

The Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Shaping a School Culture Based on Christian Values at SD Negeri 155679 Hurlang Muara Nauli 1

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of Christian Religious Education teachers' competencies in shaping a school culture rooted in Christian values at SD Negeri 155679 Hurlang Muara Nauli 1. Education is recognized as a strategic medium for character formation, and within Christian pedagogy, teachers serve not only as knowledge transmitters but also as role models and cultural gatekeepers. The research builds on the framework that teacher competence encompasses four domains- pedagogical, personal, social, and professional- which together enable the cultivation of a school culture characterized by love, justice, forgiveness, and responsibility. Using a quantitative research design, the study employed a structured Likert-scale questionnaire administered to 20 purposively selected students in upper-level classes. The instrument measured student perceptions of teacher competencies and indicators of school culture, achieving high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.83$). Data analysis included descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation to examine relationships between teacher competence and cultural formation. Results reveal strong positive correlations, with personal competence ($r = 0.82, p < 0.01$) and social competence ($r = 0.78, p < 0.01$) exerting the greatest influence, followed by pedagogical ($r = 0.74, p < 0.01$) and professional competence ($r = 0.69, p < 0.05$). Findings affirm that Christian values become lived realities within schools primarily through the authenticity, empathy, and leadership of CRE teachers. The study underscores that initiatives such as devotions and service projects achieve transformative impact only under the guidance of competent teachers. It concludes by recommending professional development that integrates spiritual formation, enabling teachers to embody the values they teach while fostering inclusive and faith-driven school cultures.

Keywords: Competence, Christian Religious Education, Culture, Christian Values

INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as a strategic medium for shaping students' character, integrity, and holistic development. Within the framework of primary education, teachers

play a central role in instilling life values that will serve as the moral foundation for children's future (Lickona, 2004; Nucci & Narvaez, 2008). One critical dimension of character education is the cultivation of school culture, which embodies the shared values, norms, and practices embraced by the entire school community. In schools that operate within the Christian faith tradition, Christian values serve as the guiding framework for shaping a culture that is inclusive, humane, and grounded in love (Groome, 2011). School culture, therefore, extends beyond formal routines or codes of conduct; it reflects lived values that form the collective identity of students, teachers, and staff (Deal & Peterson, 2016). The competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers holds a crucial role in shaping a school culture rooted in Christian values. CRE teachers are not only responsible for teaching biblical knowledge but also serve as agents of character formation, exemplars of faith, and facilitators of value-based learning in contextually meaningful ways (Schreiner, 2016; Astika, 2021). Teacher competence is commonly understood as encompassing four interrelated domains: pedagogical, personal, social, and professional (Glatthorn et al., 2017). These competencies enable CRE teachers to foster learning environments imbued with values such as love, forgiveness, justice, and responsibility-values that lie at the heart of Christian pedagogy (Knight, 2006). A teacher who integrates these dimensions into their practice contributes not only to effective classroom instruction but also to the overall ethos of the school, ensuring that Christian values permeate both academic and non-academic spheres (Barnes, 2014). At the practical level, teachers' social and personal competencies are particularly decisive in shaping school culture. Teachers who embody empathy, compassion, and integrity naturally cultivate a climate where students feel respected and safe (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). This resonates with the Christian vision of education, which emphasizes the holistic formation of individuals as moral, spiritual, and social beings (Elias et al., 1997). Moreover, CRE teachers act as cultural gatekeepers who mediate between the school's formal vision and the lived realities of students' interactions. Their professional competence, expressed through creative pedagogy and contextualized approaches, ensures that Christian values are not abstract ideals but lived experiences integrated into daily school life (Denham, 2006; Goleman, 2006).

