

IMPACT OF ETHICAL AND MORAL VALUES IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CURRICULUM ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN JOS SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

FIDELIA SOLOMON

Department of Christian Religious Studies (CRS)
TCNN College of Education, Bukuru, Plateau State, Nigeria
E-mail address: fideliasolomon3@gmail.com
+2348065587899

&

IBRAHIM DUNG PETER

Christ Baptist Church P.O. Box 1842, Angwan Yashi Tudun Wada
Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria
E-mail address: peteribrahim784@gmail.com
+2348034581148

&

ISHAKU AZI AJIK

Department of Economics
TCNN College of Education, Bukuru, Plateau State, Nigeria
E-mail address: ishakuajik1985@gmail.com
+2347066141897

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the Impact of Ethical and Moral Values in Christian Education Curriculum on the Academic Performance of Students in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. The researchers used historical, descriptive, and critical approaches, tracking the contributions of literary works through the Historical Method. This paper also highlights the impact of ethical and moral values in Christian Education to include developing and fostering the lives of the students' values such as humility, respect, love, kindness, justice, fair-play, spirit of forgiveness, obedience, devotion to duty, orderly behaviour and selfless service to God and humanity. The study found out that the teaching of Christians Religious Studies is to inculcate the knowledge of the Bible and fear of God in the Learner, inculcate moral virtue in learners, develop tolerance for other religions, creating a disciplined society and responsible citizenry. The study recommended among others that government should recruit qualify teachers in Christian Religious Studies to teach Christians Religious Studies (CRS) in all junior schools, Christians Religious Studies should be given more attention by government to always inculcate moral principles; justice, equity and honesty. Also, Libraries should be well stock by the school authorities with current Christian Religious Studies textbooks.

Keywords: Impact, Academic Performance, Students, Christian Education, Curriculum, Ethical-Moral Values.

INTRODUCTION

In Africa, Christian Religious Studies (CRS) was introduced in the Kenyan Educational system prior to their political freedom. The missionaries aimed to add value to education for character

formation both secular and religious purposes. This education was purposed to produce socially, morally, and mentally developed persons. Learners were exposed to the logic of duty and ideas of rights about the environment and were instructed with abilities necessary for life and services. One of the subjects the missionaries left on the shores of Nigeria was Christian Religious Studies (CRS) (Eric and Isaac, 2023).

During the missionary administration because of the moral values it teaches the people on how to follow the government to take over the schools in Nigerian, secondary school curriculum was reviewed and more emphasis was placed on the studies of science and technological subjects. The high level of moral decadence and insurgencies in Nigerian nation is an indication that there is poor religious teaching in secondary school system. Christian religious studies (CRS) as one of the religious subjects taught in secondary school in Nigerian takes a central stage in ensuring moral and spiritual wellbeing of individuals in the society. The key role of CRS in equipping the individuals and ensuring high level of morality is made clear in the objectives of CRS at the senior secondary level which include provision more opportunities for Nigerian youths to learn more about God and thereby develop their faith in God; to enable the youths to accept Christ as their savior; to help the youths develop Christian attitude and moral values (such as humility, respect, love, and justice, etc.); to instill in the youth the spirit of tolerance, reconciliation, peaceful co-existence and non-violence as well as to develop and foster in the youth the spirit of respect for all people and human life (Universal Basic Education Curriculum (UBE, 2013).

The introduction of Christian religious studies (CRS) as one of the subjects in arts came into being with the introduction of other categories like science and technological subjects when the federal government of Nigeria takeover most of the schools in Nigeria. It is believed that the introduction of CRS will help in the teaching and development of students in Nigeria especially the youths. Christian religious studies (CRS) as one of the religious subjects taught in school in Nigerian takes a central position in ensuring moral and spiritual wellbeing of individuals in the society.

Christian Religious Studies (CRS) is a significant component of the curriculum in Junior Secondary Schools across Nigeria. It plays a crucial role in shaping the moral values, attitudes, and behaviors of students. The high level of moral decadence and insurgencies in Nigerian as a nation is an indication that there is poor religious teaching in junior secondary school system. Christian religious studies (CRS) as one of the religious subjects taught in junior secondary school in Nigerian takes a central position in ensuring moral and spiritual wellbeing of individuals in the society. The key factors of CRS in equipping the individuals and ensuring high level of morality is made clear in the objectives of CRS at the junior secondary level which include; to provide more opportunities for Nigerian youths to learn more about God and thereby develop their faith in God; to enable the youths to accept Christ as their savior; to help the youths develop Christian attitude and moral values, such as humility, respect, love, and justice, etc. To instill in the youth the spirit of tolerance, reconciliation, peaceful co-existence and non-violence as well as to develop and foster in the youth the spirit of respect for all people and human life (Universal Basic Education Curriculum (UBA, 2013).

