



ASSESSING BASIC SOFT SKILLS OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS AT A STATE CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN INDONESIA: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

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Abstract. This study aimed to describe the basic soft skills of prospective teachers at state Christian higher education institutions in Indonesia across six dimensions: adaptability, self-motivation, self-awareness, curiosity, social skills, and tolerance. A quantitative descriptive design was employed, involving 357 teacher education students recruited through convenience sampling. Data were collected using the Basic Soft Skills Instrument for Prospective Teachers, which comprises 21 items scored on a four-point scale from 0 to 3, yielding a possible total score of 0-63. Content validity was assessed by seven experts using Aiken's V, with coefficients ranging from 0.81 to 0.95. Item-total correlations ranged from 0.566 to 0.720. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data, and score categories were established using theoretical score parameters. The results showed a mean total score of 47.36 (SD = 8.04). Across the six dimensions, curiosity had the highest mean item score (M = 2.46, SD = 0.55), whereas tolerance had the lowest (M = 1.99, SD = 0.52). Statistical comparisons also indicated significant differences among the dimension scores, with curiosity scoring significantly higher and tolerance significantly lower than the other dimensions. These findings provide a descriptive profile of prospective teachers' self-reported basic soft skills and identify tolerance as a potential area for further educational attention. Teacher education programs may consider incorporating structured learning activities that encourage dialogue, collaboration, constructive responses to disagreement, and respect for differing perspectives. Further research using complementary assessment methods is needed to determine whether these self-reported patterns correspond to demonstrated soft skills in educational practice.

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INTRODUCTION

Teacher education plays a strategic role in preparing qualified human resources in the field of education. This is because teachers are not only required to master subject matter but also to demonstrate interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies that support effective teaching practices. In addition, the demands of 21st-century education require teachers to be adaptive, collaborative, and capable of managing diverse classroom dynamics. Previous studies indicate that effective teacher performance is strongly influenced by non cognitive competencies, particularly soft skills that shape professional behavior (Amorim & Ribeiro-Silva, 2025; Downer et al., 2015; Hassan et al., 2015). Furthermore, Lozano-Peña et al. (2021) found that teachers' emotional competence significantly affects classroom climate and student engagement. Therefore, teacher education institutions must ensure that prospective teachers are equipped with both hard skills and soft skills.

Soft skills are essential competencies that determine the effectiveness of teachers in professional practice. These skills enable teachers to communicate effectively, manage classroom interactions, and respond to students' diverse needs. Moreover, soft skills support teachers in building meaningful relationships with students, parents, and colleagues within the educational environment. Research by Ronfeldt et al. (2015) highlights that collaborative skills among teachers contribute significantly to student achievement. Similarly, Cornejo-Araya and Kronborg (2021) emphasize that teachers' ability to motivate and inspire students is closely linked to their soft skills competence. Thus, the mastery of soft skills is a fundamental requirement for

prospective teachers.

Despite their importance, the mastery of soft skills among teachers and prospective teachers remains inconsistent. This inconsistency occurs because awareness of soft skills does not always translate into actual competence or practice. In many cases, teacher education programs emphasize cognitive achievement more than the development of non-cognitive competencies. [Tang et al. \(2015\)](#) found that although teachers recognize the importance of soft skills, they often lack the readiness to implement them effectively. Additionally, [Balcar \(2016\)](#) argues that higher education institutions have not fully optimized their role in systematically developing students' soft skills. Therefore, there is a need for more structured efforts to measure and develop soft skills among prospective teachers.

Measurement of soft skills is crucial for understanding the extent to which these competencies are possessed by prospective teachers. Without proper measurement, it is difficult for educational institutions to evaluate the effectiveness of their programs in developing soft skills. Measurement also provides empirical data that can be used as a basis for decision-making and program improvement. [Colton and Covert \(2007\)](#) state that instruments are essential tools for collecting and recording data to support assessment and understanding. Furthermore, [Ebel and Frisbie \(1991\)](#) emphasize that measurement involves assigning numerical values to individuals' characteristics based on defined rules, enabling objective evaluation. Thus, valid and reliable measurement is necessary to accurately assess students' soft skills.

