

The Role of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Fostering a Sense of National Unity and Integrity in Junior High School Students in Tanah Sereal-Bogor based on Romans 15:5-7

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Abstract. *The Christian Religious Education teacher plays a strategic role in shaping students' understanding of the importance of living in harmony and peace, despite different backgrounds. However, in practice, not all Christian Religious Education teachers are able to effectively integrate teachings about unity and solidarity. The role of Christian Religious Education teachers in fostering a sense of national unity among Junior High School Tanah Sereal-Bogor students is crucial, especially in the context of Indonesia's diversity. This study aims to examine the strategic role of Christian Religious Education teachers based on guidelines derived from Romans 15:5-7. The research will use a qualitative approach, exploring the role of Christian Religious Education teachers in fostering a sense of national unity among Junior High School Tanah Sereal-Bogor students based on the teachings of Romans 15:5-7. The results show that the implementation of teachings from Romans 15:5-7 in the Christian Religious Education curriculum can have a significant impact on shaping students' characters to have attitudes of national unity and solidarity. Thus, Christian Religious Education teachers act as agents of change who can strengthen the sense of national unity through education based on Christian values.*

Keywords: *Role, Christian Religious Education, Character, Unity and Solidarity.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of education in Indonesia, the role of Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers is not only limited to learning religious material, but also includes the formation of students' character and attitudes in everyday life. (Kasingku & Lotulung, 2024) One important aspect that must be developed is a sense of national unity, especially among junior high school students. Indonesia is a country rich in cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. This diversity is both a gift and a challenge for the Indonesian people. In this situation, education has a strategic role in instilling the values of unity and integrity to students. Christian Religious Education teachers, with the foundation of Christian values, have the responsibility to educate students to be able to coexist harmoniously in a pluralistic society. Dewi (Dewi, 2021) has discussed that Christian Religious Education teachers must have an openness to national insight and understand that every human being is an image of God created by God in diversity.

In schools, especially at the junior high school level, students are in a phase of development that is very vulnerable to environmental influences. Students are still searching for self-identity and are often easily influenced by narrow and exclusive views. In this situation, PAK teachers have a strategic role to shape students' understanding of the

importance of living in harmony and peace, despite different backgrounds. However, in practice, not all PAK teachers are able to integrate these teachings on unity effectively. Many teachers still focus on the cognitive aspect and place less emphasis on inclusive character building. In addition, the lack of adequate training and resources is also an obstacle in the implementation of holistic education.

In previous research, Lilis (Ermindyawati, 2019) has discussed the important role of Christian Religious Education teachers in helping students' spiritual growth and the large correlation between student behaviour and the role of Christian Religion teachers. However, there are still several aspects that can be expanded or added to further explore the discussion of the role of Christian Religious Education teachers in fostering a sense of national unity. Furthermore, Telaumbanua (Telaumbanua, 2020) has discussed the role of Christian Religious Education teachers in shaping student character, but has not directly linked it to the formation of a sense of national unity and integrity. The article has not explicitly discussed how the role of Christian Religious Education teachers can contribute to the formation of a sense of national unity and integrity.

Peter (Peter, 2020) has discussed the importance of learning Religious Education and Culture (PAK) in building nationalist characters to prevent intolerance and radicalism. However, the role of Christian Religious Education teachers in fostering national unity has not been specifically discussed. Christian Religious Education teachers have a very important role in instilling the values of national unity and integrity to students. Christian Religious Education teachers have a unique opportunity to influence students' views and attitudes towards diversity and unity in society. Christian Religious Education teachers can convey religious teachings that encourage tolerance, respect for differences, and a spirit of unity among students, regardless of religious or ethnic background.

In this context, it is still necessary to discuss further how Christian Religious Education teachers can integrate the values of national unity into the curriculum and learning, as well as what concrete strategies can be applied in teaching and practising these values in the classroom.