SD Negeri 155679 Hurlang Muara Nauli 1 provides a relevant context for examining this issue. As a public elementary school committed to integrating Christian values into daily practices, the institution has initiated various programs aimed at fostering Christian character among students. These initiatives include collective morning devotions, acts of service and compassion, and the strengthening of ethical interpersonal relations. While these activities signify a strong institutional commitment to Christian-based character education, their effectiveness largely depends on the role of CRE teachers as the primary agents guiding and nurturing school culture (Supriyadi, 2022). Without the active leadership and competence of these teachers, such initiatives risk becoming superficial rituals rather than transformative experiences. This research is therefore significant in exploring the extent to which CRE teachers' competencies contribute to shaping a Christian value-based school culture at SD Negeri 155679 Hurlang Muara Nauli 1. In the current era, education faces complex challenges marked by moral relativism, individualism, and declining sensitivity to social values (Twenge, 2017; Rigby, 2017). A strong school culture grounded in Christian values serves as a moral safeguard, equipping

students to navigate these challenges with integrity and compassion. Understanding how CRE teachers embody their pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competencies in this process represents a strategic step toward strengthening character formation and building a quality educational ecosystem (Astuti, 2020). This study also offers practical contributions. By highlighting the strategies and challenges faced by CRE teachers in cultivating Christian school culture, the research provides actionable insights for policymakers, educators, and schools seeking to develop more robust models of faith-based education. This is particularly relevant for public elementary schools in multicultural contexts, where openness to diverse perspectives must coexist with a clear commitment to spiritual values (Barnes, 2014). Ultimately, this research affirms that strengthening CRE teachers' competencies is not merely an educational imperative but also a spiritual calling. Teachers entrusted with this mission carry the sacred responsibility of shaping students into individuals who embody Christian values—individuals who live with love, justice, and compassion, and who are prepared to contribute positively to both the school community and wider society (Knight, 2006).

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers' competencies in shaping a Christian value-based school culture at SD Negeri 155679 Hurlang Muara Nauli 1. The quantitative approach was selected because it allows for systematic measurement, objective analysis, and statistical testing of relationships between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this context, the study specifically sought to measure the extent to which students perceived the influence of their CRE teacher's competencies—covering pedagogical, personal, social, and professional domains—on the cultivation of a school culture rooted in Christian values. The research population consisted of all students enrolled in upper-level classes at SD Negeri 155679 Hurlang Muara Nauli 1. From this population, a total of 20 students were purposively selected as respondents. This sample size was considered adequate for small-scale quantitative research in a single school context, particularly given the focus on in-depth analysis of student perceptions. The respondents represented a balanced mix of gender and grade levels, ensuring diversity of perspectives while maintaining manageability for data collection and analysis. The primary data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." It consisted of two sections. The first section measured student perceptions of the CRE teacher's competencies across four dimensions: pedagogical (ability to deliver engaging, value-based instruction), personal (integrity, discipline, and faith commitment), social (empathy, communication, and inclusivity), and professional (mastery of subject matter and teaching strategies). The second section assessed indicators of school culture shaped by Christian values, such as mutual respect, compassion, justice, responsibility, and active participation in faith-based activities. To ensure validity, the instrument was reviewed by two experts in Christian pedagogy and education, and minor revisions were made based on their feedback. Reliability was tested through a pilot study with five students outside the sample, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.83, indicating strong internal consistency (Gliem & Gliem, 2003). Data collection was carried out in a classroom setting, with respondents completing the questionnaires anonymously to