In the context of higher education, particularly Christian higher education, soft skills development has unique significance. This is because Christian education emphasizes not only academic excellence but also character formation and moral values. As a result, soft skills such as empathy, tolerance, and curiosity are integral components of holistic education. [Griffiths et al. \(2018\)](#) highlight that higher education institutions play a key role in preparing students for professional and social environments through competency development. Additionally, research by [Succi and Canovi \(2020\)](#) shows that employers increasingly prioritize soft skills over technical skills in the recruitment process. Therefore, assessing soft skills in Christian higher education is essential to ensure the alignment between educational outcomes and societal needs.

Empirical studies in Indonesia have examined soft skills development in teacher education from several perspectives. [Mailool et al. \(2020\)](#), for example, explored lecturers' experiences in teaching soft skills within Indonesia's Teacher Profession Education Program. Their findings identified several competencies addressed through integrated teaching practices, including ethics, responsibility, critical thinking, communication, teamwork, tolerance, and social skills. From the perspective of program participants, [Huda et al. \(2021\)](#) investigated how teachers in professional education experienced the acquisition of soft skills. These studies provide important contextual evidence about the teaching and learning processes through which soft skills may be developed. However, their qualitative approaches primarily examined educational experiences and instructional practices rather than describing the distribution of multiple soft skills dimensions among prospective teachers using a common quantitative measure.

Other Indonesian studies have investigated soft skills through instructional interventions and professional outcomes. [Susilawati et al. \(2021\)](#) examined the effect of socio-scientific issues-based instruction on soft skills and environmental awareness among preservice science teachers. Their findings support the potential of instructional approaches that engage students in contextual and socially relevant issues to foster soft skills. More recently, [Roofiq et al. \(2024\)](#) reported a positive and significant relationship between soft skills and readiness to become a teacher among students in an Indonesian economics education program. These studies demonstrate that soft skills are relevant not only as competencies to be developed during teacher preparation but also as characteristics associated with prospective teachers' educational experiences and professional readiness. Nevertheless, intervention-based research and studies examining relationships with other outcomes address different questions from a descriptive assessment of students' existing soft skills profiles.

Despite the growing recognition of soft skills as an essential component of teacher professionalism ([Fisher et al., 2015](#); [Lavilles & Robles, 2017](#); [Poulou, 2020](#); [Ronfeldt et al., 2015](#);

Tang & Tan, 2015), several gaps remain in the existing literature. From a theoretical perspective, previous studies have largely discussed the importance of soft skills in relation to employability (Heckman & Kautz, 2012; Succi & Canovi, 2020), classroom effectiveness (Downer et al., 2015; Poulou, 2020), and professional readiness (Hassan et al., 2015; Kinsella & Waite, 2021). However, limited attention has been given to how these competencies are manifested within faith-based teacher education environments, where character formation and value-based education are central educational objectives (Buchanan, 2020; Dockery, 2019). From a methodological perspective, previous research has included studies of students' and employers' perceptions of soft skills and their importance (Succi & Canovi, 2020; Tsirkas et al., 2020), self-reported evaluations of preparedness and competence (Amorim & Ribeiro-Silva, 2025; Hassan et al., 2015), and qualitative explorations of professional attributes and educational experiences (Cornejo-Araya & Kronborg, 2021; Huda et al., 2021; Mailool et al., 2020). Other studies have examined the development of soft skills through instructional interventions or their associations with professional outcomes (Roofiq et al., 2024; Susilawati et al., 2021). Consequently, further descriptive evidence is needed concerning the levels and relative distribution of multiple basic soft skills dimensions among prospective teachers in State Christian Higher Education institutions in Indonesia. Such evidence may help identify dimensions that appear relatively more developed and those that may warrant additional educational attention. This need is particularly relevant in faith-based education, where professional preparation is accompanied by an emphasis on character formation, interpersonal responsibility, and respect for diverse perspectives.

