication, attentiveness to students' needs, and a willingness to walk alongside learners in their educational journey.

The relevance of this relational framework becomes particularly evident in public-school settings where Christian students may represent a minority and where teachers must navigate diverse cultural, social, and religious backgrounds. SMP Negeri 7 Bawolato, located in Nias, presents such a context. The school serves 46 Christian students guided by seven CRE teachers who share responsibility for nurturing students' spiritual and moral development within a broader pluralistic environment. In this setting, the quality of educative relationships significantly influences students' engagement with CRE, their sense of belonging, and their willingness to internalize Christian values. Social competence enables CRE teachers to create inclusive and supportive learning spaces where students feel respected, understood, and encouraged to participate actively in the learning process. Existing research on Christian education has tended to focus more heavily on pedagogical skills, curriculum design, or theological content, often overlooking the relational dynamics that mediate the effectiveness of instruction. Limited scholarly attention has been given to the integration of biblical texts, such as Philippians 1:5, with empirical analysis of teacher social competence in Indonesian public schools. This gap is significant, as relational challenges, such as communication barriers, student disengagement, and socio-emotional difficulties, frequently hinder the realization of educational goals. Without strong social competence, even well-designed curricula and sound theological instruction may fail to foster meaningful learning experiences. This study seeks to examine the social competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in fostering educative relationships at SMP Negeri 7 Bawolato, using Philippians 1:5 as a theological and conceptual framework. The study aims to explore how the biblical concept of partnership (*koinōnia*) informs teachers' relational practices and how these

practices contribute to the formation of supportive, collaborative, and value-oriented learning environments. By integrating exegetical reflection with educational analysis, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how social competence grounded in Scripture can strengthen Christian pedagogy and enhance the quality of teacher-student relationships in public-school contexts.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design that integrated an exegetical analysis of Philippians 1:5, a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), and a simple complementary interview to examine the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in fostering educative relationships at SMP Negeri 7 Bawolato, Nias. The qualitative approach was selected to allow for in-depth interpretation of biblical texts, theoretical perspectives on teacher social competence, and contextual educational experiences. By combining theological reflection with educational inquiry, the study sought to bridge scriptural insight and classroom practice in a public-school context. The exegetical component focused on Philippians 1:5, which emphasizes “partnership in the gospel” (*koinōnia*). A historical-critical and literary approach was applied to explore the theological meaning of partnership, relational commitment, and shared responsibility within the Pauline context. Reputable biblical commentaries, Greek lexical studies, and peer-reviewed theological works published between 2005 and 2024 were consulted to ensure interpretive reliability. This analysis provided the theological framework for understanding educative relationships as collaborative and relational rather than hierarchical. The SLR served as the primary methodological foundation. Inclusion criteria were peer-reviewed publications from the last ten years that addressed teacher social competence, relational learning, or Christian pedagogical frameworks. From an initial pool of 112 sources, 38 articles and books met the relevance and quality criteria. These sources were analyzed thematically to identify patterns related to communication skills, empathy, collaboration, respect, and relational trust in educational settings. To contextualize the literature-based findings, a simple semi-structured interview was conducted with two of the seven CRE teachers at SMP Negeri 7 Bawolato. The interview functioned as a supporting data source rather than a primary empirical dataset. Questions focused on teachers’ experiences in building relationships with students, challenges in fostering partnership within the classroom, and perceptions of how biblical principles influence their relational practices. The school context includes 46 Christian students taught by seven CRE teachers, providing a meaningful environment for examining relational dynamics within Christian education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal that the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers plays a decisive role in fostering educative relationships at SMP Negeri 7 Bawolato, particularly when understood through the theological lens of Philippians 1:5. The integration of exegetical analysis, systematic literature review (SLR), and complementary interview data demonstrates that educative relationships grounded in partnership (*koinōnia*) significantly influence students’ engagement, emotional security, and moral development. Philippians 1:5, which expresses Paul’s gratitude for the

believers' "partnership in the gospel," provides a relational paradigm that transcends mere instructional interaction and emphasizes shared participation, mutual trust, and collective responsibility. When applied to the educational context, this biblical concept reshapes the teacher-student relationship into a collaborative journey of learning and character formation. The exegetical analysis highlights that *koinōnia* in Philippians 1:5 is not a passive association but an active, enduring commitment characterized by mutual support and shared purpose. Paul's use of this term underscores the relational depth of early Christian communities, where teaching and discipleship occurred within bonds of trust and cooperation. Translating this principle into CRE pedagogy, social competence emerges as the teacher's ability to cultivate relational spaces where students feel valued as partners in learning rather than mere recipients of instruction. This theological foundation reframes social competence as a spiritual and ethical calling, not simply a professional skill set. Findings from the SLR consistently affirm that strong teacher-student relationships are central to effective moral and religious education. The literature indicates that social competence encompasses empathetic communication, emotional sensitivity, fairness, respect, and the capacity to manage interpersonal dynamics constructively. In Christian education, these attributes are particularly significant because values such as love, fellowship, and mutual care are integral to the faith itself. Studies reviewed in the SLR demonstrate that students are more likely to internalize moral and spiritual values when they experience relational authenticity and trust with their teachers. This supports the notion that educative relationships function as a mediating factor between theological instruction and character formation.