The major aims of CRS in the education curriculum is to raise generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, appreciate dignity of labour and those moral values specified in the broad national aims as good citizens. While at the secondary school level the subject is meant to prepare learners for useful living through inculcation of Christian attitudes and values, and to prepare learners for higher education (Akubue, 2012). Without effective religious studies in Nigerian as a nation will likely end up in conflict, religious crisis, insurgencies and social unrest among other things. This is because The paper shall discuss conceptual issues as: Christian religious studies, concept of ethics and values education; concept of moral education impact of Christian religion study on junior secondary school students, impact of ethical and moral values among Christian religious students' academic performance and theoretical review

LITERATURE REVIEW

CONCEPT OF CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

The word 'Christian' means a follower of Christ and etymologically comes from this Greek word 'Christos; meaning "the anointed one", it is used three times in the New testament of the Bible (Act11:28, 1 Peter 4:16). The Bible tells us "it was in Antioch of Syria that the followers of Jesus were first called "Christian". Israel (2011) states that a Christian is one who professes and belief in Jesus Christ or fellows the religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Kesmen and Mellemut (2022) viewed Christian religious studies is an aspect of learning that deals with the inculcating in the students, certain elements of education, intellectual theory and practices of Christ as contained in the Holy Bible. Christian Religious Studies is defined as a social science subject that teaches students good moral behaviour, fearing of God, knowledge and skills that will make them to contribute their quota in socioeconomic and moral development. The inclusion of sound religions and moral values in the life of students invariably could help in the development of spiritual and moral sound being of the students. Christian Religious Studies is one of the subjects taught in secondary schools in Nigeria.

Nawose and Kerich (2023) stated that Christian Religious Education subject covered three key parts: The Bible (both Old & New Testaments), African religious culture and modern Christian living (Moore, 2018). The CRE subject's purpose is creating awareness in the learner's life and forging a connection with God. The style accepted for the study of these inclusive areas was thematic. This approach needed learning situations which connect the learner together with the teacher when someone wishes to critically analyse, evaluate situations, make judgments and determine the implications of the matters raised.

Christian Religious studies help to inject sanity into society and minimize the turning of a nation into a police state by cultivating citizens who acknowledge metaphysical sanctions, whose acceptable behaviors are often determined not just by external constraints but by spiritual consideration. Christian Religious studies focus on developing knowledge, skill of mind, the life and character of students in sacred and secular matters, in a manner that is truly Christ centered and in harmony with his will.

Christian Religious studies have been one of the most important subjects being taught in Nigeria. This is because the subject helps to streamline the thought, character, moral, and aspiration of the students. It also offers hope for the future, integrate, discipline, harmonious, and progressive society.

National Policy on Education (2013) edition cited in Yaro (2018) stated that the new Christian religious studies curriculum has the following content: it is assumed that the formative years for a child is from ages 1-15, therefore religious studies is made compulsory from primary 1-JSS III and made optional at the senior secondary level. The Senior Secondary School Christian Religious Studies curriculum further emphasizes the relationship between Religion and morality, between God and Man, and presents God as the creator of all mankind, the sustainer of human lives and the sources of the Christian belief, joy and hope.

CONCEPT OF ETHICS AND VALUES EDUCATION

Solomon (2024) stated that Ethics is derived from the Greek word “Ethos” meaning custom or conduct. Similar to “ethics” are moral, morality derived from the Latin, Mos, mores meaning habit, custom, manner of living” (Shields 2004:9). Ethics come from society and the collective beliefs and values of its citizens. Ethics also come from those individuals willing to make difficult choices and think about big questions good and bad right and wrong.

Bruno (2015) opined that ethics and values education (EVE) applies to all aspects of education which either explicitly or implicitly relate to ethical dimensions of life and are such that can be structured, regulated and monitored with appropriate educational methods and tools. Among the main aims of EVE are the following: to stimulate ethical reflection, awareness, responsibility, and compassion in children, provide children with insight into important ethical principles and values, equip them with intellectual capacities (critical thinking and evaluation, reflection, discovery, understanding, decision-making, non-cognitive abilities like compassion) for responsible moral judgment, to develop approaches to build a classroom or school environment as an ethical community, and to reflectively situate individuals into other local and global communities with a mission to contribute to the common good. All this enables pupils to overcome prejudice, discrimination, and other unethical practices and attitudes. EVE steers children towards the search and commitment to fundamental values, meaning and purpose in their lives. EVE is also oriented into nurturing respectful attitude towards others (both individuals and communities alike) and putting one’s beliefs, attitudes and values into practice.