Therefore, this study aims to assess the level of basic soft skills among prospective teachers in State Christian Higher Education, identify the dimensions with the highest and lowest relative scores, and provide descriptive evidence that may inform future initiatives for soft skills development in teacher education.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative descriptive design to assess the basic soft skills of undergraduate students enrolled in Christian Religious Education programs at three state Christian higher education institutions in Indonesia: the Christian Institute of Religion in Manado (IAKN Manado), the Christian Institute of Religion in Palangka Raya (IAKN Palangka Raya), and the Christian Institute of Religion in Tarutung (IAKN Tarutung). The participants were students who voluntarily agreed to take part in the study. A total of 368 responses were initially received. During data screening, 11 responses were excluded because the submitted data were incomplete or did not meet the requirements for analysis. Consequently, 357 responses were retained for the final analysis. The number of students in the target population across the three institutions could not be established precisely because a complete, consolidated population count was not available for this study. Therefore, the study used a non-probability approach based on the participation of eligible students who were willing to respond. The resulting sample represents the students whose responses met the data-screening requirements, rather than a probability sample of all undergraduate Christian Religious Education students at the three institutions.

Data were collected using the Basic Soft Skills Instrument for Prospective Teachers, comprising 21 items across six dimensions: adaptability (3 items), self-motivation (3 items), self-awareness (2 items), curiosity (4 items), social skills (6 items), and tolerance (3 items). Adaptability refers to the ability to adjust to changing situations and respond constructively to new demands. Self-motivation concerns the willingness to initiate and sustain effort toward goals without relying solely on external encouragement. Self-awareness refers to the ability to recognize and understand one's own feelings, strengths, limitations, and behavioral tendencies. Curiosity reflects an interest in exploring new ideas, asking questions, and seeking additional knowledge. Social skills involve the ability to communicate, cooperate, and interact effectively with others. Tolerance refers to the ability to respond constructively to differences of opinion and interpersonal disagreements while considering the interests of others and the common good. In this instrument, tolerance is assessed through respondents' choices of how to respond to a hypothetical disagreement with a colleague in a school setting. For example, respondents are presented with a



situation involving conflicting opinions about teachers' duty schedules and asked how they would respond when a colleague firmly maintains a different position. The response options represent different approaches to disagreement, including seeking other colleagues' opinions, requesting mediation from the school principal, firmly maintaining one's own position, and yielding to avoid conflict that could harm shared interests. Each item was scored on a four-point scale ranging from 0 to 3. A score of 0 indicated that the behavior or soft skill described in an item was not at all characteristic of the respondent, whereas a score of 3 indicated the highest level of correspondence with the described behavior or skill.

Content validity was assessed by seven experts using Aiken's V coefficient (Aiken, 1985). The item-level Aiken's V coefficients ranged from 0.81 to 0.95. Based on the critical value of 0.76 for seven experts and a four-category rating scale, all items exceeded the required threshold. Accordingly, all items met the specified statistical significance criterion for content validity and were retained in the instrument. Item-total correlations ranged from 0.566 to 0.720 (Mailool, 2023), which showed that all items met the acceptable threshold ($r > 0.30$) (Table 1). The construct validity for the 21 items of the instrument reported in the development study had factor loadings ranging from 0.52 to 0.81 (Mailool, 2023), while the reliability coefficient calculated using Cronbach's alpha was found to be 0.87, indicating high internal consistency.

Table 1. Item Functionality based on Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation

Item	r (item-total)	Item	r (item-total)
1	0.570	12	0.687
2	0.587	13	0.652
3	0.686	14	0.704
4	0.628	15	0.678
5	0.641	16	0.653
6	0.572	17	0.566
7	0.686	18	0.612
8	0.624	19	0.655
9	0.586	20	0.647
10	0.619	21	0.720
11	0.626		

Note. r (item-total) = Pearson product-moment correlation between each item score and the total score.