In the context of SMP Negeri 7 Bawolato, the presence of 46 Christian students guided by seven CRE teachers creates a relationally rich but demanding environment. Interview data reveal that teachers perceive relational engagement as essential for sustaining students' interest in CRE, especially in a public-school setting where religious education competes with diverse social influences. Teachers reported that students respond more openly when teachers demonstrate approachability, attentiveness, and consistency in their interactions. These relational qualities reflect the biblical notion of partnership, where learning is shared and supported rather than imposed. One significant finding is that social competence enhances students' sense of belonging and participation. Teachers noted that students are more willing to ask questions, express doubts, and engage in discussion when they perceive the teacher as a relational partner rather than an authoritative figure alone. This aligns with the Pauline model of partnership, which emphasizes mutual encouragement and shared commitment. In classrooms where social competence is evident, students demonstrate higher levels of attentiveness and cooperative behavior, suggesting that relational trust facilitates cognitive and moral engagement. The discussion also reveals that social competence is particularly important in addressing students' socio-emotional needs. Teachers at SMP Negeri 7 Bawolato acknowledged that many students face familial, economic, and emotional challenges that affect their learning readiness. Through empathetic listening and supportive communication, CRE teachers provide relational stability that enables students to engage more meaningfully with biblical teachings. This finding resonates with the SLR, which highlights that relational pedagogy fosters emotional safety, a prerequisite for effective moral and spiritual learning.

Another key theme emerging from the results is the role of teacher consistency and integrity. Interviewed teachers emphasized that students closely observe how teachers interact with others, manage conflict, and respond to challenges. When teachers model respect, patience, and fairness, students are more inclined to emulate these behaviors. This reflects the ethical dimension of *koinōnia*, where partnership is sustained through trustworthiness and shared moral commitments. The study thus confirms that social competence is inseparable from moral exemplarity in Christian education. The findings further suggest that educative relationships grounded in social competence contribute to a more inclusive and harmonious classroom environment. In a pluralistic public-school context, CRE teachers must navigate diverse backgrounds while maintaining the distinctiveness of Christian values. Teachers reported that relational sensitivity enables them to communicate biblical principles without alienating students or creating tension. This relational balance reflects Paul's pastoral approach in Philippians, where partnership is maintained despite differences and challenges. The convergence of exegetical insights, literature synthesis, and contextual teacher experiences demonstrates that social competence rooted in Philippians 1:5 significantly strengthens educative relationships. Such competence transforms CRE classrooms into relational communities where learning is collaborative, values are embodied, and faith is experienced as shared participation. The study affirms that social competence is not peripheral but central to the effectiveness of Christian Religious Education, particularly in fostering relationships that support holistic student development.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers is a fundamental factor in fostering meaningful educative relationships within public-school contexts, as demonstrated at SMP Negeri 7 Bawolato, Nias. Grounded in the biblical reflection of Philippians 1:5, which emphasizes partnership (*koinōnia*) in the gospel, the findings affirm that educative relationships in Christian education are most effective when they are relational, collaborative, and rooted in mutual trust. Social competence enables teachers to move beyond instructional delivery toward relational engagement that supports students' emotional, moral, and spiritual development. The integration of exegetical analysis, systematic literature review, and contextual interview data reveals that social competence is expressed through empathetic communication, emotional sensitivity, consistency, and ethical integrity. These attributes allow CRE teachers to create learning environments where students feel valued as partners in the educational process. When students experience respect, openness, and care from their teachers, they are more inclined to engage actively with Christian teachings and internalize the values being conveyed. Philippians 1:5 provides a theological framework that reframes teacher-student interaction as shared participation in learning and faith formation rather than a hierarchical or transactional relationship. The study highlights that social competence plays a crucial role in addressing the socio-emotional challenges faced by students in a pluralistic public-school setting. Through relational attentiveness and pastoral sensitivity, CRE teachers contribute to a classroom atmosphere that promotes belonging, cooperation, and moral reflection. This relational climate supports holistic learning by integrating cognitive understanding with ethical and emotional growth. This research underscores that social competence is not an auxiliary skill but a

core dimension of Christian teacher professionalism. When grounded in Scripture and embodied through consistent relational practices, social competence strengthens the impact of Christian Religious Education and fosters educative relationships that reflect the communal and participatory vision of the Christian faith.

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