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Students' Perception of the Importance of Christian Religious Studies in Character Development in Senior High Schools

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Abstract:

The study investigated students' perception of the importance of Christian Religious Studies in character development in senior high schools. It further sought to determine the role of the subject in character development from the student's perspective and how the study of the subject contributes to character development in senior high schools. The qualitative study design was to collect data from 100 students from Amaniampong Senior High School at Mampong in the Ashanti region of Ghana. It was found, among other things, that 81% of the respondents, being the majority, said that Christian Religious Studies contribute to the character development of students in senior high schools. In comparison, 19% of them, as the minority, said that they do not think Christian Religious Studies contribute to students' character development in senior high schools. Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations were made: First and foremost, the Ministry of Education (MoE) should provide schools with sufficient teaching materials to enable teachers to teach Christian Religious Studies to achieve the subject's objectives. Moreover, teachers must use different teaching methods in the classroom to make all students benefit from the subject. Besides, the government should pay teachers better salaries to motivate them to deliver.

Keywords: Christian religious studies, character development, students, senior high schools

1. Introduction

Do Christian Religious Studies contribute to character development in senior high schools? Some people are of the opinion that Christian Religious Studies affect character development in senior high schools. However, others strongly think Christian Religious Studies do not contribute to character development in senior high schools. Unfortunately, none of these groups of people have empirical evidence to support their claims. According to Baiyer (2010), Christian Religious Studies is about the systematic study of the Christian faith found in the Old Testament and the New Testament of the Holy Bible. Nigeria's National Commission for College of Education (NCCE) (1992) also stated that Christian Religious Studies is an academic field of study developed for individuals' moral and spiritual development. Besides, Lekwat (2000) claimed that Christian Religious Education is a genuine means of obtaining sound moral and spiritual development for peaceful co-existence.

In Ghana, Christian Religious Studies (CRS) is a course of study at the secondary level of education. The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) curriculum for Christian Religious Studies stipulates that by the end of their 3-year course of study, students are expected to gain knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the religious, cultural, historical, and social background of the biblical materials recommended for study. The students are also supposed to have understood the nature of biblical morals in the selected themes from the Bible and the extent of their relevance and likely use to present social, political, religious, and cultural life, including existence (www.ghana.waecdirect). In addition, they are required to identify difficulties involved in using healthy attitudes, concepts, and skills gained from the Bible to ensure peaceful co-existence and national development. Besides, they are expected to prepare enough for higher education through critical thinking and independent work.

According to Ngussa and Makewa (2018), Christian Religious Education prepares learners to be morally upright and influences them to fear God and respect their fellow human beings. Further, they maintained that Christian Religious Education is a possible antidote to moral issues such as corruption, injustice, and unfair treatment of the poor in society, giving learners the practical ability to discriminate between right and wrong and to choose what is right in everyday life. In addition, they found a significant difference in teachers' rating of the frequency of disciplinary cases between schools that teach Christian Religious Education and those that do not teach the subject, with the rate being higher in schools where Christian Religious Education is not taught.

Mathenge (2008) observed that students had a favourable perception of Christian Religious Studies as an essential subject in their development. Waithira (2006) adduced that Christian Religious Education contributes significantly to the

moral development of young people in schools, particularly in secondary schools in the Mathioya District in Kenya. That heads of discipline, teachers, and students considered the content of the curriculum of Christian Religious Education good for moral development. However, she noted that the methods used to teach the subject had affected its effectiveness regarding moral development.

According to Santi and Santi (2017), Religious Education is a necessary process for every society which seeks a better future for its people. They observed that morality, principles, faith, and authentic values are the pillars supporting the development of a balanced, physically, psychologically, and spiritual society. They also claimed that school has a huge role in this process, particularly in this day and age when families neglect the responsibility of educating children. Eric (1994) found that Religious Education in the United States of America has been an essential subject of study because of its contribution to the moral and spiritual growth of the learners.

Amugune (2005) contended that, as a matter of principle, religious teachings have traditionally been the vehicle by which moral standards are instilled in Africa. Mbiti (1996) also advanced that Religious Education is responsible for instilling in every generation those forms of knowledge, values, and attitudes that society requires to prosper. Further, he espoused that religion provides mankind with moral values by which to live. Chesaro (2003) collaborated with this when he observed that no society could exist without morals and discipline for its welfare and that of the individual. He averred that morals build relationships between people and the world.