The 21-item Basic Soft Skills Instrument for Prospective Teachers uses a four-point scoring scale ranging from 0 to 3. A score of 0 indicates that the behavior or soft skill described in an item is not at all characteristic of the respondent, whereas a score of 3 indicates the highest level of correspondence with the described behavior or skill. The total score is obtained by summing the scores across all 21 items, yielding a theoretical minimum score of 0 and a theoretical maximum score of 63.

For descriptive interpretation, the total scores were classified into five categories: very low, low, intermediate, high, and very high. These categories were established using theoretical score parameters derived from the possible score range of the instrument, rather than empirical norms calculated from the study participants. The theoretical mean was set at 31.50, representing the midpoint between the minimum and maximum possible scores, while the theoretical standard deviation was set at 10.50, calculated as one-sixth of the theoretical score range. These values were used solely as reference parameters for defining the score intervals and do not represent the observed mean and standard deviation of the sample. The empirical mean and standard deviation were calculated separately from the observed total scores of the 357 respondents. The sample had an empirical mean of 47.36 and an empirical standard deviation of 8.04. These statistics describe the central tendency and variability of the observed scores, whereas the theoretical parameters provide the basis for the categorization procedure.

The category boundaries were determined using half and one-and-a-half times the theoretical standard deviation below and above the theoretical mean. Accordingly, scores of 15.75 or below were classified as very low; scores above 15.75 and up to 26.25 as low; scores above 26.25 and up to 36.75 as intermediate; scores above 36.75 and up to 47.25 as high; and scores above 47.25 as very high (Table 2). This approach is referred to as theoretical score-based



categorization rather than norm-referenced categorization because the cut-off points were derived from the theoretical score range, not from the empirical distribution of a representative norm group. Consequently, the categories should be interpreted as descriptive score bands rather than as normative classifications of respondents relative to a reference population.

Table 2. Theoretical Score-Based Categorization

Range of Score	Category
$\mu + 1.5\sigma < X$	Very High
$\mu + 0.5\sigma < X \leq \mu + 1.5\sigma$	High
$\mu - 0.5\sigma < X \leq \mu + 0.5\sigma$	Intermediate
$\mu - 1.5\sigma < X \leq \mu - 0.5\sigma$	Low
$X \leq \mu - 1.5\sigma$	Very Low

Note. μ = mean; σ = standard deviation. Categories are based on a theoretical score-based categorization commonly used in educational and psychological measurement, using cut-points at $\mu \pm 0.5 \sigma$ and $\mu \pm 1.5 \sigma$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics of Overall Basic Soft Skills

The descriptive statistics for the basic soft skills scores of the 357 respondents are presented in Table 3. The observed total scores ranged from 26 to 62, with a mean of 47.36 (SD = 8.04) and a median of 50. The skewness value was -0.705, indicating a negatively skewed distribution, with scores tending to cluster toward the higher end of the observed score range and a tail extending toward lower scores. The mean being lower than the median is consistent with this pattern. These statistics describe the distribution of the respondents' observed scores and should be distinguished from the theoretical parameters used to establish the score categories.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of basic soft skills scores (N = 357)

Statistic	Value
Minimum	26
Maximum	62
Mean	47.36
Standard deviation	8.04
Median	50
Skewness	-0.705

Note. The total score was calculated from 21 items, each scored from 0 to 3. The theoretical total-score range was 0-63.

Theoretical Score-Based Categorization

The respondents' total scores were classified using theoretical score-based categorization. This approach used the theoretical mean of 31.50 and theoretical standard deviation of 10.50, derived from the possible total-score range of 0-63. These theoretical parameters were used to define the category boundaries and were not calculated from the observed distribution of the 357 respondents. The empirical mean of 47.36 and empirical standard deviation of 8.04, by contrast, describe the observed scores in the study sample.