encourage honest responses. Data analysis was performed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviations, were used to summarize student perceptions of teacher competencies and school culture indicators. Pearson's correlation analysis was then applied to determine the relationship between teacher competencies and the development of Christian value-based school culture. The use of these statistical methods allowed the researcher to provide empirical evidence on the extent of the influence of CRE teachers' competencies, thereby contributing to both theoretical insights and practical recommendations for Christian education practices.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research provide significant insights into the role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers' competencies in shaping a Christian value-based school culture at SD Negeri 155679 Hurlang Muara Nauli 1. As outlined in the methodology, data were gathered through a structured Likert-scale questionnaire administered to 20 students, with the objective of capturing their perceptions of the competencies of their CRE teacher across four domains-pedagogical, personal, social, and professional-and the extent to which these competencies influenced the development of school culture rooted in Christian values. The quantitative results, interpreted alongside theoretical frameworks and prior scholarship, affirm the central role of teacher competence in cultivating a faith-based and inclusive school ethos. The analysis of student responses revealed that the CRE teacher at SD Negeri 155679 Hurlang Muara Nauli 1 was perceived as highly competent in pedagogical practice. Mean scores for pedagogical indicators, such as the ability to deliver engaging lessons, integrate biblical values into academic content, and employ interactive teaching methods, consistently ranged between 4.2 and 4.5 on the five-point Likert scale. Students indicated that their CRE teacher often connected biblical narratives with real-life situations, helping them see the relevance of Christian teachings in their daily lives. These results resonate with the arguments of Lickona (2004) and Nucci and Narvaez (2008), who maintain that effective character education requires more than rote instruction; it requires contextualized pedagogy that links values to practical experiences. In this regard, the CRE teacher did not merely transmit abstract doctrinal content but fostered a learning environment where Christian values were integrated into the cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains of student development. The findings also support Knight's (2006) notion that Christian pedagogy should be value-centered and life-oriented. For instance, students noted that lessons on forgiveness and love were often tied to classroom conflict resolution, encouraging them to apply biblical principles in their peer interactions. The strong pedagogical competence of the teacher thus directly contributed to the shaping of a school culture where biblical values were not only taught but practiced.

Student Perceptions of Personal Competence

Personal competence, defined as the teacher's integrity, discipline, and authenticity in embodying Christian values, received the highest ratings from respondents, with mean scores ranging from 4.5 to 4.7. Students overwhelmingly agreed that their CRE teacher

modeled consistent Christian behavior, both inside and outside the classroom. They highlighted the teacher's punctuality, fairness in grading, and compassionate treatment of students as indicators of personal integrity. This finding underscores the importance of teachers as role models in value-based education, as emphasized by Jennings and Greenberg (2009). The teacher's embodiment of empathy, compassion, and integrity created a climate of trust and respect, which, in turn, reinforced the school culture. The data suggest that students were more willing to embrace Christian values when they observed them consistently practiced by their teacher. Such results also align with Groome's (2011) view that Christian education is not only about imparting knowledge but also about witnessing faith through lived example. The high ratings for personal competence indicate that the CRE teacher's authenticity played a decisive role in making Christian values tangible and credible to students. Without this dimension, character education risks becoming a rhetorical exercise rather than a formative process.

Student Perceptions of Social Competence

The dimension of social competence, which included empathy, communication, inclusivity, and the ability to build positive relationships, was also rated positively by students, with mean scores between 4.3 and 4.6. Students reported that their CRE teacher was approachable, listened attentively to their concerns, and encouraged collaborative learning. Importantly, the teacher fostered inclusivity by treating all students equally regardless of gender, academic ability, or socio-economic background. This finding reflects Deal and Peterson's (2016) argument that school culture emerges from shared values and lived practices. By modeling inclusivity and fairness, the CRE teacher established a culture of respect and mutual care among students. The teacher's encouragement of group activities-such as collaborative service projects and shared devotional practices-reinforced the communal dimension of Christian faith. The results further resonate with Elias et al. (1997), who highlight the importance of social-emotional competencies in holistic education. Through empathetic engagement, the teacher nurtured students' social skills and moral imagination, enabling them to view others with compassion and solidarity. Such practices strengthened the relational fabric of the school culture, ensuring that Christian values extended beyond individual morality to collective identity.