The teaching of Christian Religious Education is a critical component that makes it possible for the school youth to acquire morality by inculcating the right attitudes toward social obligations and responsibilities in society (Kowino et al., 2012). Besides, Musongole (2010) adduced that Religious Education deals with emotions, values, and feelings and leaves room for learners to make informed decisions. Furthermore, the United Republic of Tanzania (2007, p.14) reports that Tanzania's secondary school curriculum considers religious studies 'an area of learning that helps to reinforce personal values and beliefs and respect for other people's religious beliefs and instills values such as honesty, reliability, respect for the law, tolerance, fairness, caring or compassion and non-discrimination.'

Christian Religious Education instills positive attitudes and moral values such as humility, respect, love, kindness, and a spirit of forgiveness (Ilechukwu & Ugwuozor, 2014). In addition, teachers' approaches to teaching Christian Religious Education, their personality, and accessibility to learners affect the moral development of the learners (Waithira, 2006).

Kidakwa and Obonyo (2004) established that in Kenya, Christian Religious Education is considered a core subject that shapes secondary school youths into ideal personalities in society. It goes beyond the classroom, learning more about character formation instead of knowledge acquisition. Further, they claimed the major objectives of Christian Religious Education, among other things, are to enable learners to gain insight into the unfolding of God's self-revelation to humankind and use the acquired social, spiritual, and moral insights to think critically and to make right moral decisions in a fast-changing society.

2. Statement of the Problem

Many authors have shown the place of religion on morality. Holmes (2007) asserted that the Bible places significant importance on moral virtues and character. The beatitudes of Jesus in Matthew 5, for example, are a good example of moral values in the Bible. Maiyo (2015) also stated that the concept of morality is traditionally inherent with religion as the ultimate judgement of what is right and wrong lies with God. Moreover, Aroni (2003) maintained that Christian Religious Education influences students to do things correctly according to biblical teachings.

According to Maiyo (2015), teaching Christian Religious Studies helps in the moral development of students in schools. Christian Religious Studies mould students into responsible citizens, enabling them to develop values and virtues that reinforce appropriate behaviour. Furthermore, Kowino et al. (2012) claimed that teaching Christian Religious Education is a critical component that helps school-going youth acquire morality by instilling the right attitude toward social obligations and responsibilities. Besides, Musongole (2010) adduced that Religious Education deals with emotions, values, and feelings and leaves room for learners to make concrete decisions.

Kidakwa and Obongo (2004) stated that in Kenya, Christian Religious Education is considered a core subject that shapes the secondary school youth into ideal personalities in society. The subject goes beyond the classroom, learning more about character formation instead of knowledge acquisition. Its objective, among other things, is to enable learners to gain insight into the unfolding of God's self-revelation to humankind and use the acquired social, spiritual, and moral insights to think critically and make appropriate moral decisions in a rapidly changing society. Notwithstanding the views expressed by many scholars about the effects of Christian Religious Studies on the character formation of secondary school students, little can be said about the studies conducted to unravel students' perception of the importance of Christian Religious Studies in character development in senior high schools. Against this background, this study seeks to investigate students' perception of the importance of Christian Religious Studies in character development in Amaniampong Senior High School at Mampong in the Ashanti region of Ghana.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Research on Religious Education and Students' Discipline

The United Republic of Tanzania (2017) reported that the secondary school curriculum in Tanzania considers religious studies as 'an area of learning that helps to reinforce personal values and beliefs and respect for others' people religious beliefs and instill in them values such as honesty, reliability, respect for the law, tolerance, fairness, caring or compassion and non-discrimination.' Furthermore, Kowino et al. (2012) opined that the teaching of Christian Religious

Education is a critical component that helps the school-going youth acquire morality by instilling the right attitudes toward social obligations and responsibilities in society. Besides, Musongole (2010) claimed that Religious Education deals with emotions, values, and feelings and leaves room for learners to make concrete decisions.

In addition, Ilechukwu and Ugwuozor (2010) adduced that Christian Religious Education is a subject that helps streamline students' thought, character, morality, and aspiration in Nigeria. Further, they maintained that Christian Religious Education promotes morals among students, teaching them to live in a world guided by moral ideas of loyalty to God, charity, and justice to their fellow human beings. Again, they observed that Christian Religious Education instills positive attitudes and moral values such as humility, respect, love, kindness, and a spirit of forgiveness.