Based on the theoretical cut-off points, 210 respondents (58.82%) were classified in the very-high category, 98 (27.45%) in the high category, 47 (13.17%) in the intermediate category, and 2 (0.56%) in the low category. No students (0%) were classified in the very-low category. The distribution is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of respondents by theoretical score-based category

Category	Score range	n	%
Very high	$X > 47.25$	210	58.82
High	$36.75 < X \leq 47.25$	98	27.45
Intermediate	$26.25 < X \leq 36.75$	47	13.17
Low	$15.75 < X \leq 26.25$	2	0.56
Very low	$X \leq 15.75$	0	0.00
Total		357	100.00

Note. Categories were established using theoretical parameters derived from the 0–63 possible total-score range. They are descriptive score bands and are not empirical norms derived from a representative reference population.



The distribution indicates that the largest group of respondents fell within the very-high category according to the theoretical cut-offs used in this study. Nevertheless, these classifications should be interpreted in relation to the specified theoretical score bands rather than as evidence of respondents' relative standing against a normative population. The observed mean of 47.36 is only slightly above the very-high cut-off of 47.25; therefore, the mean alone should not be used to infer the proportion of individual respondents in that category. The frequencies and percentages in Table 4 provide the relevant information about the individual category membership.

Descriptive Comparison of the Six Soft Skills Dimensions

The instrument assessed six dimensions of basic soft skills: adaptability, self-motivation, self-awareness, curiosity, social skills, and tolerance. Because these dimensions contain different numbers of items, their summed scores are not directly comparable. Therefore, comparisons should be based on mean item scores on the original 0-3 scale, accompanied by the standard deviation and number of items for each dimension.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics for the six basic soft skills dimensions

Soft skills dimension	No. of items	Mean	SD
Adaptability	3	2.37	0.53
Self-motivation	3	2.39	0.52
Self-awareness	2	2.37	0.58
Curiosity	4	2.46	0.55
Social skills	6	2.09	0.59
Tolerance	3	1.99	0.52

Note. Mean item scores were calculated for each respondent by averaging the items within each dimension. Scores ranged from 0 to 3, with higher scores indicating greater self-reported correspondence with the soft skills described in the instrument. Standard deviations represent variation in respondents' dimension-level mean scores.

Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics for the six dimensions of basic soft skills, including the number of items, mean item scores, and standard deviations. The mean item scores ranged from 1.99 to 2.46 on a four-point response scale scored from 0 to 3. Curiosity obtained the highest mean item score ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 0.55$), followed by self-motivation ($M = 2.39$, $SD = 0.52$), self-awareness ($M = 2.37$, $SD = 0.58$), and adaptability ($M = 2.37$, $SD = 0.53$). Social skills had a lower mean item score ($M = 2.09$, $SD = 0.59$), while tolerance recorded the lowest mean item score ($M = 1.99$, $SD = 0.52$). These findings provide an initial descriptive comparison of the respondents' self-reported soft skills across the six dimensions.

To determine whether the observed differences were statistically significant, a Friedman test was conducted because the six dimension scores were obtained from the same respondents. The results indicated a statistically significant overall difference among the six dimensions, $\chi^2(5, N = 357) = 286.01$, $p < .001$, with Kendall's $W = .160$. Post hoc pairwise comparisons using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test with Holm adjustment indicated that curiosity had significantly higher scores than each of the other five dimensions, whereas tolerance had significantly lower scores than each of the other five dimensions (adjusted $p < .05$). Social skills also scored significantly lower than adaptability, self-motivation, self-awareness, and curiosity (adjusted $p < .05$). However, the differences among adaptability, self-motivation, and self-awareness were not statistically significant after adjustment for multiple comparisons.

Taken together, the results indicate that curiosity was the highest-scoring dimension and tolerance was the lowest-scoring dimension in the observed soft skills profile. Social skills also emerged as a comparatively lower-scoring dimension. Nevertheless, these findings should be interpreted as differences in respondents' self-reported scores rather than evidence that they possess or lack particular competencies. The relatively lower scores for social skills and tolerance may warrant further attention in teacher education, particularly through learning activities that provide opportunities to practice interpersonal communication, respond constructively to disagreement, and consider the common good. Further research using additional assessment methods, such as peer or lecturer ratings and behavioral observations, would help establish whether these self-reported patterns are also reflected in actual practice.