CONCEPT OF MORAL EDUCATION

The term moral education is most often used quite narrowly to refer to those parts of educational process, which are structured within one or more school subjects, dedicated specifically to ethics. It is also often connected with religious education and comprises a single school subject, which enables children to learn about world religions and supports the development of beliefs and values. Moral education is often focused on learning about belief systems, value systems and practices of other traditions and viewpoints, to explore them and develop understanding and respect of them, particularly from the perspective of how they affect action and how they can peacefully coexist. Nord and Haynes (2015) state that moral education encompasses two major aspects. The first is “moral socialization”, which means training and nurturing in children key norms, values and virtues, which are dominantly recognized in the society as enabling flourishing and good life. The second aspect concerns developing intellectual resources, skills and competencies, which enable for well informed and responsible moral judgments, decisions and actions (Bruno, 2015).

Morals define the kind of behaviour that the society wants from the people. Certain behaviours are considered to be unacceptable in the society. For most societies, however, morals are not written in stone, or proclaimed by God above, but instead reflect local sensibilities. Many societies have different ideas about what is acceptable and not acceptable. Kohlberg, (2009) stated that children have very little or no moral sense, because they are not born with an understanding of the nature of human relationships. Christian Religion is being practiced in Nigeria till today because it is a builder of attitude and morality. Religion cannot be separated from education that is the reason why religious education is included in the National Curriculum of Education right from the primary to the University Education. Despite the importance of Christian Religious Knowledge to the individual and nation in imparting moral values and behavioural change, it is worthy to note that the performance of students in the subject is diminishing and poor.

IMPACT OF CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS STUDIES ON JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Christian Religious Studies (CRS) is one of the major subjects missionaries brought to Nigerian educational system on the establishment of schools by the 19th century missionaries. The aim was to train people who will be of immense help to the colonial trinity goals (God/Christianity, government/colonization and Gold/commerce). In order to achieve the above, the major curriculum contents of their educational system were Bible Studies, Arithmetic and English language for communication. To implement fully the contents, adequate attention was given to the understanding of the place of God in man's life (Nsongu, 2011). During the missionary era, bible studies otherwise known as CRS were the core subject. Subsequently, after independence, government took over schools; there was a clarion call for review of curriculum in 2013.

Ogbodo and Shanpepe (2025) viewed that impact of CRS on Students to include:

1. It allows for self-knowledge and understanding of others: CRS provides the time and space to consider the deep questions of creation, origins, and the mysteries of the universe.
2. CRS has developed and fostered in the lives of the students' values such as humility, respect, love, kindness, justice, fair-play, spirit of forgiveness, obedience, devotion to duty, orderly behaviour and selfless service to God and humanity.
3. It helps students to acquire social, spiritual and moral insights to think critically; and make appropriate moral decisions in a rapidly changing society, appreciate and respect their own; and other peoples' culture.
4. It has promoted in the student's international consciousness through the understanding of universal brotherhood and sisterhood; and contributes positively to the transformation of self and society as a whole.
5. CRS gives opportunities for students to engage with cultural diversity and difference, perhaps more so than any other subject.
6. Christian Religious studies give students practical skills for living. Reflection helps us to learn from our actions.
7. Christian Religion studies provide mental peace: Human life is uncertain. We struggle for survival in the uncertainties, insecurities and dangers. Sometimes we feel helplessness. It is the religion which consoles and encourages us in all times of crisis.

8. CRS has provided students with opportunities to discern ethical dilemmas or moral situations in which virtues conflict or collide, and learn to reason about what deliberative action could be taken.
 9. CRS has provided opportunity for the students to learn more about God and further grow in faith in God;
 10. CRS has enabled students accept Christ as their Saviour;
 11. CRS has enabled students accept the guidance of the Holy Spirit in their daily activities;
 12. CRS has enabled students accept Christ as the founder and sustainers of the Christian church;
 13. CRS has help students understand the basic teachings of Christ and to apply these to their daily lives and work;
 14. CRS has developed and foster in the lives of the students values such as humility, respect, love, kindness, justice, fair-play, spirit of forgiveness, obedience, devotion to duty, orderly behaviour and selfless service to God and humanity;
 15. CRS has prepared the youth for higher education and for service within the community
- Kesmen and Mellemut (2022) stated that in the past, several aims were proposed for Christian Religious Studies in Nigerian secondary schools. These include:
1. To teach the bible: CRS as an academic field of study aims at teaching the student the Bible contents. The Bible is the master textbook and in fact, in most times, the title given to the subject was Bible.
 2. To teach morals: The teaching of morals has been a long-standing aims recommended for teachers of Christian religious studies in secondary schools and other institutions of learning. Morality is a very important concept especially in this era of moral decadence all over the world.
 3. To teach catechism on Christian nurture: The view that CRS aims at teaching catechism or Christian nurture underlies the frequent demand by the various churches that Christian religious studies in schools should be given to their adherents by teachers who are members of their own religious denomination. The view seeks to awaken, nourish and develop one's personal belief and to hand on the received tradition so as to build up the ecclesial community