According to Riady (2009, p. 74), the Indonesian tycoon and education philanthropist, Riady, observed that modern, secular, contemporary education has failed. He stated increasing crime rates and moral failures in the US, as well as smoking, consumption of prohibited drugs, lesbianism and homosexuality, and pornography as evidence of the failure of secular education. He claimed that there were unique differences between secular and religious schools. Consequently, when he returned from the United States in 1988, Riady set up Christian (protestant) schools to correct the 'ills' he saw with the Indonesian education system (Riady, 2009, p. 74). His schools teach fundamental Christian doctrines and promote discipline by training students to become disciples of Christ. He advocates for 'theocracy.' Riady defined this as how 'teachers know how to integrate faith, knowledge and character' when teaching history, maths, astronomy, chemistry, and other lessons (Riady, 2009, p. 76).

Hoon (2011) averred that Riady's schools appeal to Christian and non-Christian parents alike, who are wooed by the exclusive ethnic and social class environment, academic accomplishments and reputation, and character building, based on Christian values and discipline which the schools claim to provide. He observed that many parents enrol their children in Christian schools saw religion as a driver to reinforce discipline. Studies found that Christian schools normally highly commit to moral values and discipline (Francis, 2005; Green, 2009). Schmidt (2007) also argued that the Christian discursive notion of 'discipleship' evokes a process of disciplining the self to become more like Christ. Studies found that a school is an institution where student subjectivity is constituted and reinscribed by different 'disciplinary technologies' (Foucault, 1977; Grant, 1997).

According to Maiyo (2015), the teaching of Christian Religious Education assists in the moral development of secondary school students. It moulds them to become responsible, enabling them to develop values and virtues which reinforce appropriate behaviour. Ndiku and Christian Religious Education are likely to be a solution to moral issues such as corruption, injustice, and unfair treatment of society's poor. For example, a teacher showed that Luke's Gospel challenged tax collectors not to collect more than what is required, soldiers not to mistreat people, and the rich to help the poor. The teacher further argued that these moral values are instilled in young people, making the Christian Religious Education syllabus in secondary school (Ndiku & Ngussa, 2018). This position was collaborated by Aroni (2013) that Christian Religious Education influences students to conduct themselves according to biblical teachings.

Again, Ndiku and Ngussa (2018) recorded that the rate of disciplinary cases in all ten cases was higher in schools where Christian Religious Education is not taught than in schools where Christian Religious Education is taught. They contended that the rate of disciplinary cases was higher in schools where Christian Religious Education is taught than in schools where the subject is taught. This is because the general perception of teachers, particularly on students' disciplinary cases, premarital relationships, and dodging obligatory tasks, was high in schools where the subject is not taught and low in schools where the subject is taught. Further, they argued that sabotage, student suspension, pregnancy cases, riots, fighting, drug abuse, and violence cases were low in schools where Christian Religious Education is taught and in schools where the subject is not taught. However, they said that the rate of the incidences was higher in schools that do not teach Christian Religious Education. Accordingly, they concluded there is a huge difference in teachers' rating on the frequency of disciplinary cases between schools that teach Christian Religious Education and schools that do not teach the subject.

According to the Republic of Kenya (1999), religious education has not only been seen by religious organizations as another academic subject but a subject that has been expected to effect behavioural change among learners. Consequently, there is a need for Religious Education to be taught by committed and practicing teachers of the faith.

The deep-rooted belief that religion ought to be the basis of education and that intellectual advancement, as shown by the good examination results, achievement at the expense of sound moral and cultural growth was not good enough. Consequently, the need for Religious Education in schools was consistently overemphasised (The Kenya Episcopal Conference, 1982).

The curriculum of Christian Religious Education states, among other things, that through learning Christian Religious Education, learners should acquire social, spiritual, and moral insights to think critically and make appropriate decisions in an increasingly changing society. Besides, it argues that students should acquire basic principles of Christian living and develop a sense of self-respect and respect for others. Moreover, it says Christian Religious Education should ultimately contribute positively to transforming self and society (Kenya National Examination Council, 2005).

However, the curriculum is insufficient to lead the learners to a deep commitment to their religious faiths to enhance their morals. This realisation prompted the establishment of the pastoral programme of instruction to complement the teachings in Religious Education in the formal timetables, particularly in primary schools. As a result, the time has been set aside for this aspect of religious instruction. Nevertheless, the pastoral programme has not been effective in secondary schools, and this is a challenge (Mutinda, DM, 2004).