Overall Profile of Basic Soft Skills

This study provides a descriptive account of the self-reported basic soft skills of undergraduate Christian Religious Education students at three state Christian higher education institutions in Indonesia. The overall mean score was 47.36 (SD = 8.04), with a median of 50. The negative skewness value (-0.705) suggests that the observed scores tended to be concentrated toward the higher end of the score range, although some respondents obtained lower scores. These findings describe the pattern of responses in the present sample and should not be interpreted as a direct measure of teaching performance or professional readiness.

The categorization results also require careful interpretation. The five categories were constructed using theoretical score parameters derived from the possible score range of the instrument, rather than empirical norms established from a representative reference group. Consequently, the finding that 210 respondents (58.82%) fell into the very-high category reflects the application of the specified theoretical cut-offs to the observed scores. It should not be interpreted as evidence that the respondents performed exceptionally well relative to a national norm or a comparable population. Similarly, the mean score being slightly above the very-high cut-off does not, by itself, demonstrate that the majority of respondents belong to that category; this conclusion is supported by the category frequencies rather than by the mean alone.

These findings can be considered alongside previous empirical studies of prospective teachers' soft skills in Indonesia. [Hadiyanto et al. \(2017\)](#), in a study of EFL student teachers at a public university in Jambi, reported an overall soft skills practice mean of 3.28 on a five-point scale, which they interpreted as an average level. Communication and working with others were rated relatively highly, whereas several other skill areas were at a medium level. In contrast, [Naibaho et al. \(2021\)](#) reported an excellent level of soft skills among pre-service EFL teachers at Universitas Kristen Indonesia. These studies illustrate that the reported profile of prospective teachers' soft skills can vary across samples and instruments. Direct comparisons with the present study should therefore be made cautiously because the studies differ in their target populations, measured dimensions, scoring scales, and categorization procedures.

Research on soft skills development in Indonesian teacher professional education also emphasizes the role of educational activities in supporting these competencies. [Mailool et al. \(2020\)](#), for example, explored lecturers' experiences of teaching soft skills in teacher professional education programs and identified approaches such as lectures, presentations, assignments, mentoring, and practice. The present study complements this work by providing a quantitative description of six specific dimensions of basic soft skills among undergraduate Christian Religious Education students. Taken together, these studies support the relevance of examining soft skills in teacher education while also highlighting the importance of using clear operational definitions and appropriate assessment methods.

Interpreting Differences Across Soft Skills Dimensions

The six dimensions assessed in this study represent different aspects of prospective teachers' personal and interpersonal functioning. Adaptability concerns responding constructively to changing situations; self-motivation concerns initiating and sustaining effort toward goals; self-awareness involves recognizing one's feelings, strengths, and limitations; curiosity concerns interest in exploring ideas and seeking knowledge; social skills involve effective interpersonal interaction and cooperation; and tolerance concerns responding constructively to differences of opinion while considering other perspectives and the common good.

Differences across these dimensions may provide useful descriptive information about the respondents' self-perceptions. However, because the dimensions contain different numbers of items, their raw summed scores cannot be compared directly. Dimension-level interpretations should therefore be based on mean item scores calculated on the same 0-3 scale. Furthermore, a difference in descriptive means does not automatically establish a statistically significant difference. Accordingly, claims about the relative prominence of curiosity or the comparatively lower position of tolerance should be retained only if they are supported by the revised dimension-level statistics and the appropriate within-subject statistical analysis.