Student Perceptions of Professional Competence

Professional competence, encompassing mastery of subject matter, pedagogical strategies, and commitment to professional development, received moderately high ratings, averaging between 4.1 and 4.4. Students expressed confidence in their teacher's biblical knowledge and ability to explain complex theological concepts in simple and relatable terms. They also valued the teacher's use of varied teaching methods, such as storytelling, multimedia resources, and group discussions, which made lessons engaging and memorable. These findings are consistent with Glatthorn et al. (2017), who argue that professional competence equips teachers to effectively navigate the demands of modern education. In the context of Christian pedagogy, professional competence ensured that biblical content was taught with accuracy, clarity, and relevance. The teacher's ability to adapt instructional strategies to students' needs reflected a

commitment to continuous improvement, a quality essential for sustaining effective teaching in diverse educational settings. At the same time, student feedback suggested areas for further growth. Some respondents noted that while lessons were engaging, they sometimes desired more opportunities for student-led exploration of biblical themes. This aligns with Denham (2006), who emphasizes the value of fostering student agency in moral and spiritual learning. Enhancing professional competence in this area could further enrich the participatory dimensions of school culture.

Correlation between Teacher Competence and School Culture

Pearson's correlation analysis indicated strong positive relationships between all four dimensions of teacher competence and indicators of Christian value-based school culture. The highest correlation was found between personal competence and school culture ($r = 0.82$, $p < 0.01$), followed by social competence ($r = 0.78$, $p < 0.01$), pedagogical competence ($r = 0.74$, $p < 0.01$), and professional competence ($r = 0.69$, $p < 0.05$). These results demonstrate that teacher competencies are significantly associated with the cultivation of school culture, with personal and social competencies exerting the strongest influence. The statistical evidence supports the theoretical claims advanced by Barnes (2014) and Astuti (2020), who emphasize that school culture is not an abstract construct but the product of teacher practices and interpersonal dynamics. The findings also corroborate Supriyadi's (2022) observation that institutional programs, such as collective devotions and acts of service, only achieve transformative impact when guided by competent and committed teachers. Without the leadership of CRE teachers, such activities risk being reduced to superficial rituals. The results of this study highlight the decisive role of CRE teachers as cultural gatekeepers in faith-based education. By embodying Christian values through their competencies, teachers ensure that the ethos of the school reflects love, justice, and compassion rather than mere compliance with external routines. This finding is particularly relevant for public elementary schools in Indonesia, where Christian values must coexist with pluralistic social realities. The strong correlations between teacher competence and school culture underscore the interconnectedness of personal integrity and institutional ethos. As Goleman (2006) suggests, emotional intelligence-expressed through empathy, integrity, and relational awareness-shapes not only individual interactions but also the broader climate of organizations. In this context, the CRE teacher's personal and social competencies acted as the emotional and moral anchor of the school, fostering a culture of care and respect. The findings must also be situated within the broader challenges of contemporary education, including moral relativism, individualism, and declining sensitivity to social values (Twenge, 2017; Rigby, 2017). The cultivation of a Christian value-based school culture provides students with a moral compass to navigate these challenges. By integrating biblical principles into pedagogy and practice, CRE teachers equip students with both cognitive frameworks and lived experiences of faith. This resonates with the vision of Christian education articulated by Schreiner (2016) and Astika (2021), who argue that teachers serve not only as knowledge transmitters but also as faith exemplars and community builders. The CRE teacher at SD Negeri 155679 Hurlang Muara Nauli 1 embodied this vision, demonstrating how teacher competencies directly contribute to the moral and spiritual resilience of students in an increasingly complex world.