Mutinda (2004) found that 63.6% of teachers confirmed that students who practice what they learn in Christian Religious Education in their personal lives shun vices and hold up virtues. According to the study, 45.5% of the teachers said that Christian Religious Education changes students' behaviour as they learn how to respect human life and relate

with God and the rest of the creation. It further adduced that 27.3% of the teachers affirmed that most of the topics in the subject are related to messages given by God to his people; consequently, through the teaching, some students get reformed. Moreover, it was established that 9.1% of the teachers said that students learn the relevance of every topic in Christian Religious Education and their application in Christian life.

According to Kiambi (2020), Christian Religious Education significantly changes students' behaviour. For example, that helps students relate well with others, make the appropriate decisions, remain focused, and maintain international consciousness.

The Government of the United Kingdom (2015) maintains that Christian Education has contributed significantly to shaping the nation in which the pupils and the students were made aware of peace-keeping, behavioural development, and community development. The major problem of Christian Education was that the introduction of the subject was not in stages. The Council of England and Wales (RECEW) recommended a committee to assist in a review which was subsequently given the directive to bring out the problems and remedies to the problems. The study established that no framework was used to deliver the subject. Consequently, the Council of England and Wales published a paper in 2013 presenting the analysis of the problems and the context fronting Christian Education. The paper was handed over to the then-education secretary, Michael Gove. Gove applauded the framework as a national benchmark paper for use by all Religious Education users, including religious leaders and teachers (The Government of the United Kingdom, 2013).

Rose (2013) argued that in Kenya, despite the regular teaching of Christian Religious Education, the morals of learners can be described as 'rotten.' The general conduct of numerous young people in the larger society has continued to reflect unskillfulness in social interaction. Young people's 'rotten' conduct has raised 'eyebrows' about the acquired knowledge in Christian Religious Education. This has shown that the teaching of critical thinking through Christian Religious Education in the education system of Kenya could be challenged.

Maloko (2014) claimed that secondary school students in Kenya have completely lost their morals. The ministry of education may need to critically review basic Christian Religious Education, taught from form one to form four. Research shows that the teaching of Christian Religious Education in Kenya alleged a major position since the first missionaries in 1846 established the first school (Stanfield, 2015). According to Brenda (2013), the main work of the Christian missionaries was to convert Africans to Christianity. Missionaries used schools as means to recruit mostly the young to go to the church. They were given gifts and teachings during sessions.

3.2. The Role of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Instilling Students' Moral Values

Every Christian Religious Education teacher must undergo training to cope with the demands of the subject. According to Wright (1987), teachers are expected as a minimum part of their role to have enough knowledge of their subject matter, know how children develop and devise the right learning teaching experiences. Collaborating with this opinion, Diana (2009) admonished that schools need better teachers distinguished by being intellectually brighter, more liberally educated with greater command of the subject, and a better understanding of child development. According to her, the moral dimension of teaching and teachers has huge historical concerns in the teaching profession. Religious materials tend to be difficult to handle and require special training (Lord & Barley, 1973). Lierop (1992) contended that this is occasioned by the fact that Christian Religious Education is not only for the impartation of knowledge but affects the development of Christian character. Education without spiritual development is incomplete as man has spiritual and moral tendencies. Consequently, for education to be complete, it must include such elements of man's nature and development.

Teachers themselves have a stake in the transmission of morals. Teachers must be good role models to the learners. During adolescence, learners need role models, and they tend to take on these models from all professions close to them, whether mass media, parents and family, or their teachers (Buchner, 1997). Consequently, according to Kumar (2010), teachers must uphold moral values as they are found to be the catalyst of social change. Many teachers in the Netherlands recognize that they contribute to the moral development of children. Learners tend to acquire many character traits from teachers like responsibility, tolerance, justice, honesty, care, and others (Sanderse, 2008).

However, teachers' conversation in school primarily centres on school reports and underperforming students and not on what a morally educated student should be (Bond, 1996). Teachers should act as models of perfect and humanity to their students, teaching them kindness, benevolence, a sense of duty, purpose, courage, and hard work. Students learn more from teachers' behaviour than what they say (Godnal, 2004). Moreover, Buchner (1997) argued that no printed or spoken word could teach young minds what they should be. It is not booked on the shelves but what the teachers are themselves that can teach young minds what they should be. This means that the subjects teachers teach, their decisions, and how they react to classroom situations show their moral thoughts, emotions, and habits. Consequently, Buchner (1997) said teachers are role models to students, and so influence students' moral development.