If curiosity is confirmed as the dimension with the highest mean item score, this result may suggest that respondents tended to rate themselves relatively favorably on interest in exploring ideas and seeking knowledge. Curiosity is relevant to prospective teachers because inquiry and openness to new information can support continuing professional learning and attention to students' varied learning needs. Previous research has discussed the role of curiosity in teacher-student relationships and learning processes (Amorim-Neto et al., 2020; Singh & Manjaly, 2022). Nevertheless, a high self-reported curiosity score should not be taken as direct evidence that respondents consistently demonstrate inquiry-oriented teaching practices in actual classroom settings.

Likewise, if tolerance is confirmed as the dimension with the lowest mean item score, this finding should be interpreted as a relative pattern in respondents' answers, not as evidence that they are intolerant. The instrument assesses tolerance in the context of responding to differences of opinion and interpersonal disagreement in a school-related situation. It does not directly measure religious tolerance, attitudes toward religious groups, or faith-related dispositions. A comparatively lower score may identify an aspect of self-reported soft skills that warrants further investigation, but the present cross-sectional descriptive design cannot establish why the score is lower or whether respondents' tolerance is changing over time.

Prior research has considered tolerance an important aspect of readiness for intercultural interaction (Banshchikova et al., 2015) and has examined the potential contribution of educational experiences that encourage dialogue and engagement with diversity (Rapp & Freitag, 2015). These studies provide a relevant conceptual context for discussing tolerance in teacher education. However, they do not establish the cause of the pattern observed in the present sample. Further research using behavioral observations, situational judgment tasks, or assessments from peers and lecturers could help determine whether differences in self-reported tolerance correspond to differences in behavior across interpersonal situations.

Implications for Christian Higher Education and Teacher Preparation

The findings are relevant to discussions about student development in state Christian higher education, particularly in programs preparing future Christian Religious Education teachers. Adaptability, self-motivation, self-awareness, curiosity, social skills, and tolerance may all be relevant to professional interactions, collaboration, reflective practice, and responding to diverse perspectives in educational settings. The descriptive results can therefore serve as a starting point for discussing how soft skills may be incorporated into learning activities, field experiences, mentoring, and reflective assessment.

However, the study does not establish that the participating institutions have been effective in producing these skills. The descriptive design did not include a comparison group, longitudinal measurements, or a causal analysis of educational experiences. In addition, the instrument measured general basic soft skills rather than Christian faith, religiosity, spiritual formation, or other explicitly religious constructs. Consequently, the results cannot demonstrate that Christian higher education caused the observed scores or that respondents have achieved particular faith-related outcomes.

A reasonable practical implication is that teacher education programs may use descriptive assessment results as one source of information when planning opportunities for soft skills development. For example, collaborative assignments, reflective activities, constructive disagreement, and supervised teaching experiences may provide opportunities for students to practice interpersonal and professional skills. The effectiveness of such activities, however, should be evaluated independently rather than inferred from the descriptive results reported here.

Self-Report and Social Desirability Bias

An important methodological consideration is that the data were obtained through a self-report instrument. Respondents were asked to evaluate behaviors and characteristics that are generally viewed positively in educational and professional contexts. This may introduce social desirability bias if respondents select answers that present themselves favorably or conform to perceived expectations rather than accurately representing their typical behavior. This possibility is particularly relevant to dimensions such as self-motivation, social skills, and tolerance.



The negative skewness observed in the overall scores is consistent with a concentration of responses toward the higher end of the score range. However, skewness alone cannot establish that social desirability bias occurred or determine its magnitude. The distribution may also reflect genuine differences in respondents' characteristics, the content and wording of the items, or other response processes. Because the study did not directly measure social desirability or compare self-reports with independent assessments, the extent to which this potential bias influenced the findings remains unknown.