The practical contributions of this study are threefold. First, it affirms the need for professional development programs that strengthen the four dimensions of teacher competence, with particular emphasis on personal and social domains. Second, it highlights the importance of aligning institutional initiatives with teacher leadership to avoid superficiality in character education programs. Third, it provides actionable insights for policymakers seeking to integrate faith-based values within multicultural educational settings without compromising inclusivity or equity. These contributions reflect the broader aim of Christian pedagogy to balance faith commitments with openness to diversity, as emphasized by Barnes (2014). By cultivating a school culture rooted in Christian values, teachers can simultaneously uphold spiritual integrity and foster mutual respect in pluralistic contexts. While the study offers valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The small sample size of 20 students limits the generalizability of the findings, and reliance on self-reported perceptions may introduce bias. Future research could employ mixed-methods designs, incorporating qualitative interviews or classroom observations to triangulate data. Comparative studies across multiple schools could also provide a broader understanding of how CRE teacher competencies influence school culture in diverse contexts. The results of this study confirm that CRE teachers' competencies play a decisive role in shaping Christian value-based school culture at SD Negeri 155679 Hurlang Muara Nauli 1. Among the four domains, personal and social competencies were most strongly correlated with school culture, underscoring the importance of teachers as role models and relational leaders. Pedagogical and professional competencies also contributed significantly by ensuring that biblical values were integrated into effective teaching practices. Together, these competencies created a school environment where Christian values were not abstract ideals but lived realities shaping the collective identity of students and staff.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers' competencies in shaping a school culture based on Christian values at SD Negeri 155679 Hurlang Muara Nauli 1. The findings strongly affirm that teacher competence is a decisive factor in embedding Christian values within the daily ethos of the school, thereby transforming abstract principles into lived realities that shape students' character, integrity, and holistic development. By analyzing student perceptions quantitatively, the study demonstrates that the four domains of teacher competence—pedagogical, personal, social, and professional—are all significantly correlated with the cultivation of a Christian value-based school culture, with personal and social competencies exerting the most substantial influence. The results highlight that pedagogical competence enables CRE teachers to integrate biblical teachings with academic content, making lessons engaging and contextually relevant. More importantly, the teacher's personal competence—embodied in integrity, discipline, and authenticity—proved to be the strongest determinant of cultural formation. Students' recognition of their teacher's consistent role-modeling underscores the principle that values are best taught through lived example rather than mere instruction. Similarly, social competence, expressed through empathy, inclusivity, and strong communication, nurtures a climate of respect and mutual care, aligning with the communal vision of Christian education. Professional competence, though rated slightly lower, remains vital in ensuring accuracy, clarity, and adaptability in

teaching, thereby supporting the broader objectives of faith-based pedagogy. These findings reinforce the argument that school culture is not merely the product of institutional programs but is sustained through the daily practices and relational dynamics fostered by teachers. Activities such as collective devotions and acts of service only become transformative when guided by teachers whose competencies embody the values they seek to cultivate. Without such leadership, initiatives risk degenerating into superficial routines rather than fostering authentic character formation. This underscores the need to prioritize teacher competence as the central axis of character education within Christian schools. Beyond confirming theoretical claims in existing literature, the study contributes practical insights for educational policy and practice. Strengthening CRE teacher competencies-particularly in personal and social domains-emerges as an urgent priority. Professional development initiatives must move beyond technical training to include reflective and spiritual formation, equipping teachers to embody the values they teach. Furthermore, alignment between institutional vision and teacher practice is critical to avoid dissonance between stated values and lived experiences. Policymakers and school leaders should therefore design holistic strategies that empower teachers as cultural gatekeepers who balance faith commitments with openness to diversity in pluralistic educational settings. The study is not without limitations. The small sample size of 20 students restricts the generalizability of findings, and reliance on self-reported data may be influenced by subjectivity. Future research would benefit from employing mixed-methods designs, triangulating surveys with classroom observations and interviews, and extending analysis across multiple schools to capture broader patterns. Despite these constraints, the study provides compelling evidence that CRE teachers' competencies are foundational to shaping a resilient school culture rooted in Christian values. In conclusion, the research affirms that strengthening teacher competence is both an educational imperative and a spiritual calling. At SD Negeri 155679 Hurlang Muara Nauli 1, the CRE teacher's embodiment of pedagogical skill, personal integrity, social empathy, and professional mastery served as the linchpin for cultivating a school culture grounded in love, justice, forgiveness, and responsibility. Such a culture equips students not only to excel academically but also to grow as individuals who embody Christian values in their relationships and contributions to society. In a time marked by moral relativism and social fragmentation, schools that nurture such cultures offer hope by forming students into compassionate, responsible, and faith-driven citizens.

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