Therefore, this study aims to examine how the role of PAK teachers can foster a sense of national unity and integrity in junior high school students based on the teachings of Romans 15:5-7. The research will also explore effective methods and strategies to teach the values of unity in the context of Christian religious education, as well as identify challenges faced and solutions that can be applied. Thus, it is expected to make a significant

contribution in creating students who are not only faithful, but also able to live harmoniously in diversity and contribute positively to the unity of the nation.

This study aims to explain the role of Christian Religious Education teachers in fostering a sense of national unity and integrity in junior high school students based on the values taught in Romans 15:5-7. By integrating these teachings in the educational process, it is hoped that students will not only grow into individuals of faith, but also become citizens who are able to appreciate differences and contribute positively to the unity and integrity of the nation.

2. METHODS

This research will use a qualitative approach, exploring the role of Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers in fostering a sense of national unity and integrity in junior high school students based on the teachings of Romans 15:5-7. The research will be conducted in several junior high schools in Tanah Sereal-Bogor, which have Christian Religious Education programmes. Data collection techniques that will be used in this research include interviews will be conducted with PAK teachers, students, principals, and parents of students to get views on the role of PAK teachers in fostering a sense of national unity and integrity. These interviews and FGDs are semi-structured to allow flexibility in exploring relevant topics.

The collected data will be analysed using thematic analysis method. The steps of data analysis include: Data Transcription, Coding, Theme Grouping, Interpretation. With this research method, it is hoped that an in-depth understanding of the role of PAK teachers in fostering a sense of national unity and integrity in junior high school students can be obtained, as well as effective strategies in teaching these values based on the teachings of Romans 15:5-7.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Interpretation of Romans 15:5-7

Romans 15:5-7, in the context of the Bible, contains a message about harmony and tolerance among God's people. In this context, Paul asks that the church in Rome be able to have harmony and tolerance among the church, as well as with other people who are different. This harmony does not only mean having unity in faith, but also having the ability to accept and respect the differences that exist among them. Paul reminds them that Christ has accepted them with love and forgiveness, so they should also accept each

other in the same way. (Romans 15:5 - Interpretation / Notes - SABDA Bible, n.d., p. 15; Sumiwi & Arifianto, 2021) The Romans who were different in cultural background, ethnicity, and social level at that time were to be able to accept each other and mingle, not showing favouritism so as to narrow the differences between the churches at that time as Christ had accepted every human being with sincerity and love. He even allowed those who were different to join the fellowship that was held in homes. (PHB Bible Series: Life Application Study Bible, 2016)

In this context, harmony and tolerance do not mean eliminating differences, but rather having the ability to accept and respect those differences. Paul also reminds us that this harmony is part of the will of Christ, who wants to glorify God through unity and tolerance among His people. Therefore, harmony and tolerance among God's people are important to glorify God and be an example to the rest of society. (Romans 15:5 - Interpretation / Notes - SABDA Bible, n.d.; Sumiwi & Arifianto, 2021) The Matthew-Wahyu Bible Commentary discusses that everyone should be able to accept each other's weaknesses and differences not only when fellowshiping but when different people come to visit, they should be willing to open the door of their house. (GUTHRIE, 1996).

Romans 15:5-7 provides relevant guidance for PAK teachers in carrying out this task. The verse teaches the importance of unity of heart based on perseverance and comfort from God, and encourages acceptance of one another as Christ has accepted us. Guided by this verse, PAK teachers can teach the values of unity and oneness that are essential in social life. The unity of heart mentioned in Romans 15:5-7 means that although there are differences among individuals in the community, they can still be united in the same goal, which is to glorify God. This can be applied in an educational context by teaching students to appreciate differences and work together to achieve a greater common goal.

In addition, the acceptance of one another as taught in Romans 15:7 underlines the importance of an inclusive and tolerant attitude. (Peter, 2020) PAK teachers can provide concrete examples of how Christ accepted all people regardless of differences. This attitude is very important in building a harmonious and peaceful society, especially in the context of Indonesia's diversity.