Obilon in Eluu (2009) states that the aims of teaching Christian religious studies in Nigerian schools is to educate the Nigerian children both morally and intellectually, and instill in them the desire to be good citizens". So, through guidance and supervision of their conducts, the children are encouraged to develop a right attitude towards life, their environment, interpersonal relationship and community living. Christian Religious Studies aims at making the children have faith in God, speak to Him in prayers, and trust Him for all their needs as they work and pray. Through the teaching of Christian Religious Studies, students take decisions and develop their mind on how to withstand the emotional problems associated with every day-to-day life. Christian Religious Studies therefore, becomes a worthwhile school activity because of the values it has for the society. The teaching of Christian religious studies in school also leads pupils to raise fundamental questions relating to life and existence

The teaching and learning of CRS in secondary schools in Nigeria has the following objectives. These are:

1. To inculcate the knowledge of the Bible and fear of God in the Learner.
2. Inculcate moral virtue in learners.

3. Need to develop tolerance for other religions.
4. Creating a disciplined society and responsible citizenry.
5. Development of integrated, spiritual potentials and problem solving abilities (Okoro, 2010).

The National Curriculum of Bible Knowledge (or CRK) for senior Secondary Schools (1985) listed the objectives to guide the teaching of the subject as follows:

1. To provide more opportunities for the Nigerian youths to learn more about God and thereby develop their faith in Him.
2. To enable the youth to accept Christ as Lord and savior.
3. To enable the youth to recognize Jesus as the founder and sustainer of the Christian church.
4. To enable the youth to accept the guidance of the Holy Spirit in their daily activities.
5. To help the youth to understand the basic teachings of Christ and to apply these to their daily lives and work, and
6. To develop in the youth Christian attitudes and values such as humility respect love, kindness, justice and fair play, spirit of forgiveness, obedience, devotion to duty, orderly behavior and selfless service to God and humanity.

IMPACT OF ETHICAL AND MORAL VALUES AMONG CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Solomon (2024) stated that Ethics does not teach us an art, as to how to lead a moral life. Rather, it helps us to justify rightness or goodness which can lead to the supreme goal of human life that is to realize the summon bound of human life.

The scope of ethics indicates its subject matter.

1. It enquires the nature of our conducts.
2. It enquires into the nature of the springs of actions, motives, intentions, voluntary actions.
3. It determines righteousness or wrongness of human actions.
4. It does not enquire into the origin and growth of human conduct.

Solomon (2024) opined on reasons why we study ethics because of the following;

1. all people make moral and ethical decisions every day.
2. all people need the light that it thrown on daily problems and decisions.
3. it stimulates personal spiritual growth. Ethics supply the standards of which believers can measure their own spiritual growth and development
4. Jesus teaching was ethical as while as theological.
5. every decision is made according to some ethics, that is, some standard and norms (in those days, there was no king in Israel but man did that which was right in his own eye (Judges 17:6) this, unfortunately is the standard of ethics for many today.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Kohlberg's theory of moral development outlines how individuals progress through six stages of moral reasoning, grouped into three levels: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. At each level, people make moral decisions based on different factors such as avoiding punishment, adhering to laws, or following universal ethical principles. Kohlberg believed that moral development, like cognitive development, occurs in a sequence of stages.

To develop his theory, he posed moral dilemmas to boys aged 10 to 16 and analyzed their responses to determine their stage of moral reasoning. According to Kohlberg, individuals typically progress from pre-conventional morality (before age 9), to conventional morality (during early adolescence), and potentially to post-conventional morality (once formal operational thinking is developed), though only a few reach this final level.

Kohlberg's theory can be applied in the classroom, especially regarding rules, standards, and consequences. The theory assesses an individual's moral reasoning by placing them within one of the six stages ranging from basic obedience to authority at Stage 1, to the application of universal ethical principles at Stage 6. As an educator, it is important to consider where your students are in terms of moral development, and to help guide them toward the highest stage of moral reasoning Stage 6: universal Principles to foster a positive and constructive learning environment.

CONCLUSION

This work has been able to reveal the impact of Ethical and Moral Values in Christian Education Curriculum on the Academic Performance of Students in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. It also brings to bare the impact of ethical and moral values among Christian Religious Students' academic performance in Junior Secondary School. The study, thereby conclude that Christian Religious Education is very important for shaping the morals of the students in school and even in the society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. CRS should be given more attention by government to always inculcate moral principles; justice, equity and honesty.
2. The subject should be made compulsory at all levels of our education.
3. There is need for the school management to organize and encourage C.R.S teachers to attend workshops and seminars.
4. Moral teachings found in CRS should be reinforced across other subjects and school activities to create a consistent value-based education environment.
5. Government on its part should provide all instructional materials and equipment lacking in primary and secondary schools.

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