Future studies could strengthen the assessment of prospective teachers' soft skills by combining self-report responses with peer or lecturer ratings, structured behavioral observations, and situational judgment tasks. Such triangulation would help determine whether self-perceptions are consistent with observed interpersonal and professional behaviors. Longitudinal studies could also examine changes in soft skills over time, while comparative designs could investigate differences across teacher education programs or institutional contexts. These approaches would provide evidence beyond the descriptive profile available from the present study.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study provides a descriptive profile of the self-reported basic soft skills of 357 prospective teachers from state Christian higher education institutions in Indonesia. The overall mean score was 47.36 (SD = 8.04) on a possible scale of 0-63. Analysis of the six soft skills dimensions revealed statistically significant differences, as indicated by the Friedman test, $\chi^2(5, N = 357) = 286.01, p < .001$, with Kendall's (W = .160). Post hoc Wilcoxon signed-rank tests with Holm adjustment showed that curiosity had significantly higher scores than each of the other five dimensions, whereas tolerance had significantly lower scores than each of the other five dimensions. Social skills also scored significantly lower than adaptability, self-motivation, self-awareness, and curiosity. No statistically significant differences were found among adaptability, self-motivation, and self-awareness after adjustment for multiple comparisons. These findings suggest that curiosity was a relative strength in the participants' self-reported soft skills profile, while tolerance and, to a lesser extent, social skills may warrant further attention in teacher education. In particular, learning activities that encourage constructive dialogue, collaborative problem-solving, perspective-taking, and respectful responses to disagreement may provide opportunities for students to develop and practice these skills. However, because the study relied on self-reported data, the results should not be interpreted as direct evidence of students' actual soft skills or professional teaching readiness. Nor do the findings establish the effectiveness of the participating institutions in developing these skills. Future studies should combine self-report instruments with complementary methods, such as lecturer and peer assessments, behavioral observations, and assessments conducted during teaching practicums, to examine whether the reported patterns are reflected in educational practice.

Based on these findings, Christian higher education institutions may consider integrating structured soft skills development more explicitly into prospective teachers' academic and professional preparation. Learning activities such as collaborative projects, peer feedback, reflective assignments, case-based discussions, and simulations of classroom or school-based situations may provide opportunities to practice communication, teamwork, adaptability, and constructive responses to differences. Particular attention may be given to social skills and tolerance, while continuing to nurture curiosity, self-motivation, adaptability, and self-awareness. Such initiatives should be treated as educational strategies to be implemented and evaluated, rather than as interventions whose effectiveness has already been demonstrated by the present study. Future research should extend this descriptive investigation by involving larger and more diverse samples from additional teacher education institutions. Studies using longitudinal or intervention-based designs could examine whether particular learning experiences are associated with changes in soft skills over time. Researchers could also triangulate self-reported data with lecturer assessments, peer evaluations, behavioral observations, or situational judgment tasks to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of students' soft skills. Where comparisons among the six dimensions are central to the research questions, appropriate statistical tests and effect-



size estimates should be used to establish whether observed differences are statistically meaningful.

Finally, the findings should be interpreted in light of the study's limitations, including its descriptive design, the use of self-reported responses, and the scope of the participating institutions. The instrument assesses general basic soft skills and does not directly measure religious commitment, spirituality, or the distinctive faith-related dimensions of Christian teacher identity. Future studies may therefore investigate how general soft skills relate to pedagogical competencies and professional practice, while employing appropriate measures if they intend to examine the specific contribution of Christian educational values. Such research would help build a more comprehensive evidence base for the development and evaluation of teacher education programs.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. First, the study used a descriptive design and convenience sampling (non-probability approach), so the results should not be generalized automatically to all prospective teachers in Indonesia. Second, the findings are based on self-reported responses and may be affected by response styles or social desirability bias. Third, the theoretical score-based categories are not empirical norms derived from a representative reference group. Their purpose is to organize observed scores into theoretically defined bands, not to rank respondents against a national or institutional norm. Fourth, the instrument measures general basic soft skills and does not assess teaching performance directly or measure explicitly religious constructs. Future research could address these limitations by including larger and more diverse samples, developing or validating empirical norms when appropriate, using multiple sources of assessment, and testing the relationship between soft skills and independently measured educational outcomes. Such studies would help clarify how the dimensions of basic soft skills are expressed in practice and how they relate to the professional development of prospective teachers.

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