B. Various Roles of Christian Religious Education Teachers

Emphasising the Importance of Unity of Heart

Romans 15:5-7 contains the importance of unity of heart and national unity in religious life. In this passage, the Apostle Paul speaks of God as the source of

perseverance and comfort, who grants harmony to believers. Paul invites believers to glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with one heart and one voice. This unity of heart and national unity is based on love for God and one another, as well as on God's endurance and comfort.' (*Romans 15:5 - Interpretation / Notes - SABDA Bible*, n.d.)

In this context, unity of heart and national unity not only mean harmony in various aspects of life, but also unity in faith and purpose. This unity allows believers to live together in togetherness, tolerance, and unity, so that God's name is glorified among the nations. (*DIFFERENT BUT ONE | JOINT COMMUNICATION JAYASAN*, n.d.) This unity also allows believers to be a blessing to others, as God desires.

In Romans 15:5-7, Paul also emphasises the importance of glorifying God with one heart and one voice. This unity of heart and national unity not only means harmony in various aspects of life, but also means unity in faith and purpose. This unity allows believers to live together in togetherness, tolerance, and unity, so that God's name is glorified among the nations.

The importance of unity of heart and national unity in Romans 15:5-7 is very relevant. In the era of globalisation and religious pluralism, unity of heart and national unity become very important to maintain national unity and glorify God. (Sumiwi & Arifianto, 2021) This unity allows believers to be a blessing to others, and to glorify God with one heart and one voice.

Romans 15:5-7 emphasises the importance of unity of heart and national unity in religious life. This unity is based on love for God and one another, and on God's endurance and comfort. This unity enables believers to live together in togetherness, tolerance, and unity, so that God's name is glorified among the nations. This unity also enables believers to be a blessing to others, and to glorify God with one heart and one voice. (*Romans 15:5 - Interpretation / Notes - SABDA Bible*, n.d.)

PAK teachers can teach that unity of heart is the will of Christ. (Kasingku & Lotulung, 2024) Inviting students to unite in a common goal of glorifying God teaches that although students come from different backgrounds, they are called to unite in faith and action. (Rambitan, 2017)

Encouraging Acceptance of Each Other

Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers can teach students to accept each other, as Christ has accepted them, as well as provide concrete examples of how Christ

accepted all people regardless of differences, and encourage students to emulate this attitude in daily interactions.

The PAK teacher can start by teaching about Christ's acceptance of all people regardless of differences. The PAK teacher can explore Bible verses that show Christ's love and acceptance of different individuals, such as the story of Jesus and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) or the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Through this learning, students can understand the importance of acceptance regardless of differences.

The PAK teacher can use concrete examples from Jesus' life to illustrate the principle of acceptance. The PAK teacher can discuss how Jesus actively sought out and accepted people who were considered marginalised or sinful by society at that time, such as tax collectors, prostitutes, or the sick. By understanding how Christ accepted all people regardless of differences, students can see a strong example to follow in their daily interactions.

The PAK teacher can organise class discussions and in-depth reflection activities on how students can apply Christ's attitude of acceptance in their daily lives. (Krismiyanto & Kii, 2023) The PAK teacher can ask questions such as 'How can we accept each other as Christ accepted us?' or 'How can Christ's attitude of acceptance affect the way we interact with others who are different from us?' Through this discussion and reflection, students can reflect on the Christian values of acceptance and plan concrete actions to implement them in daily life.

The PAK teacher should be a concrete example in applying Christ's attitude of acceptance in daily interactions with students and others around them. PAK teachers should treat all students with love and respect, regardless of their background, status, or views. By modelling this attitude, teachers can inspire students to do the same in interactions with others.

Teaching the Love of Christ

Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers can teach about the love of Christ that transcends all differences, as suggested by (Kasingku & Lotulung, 2024) By understanding and applying this love, students can learn to love others regardless of ethnicity, religion, race, or class. PAK teachers can start by teaching about the love of Christ which is at the centre of Christianity. The teacher can discuss how Christ's love includes all people regardless of differences (John 3:16).

The PAK teacher can use stories from the Bible that illustrate Christ's love that transcends all differences. An example is the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman

(John 4:1-42), where Jesus showed His love to someone who came from a different ethnic and religious background. By studying these stories, students can see how Christ's love is not limited by social or cultural differences.