Religious Studies have been critical in enabling students to become conscious of what it means to live in a multi-faith community. According to Eric (1994), it has been established to assist students in understanding and respecting the beliefs and practices of others and so foster social cohesion. Oliver (2005) averred that the evolution of Religious Studies as a field of study could be traced to Europe and especially Britain from the 19th century. This period had a scholarly and historical analysis of the Bible flourishing, whereas Hindu and Buddhist texts were first translated into European languages.

In the United States of America, Religious Education has been a necessary discipline of study due to its contribution to the moral and spiritual growth of the learners. It was first conceived as comparative religion or science of religion in the early years of its inception as a subject in the 1990s (Eric, 1994). However, by the second half of the 20th century, the study of religion has assumed a prominent and essential field of academic inquiry (Hull, 1982). Eric (1994)

observed that this made many state agencies and local school districts create mandates and guidelines about the teaching of religion.

Amugune (2005) claimed that, as a matter of principle, religious teachings have traditionally been the vehicle by which moral standards were inculcated in Africa. There is a moral crisis in the world which makes it evident that schools should not avoid the responsibility of teaching in the area of moral education. Consequently, education is considered a necessary driver of morality. Education must be based on moral and spiritual foundations to be fruitful and effective (Gay, 1975).

Through Religious Education, students acquire the desired beliefs, values, and practices of the society, which enable them to live in harmony with other members of the society (Kombo, 2005). Religious Education aims to facilitate desirable changes in an individual since it includes theoretical, practical, moral, spiritual, human, and divine aspects (Harding, 2005). Wainaina (2007) stated that numerous countries of the world have realized the importance of religion and have included it as a subject of discipline in schools. For example, in Europe, the main aim of teaching Religious Education is to build and maintain a national identity. Religious Education in England had been mandated by the 1944 Education Act, in which the subject comprised different religious leaders and moral themes. However, the state required that more Christian content was taught than the content of other faiths (Grove, 2009).

Religious Education played an essential role in transmitting moral values to children in high schools in the United States. Acquiring the right norms, attitudes, and values is probably more essential for success than the actual knowledge (Tritter & Taylor, 1992). Eric (1994) recorded that the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) in the US stated that knowledge about religion is not just a characteristic of an educated person but is also necessary for understanding and living in a world of diversity.

Teaching religion in schools encourages children to be responsible and spiritually sound adults. Eric (1994) contended that one's education could not be complete without a study of religion and its relationship with an advanced civilisation. Consequently, Religious Education is important in any education system.

A study in Nigeria about the need for Christian Religious Education and moral education found distressing behaviour ranging from immorality. The distressing behaviour is shown in various ways like dishonesty, greed, injustice, selfishness, sexual promiscuity, and secret cult activities. Therefore, it was recommended that school be the best institution in a society where moral education should start (Nwomah, 1998).

Religious Education plays a part in producing good citizens by character building and ensuring high moral standards. It prepares the learners to assume their rightful place in society (Barret, 1973). In like manner, it has been observed that society does not need an education that prepares learners just academic excellence and demonstration of skills. Society instead needs an education that makes learners morally equipped for useful and purposeful services to themselves and the nation and to live in a manner required by God. Therefore, religious and moral education becomes essential in the secondary school syllabus (Ochard, 2008).

Religion's greatest value is teaching people to be humble due to their limitations. Human beings are created, so they should depend on their creator (Mbiti, 1969). Therefore, Christian Religious Education provides students with morals that significantly mould attitudes and approaches in their lives (Mwaura & Onoka, 2003).

UNICEF (2004) recorded that religion could assist prevent HIV and AIDS. The study showed that young people who knew and adhered to the teachings of their religion were less likely to engage in immoral sexual relations than those who did not. These revelations illustrate the importance of studying Religious Education for moral and health reasons. In like manner, Evening (1992) noted that Religious Education lessons present the right place for exploring moral values and their repercussions on living. Golnal (2004) claimed that religious instruction contributes significantly to the transfer of culture and the transmission of moral values to the youth.

The missionaries formally set up education in nearly all African countries. When the Phelp Stokes Commission visited Africa between 1922 and 1925, it made a plea for religious and moral education to form a basis for lasting education. For example, in Nigeria, Religious Education, Christian Religious Education has been used to develop a culture of peace (Ivorgba, 2006).