The PAK teacher can organise a class discussion on how students can apply Christ's love in their daily lives. The PAK teacher can ask questions such as 'How can we love others regardless of differences?' or 'How can the love of Christ affect the way we interact with others who are different from us?' Through this discussion, students are invited to reflect on the values of Christ's love and how students can implement them in real actions.

PAK teachers can design collaborative projects where students work together to perform concrete acts of love for others regardless of differences. (Simamora et al., 2023) For example, students can organise social activities, such as visiting nursing homes or helping communities in need. Through this experience, students can feel the direct impact of applying the love of Christ in their lives.

PAK teachers can also encourage students to conduct personal reflections on their experiences in applying the love of Christ in their daily lives. Through this reflection, students can identify challenges and successes in loving others regardless of differences, and plan further actions to continue growing in the love of Christ.

Fostering Mutual Respect

Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers can instil mutual respect among students, where students are taught to appreciate differences and see them as strengths, not weaknesses, in accordance with the principle of accepting one another taught in Romans 15:7. The PAK teacher can start by educating students about the Christian values that underpin mutual respect, including love, forgiveness, tolerance, and faithfulness. (Romans 15:5 - Interpretation / Notes - SABDA Bible, n.d.)

PAK teachers can use stories from the Bible or church history that highlight the importance of respecting differences and treating others with respect. (Sumiwi & Arifianto, 2021) For example, the story of Jesus interacting with diverse individuals from different social and cultural backgrounds can serve as a role model for students in respecting differences and can hold open class discussions on topics related to differences, such as culture, religion, or political views. In these discussions, students are given the opportunity to share their views, listen to others' perspectives, and appreciate the diversity within their group.

PAK teachers can design collaborative activities where students work together in diverse groups. Through this collaboration, students learn to appreciate the different contributions of each group member and see diversity as an enriching strength rather than an obstacle.

Integrating Bible Teachings in Daily Life

Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers can help students apply biblical teachings in their daily lives, especially in terms of accepting and loving others, as suggested by (Kasingku & Lotulung, 2024). Methods that PAK teachers can use to achieve this are through stories, group discussions, and personal reflection. PAK teachers can use stories from the Bible that highlight the importance of accepting and loving one's neighbour. For example, stories about Christ's love for all people, regardless of social status or background, such as the story of the Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:1-7) or the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). By illustrating love and forgiveness in these stories, teachers can help students understand these values and relate them to their own life situations.

The PAK teacher can organise group discussions on how to apply the biblical teachings on acceptance and love for others in daily life. In this discussion, students can share their experiences, thoughts and views on situations where they can love and accept others as taught in the Bible. The teacher can facilitate this discussion by asking questions that trigger critical thinking and deep reflection on the concept.

The PAK teacher can also encourage students to do personal reflection on how they can apply the teachings of the Bible in their daily lives. This can be done through reflection assignments, daily journaling, or *quiet time* where students can reflect on the teachings of the Bible and how they can implement them in interactions with others. Teachers can provide reflection guides or questions that help students relate the Bible teachings to personal experiences and plan concrete actions to apply them in daily life.

4. CONCLUSION

Romans 15:5-7 provides a foundation for the role of Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers in fostering a sense of national unity in junior high school students. PAK teachers have the responsibility to model unity of heart, build a classroom atmosphere that promotes perseverance and comfort, and encourage acceptance of one another. PAK teachers also teach the love of Christ as the basis for appreciating differences, building mutual respect, and organising joint activities to promote co-operation and unity. By

practising this role, PAK teachers become agents of change who shape a generation that practices the values of national unity and integrity, in accordance with Christ's teachings contained in Romans 15:5-7.

5. RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION

This research not only has an impact on educational practice, but also has the potential to contribute to curriculum development, teacher training, and theological thinking in the context of Christian religious education.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Conducting further research in this area will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of PAK teachers in shaping student character and building national unity, as well as provide a basis for the development of more effective educational practices in the context of Christian religious education.

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