3.3. Approaches of Teaching Christian Religious Studies Which Could Enhance Moral Development

Christian Religious Studies teachers use different approaches during lessons that aid learners in understanding and practicing what they learn. The teaching approaches and techniques take into account the individual differences in learners. The approaches are used based on the context. Teaching approaches are classified into four general types: telling, showing, exchanging ideas, and group planning (Lierop, 1992). According to Evening (1972), using the right teaching approaches makes learning interesting and focused. KIE (2006) suggests a teacher must opt for approaches that make teaching learner-centred and bring out the learner's positive behaviour change. The teacher should also use creativity and innovativeness to help promote and sustain positive change.

The Ominde Report (1964) does not endorse the use of the drill teaching approach. Instead, it advises teachers against not paying attention to learner participation in teaching. It encourages teachers to adjust their instruction approaches to suit the needs of the learners and use learner activity. Also, the Gachathi Report (1976) suggests that teaching approaches must emphasize making education relevant to the day-to-day problems. It says this should be achieved by enabling the learners to observe phenomena of the environment, gather data about them, interpret it, and use the information to solve problems.

KIE (2002) contends that the Christian Religious Education curriculum is developed to encourage the child-centred approach in teaching Christian Religious Education. This curriculum stipulates that teaching-learning resources should use children's interests, activities, and experiences to enable them to explore the Christian faith. It further enjoins

the teacher to avoid presenting religious truths and values in an adult manner. According to Illiot (2008), this allows the children to learn about religious traditions and to reflect on what those religious ideas and concepts mean to them.

According to Groenewegen (1993), there are numerous instructional approaches, ranging from transmission to experiential approaches. That transmission is the transfer of content from the teachers to students. It is a teacher-centred approach. Lierpo (1992) lecturing is a widely used approach in teaching.

According to Lierpo (1992), this approach is more effective when it is supplemented by a question-and-answer session or followed by a group discussion. Gachegoh (1990) admonished that the teacher should be careful about the kind of instruction he or she uses. The teacher should avoid mere lecturing, but involve learners through drama, question and answer time, and Bible reading, among other heuristic approaches which bring interaction, discussion, and discovery. KIE (2006) argued that storytelling or narration is a popular and effective approach to teaching Christian Religious Education. As regards this approach, teachers use stories based on the day-to-day experiences of the learner and relate them to Biblical teaching. This helps the learners to acquire good morals.

Lierop (1992) claimed that stories tend to draw people together in fellowship, breaking racial, tribal, or inter-school barriers. Consequently, teachers are encouraged to narrate stories that lead to character formation.

Unlike over-reliance on cognitive strategies, using affective valuing skills opens up the possibilities for free choice and critical decision-making abilities on moral habits. The valuing models employed in teaching Christian Religious Education are important as they capture affective aspects of learning morals. Lickona (2003) argued that using the valuing model ensures that the learner's competence and mastery of the self are developed.

Boss (2021) established that in any Christian Religious Education episode in which the value model is not used, the affective personality of the learner, which will make him or her value self and others, is not developed. This is because learners do not realize the value of corporate morality. Self-esteem, created by the value model, is essential to character development because morality begins with valuing the self, as it is easier to love one's neighbours when one loves oneself.

Moreover, social community building is valuable because it contributes to self-esteem,

- Partly by creating a norm of mutual respect that inhibits the put down by which learners undermine each other's self-esteem and
- Partly by helping children to feel known and positively valued by their peers.

Social community supplies a vital affective dimension to moral education, a flow of good feelings that makes it easier for learners to be good and to cross the bridge from knowing what is right to do it. About the teacher, who takes the trouble to build positive group feelings, Akech (2005) noted that developing virtue is an affair of the emotions as much as it is an affair of the mind.

According to Groenewegen (1993), a teacher could also employ visual presentations to transmit information to the learners. Using films, videos, and tapped audios can make a presentation interesting. Brennah (1975) also claims that visual materials from religious bodies could be used for the benefit of learners. These materials stimulated students thinking and understanding of different concepts. A good example was a video on drug abuse and/or HIV and AIDS which could help to warn the learners against such vices as drug abuse and HIV infections. The audio-visual presentation's strength can present something close to real-life experiences, thus, simplifying a complex issue (Groenewegen, 1993).

Groenewegen (1993) identifies text reading as an approach that facilitates the acquisition of disposition other than knowledge. Furthermore, textbook reading prepares teachers poorly for the lesson since they only ask learners to read in class. This is compounded as schools do not have enough textbooks on Christian Religious Education. Studies showed that schools have insufficient textbooks on Christian Religious Education (Amugune, 2005; Gachegom, 1990). However, this encourages sharing between students and students and between students and their teachers. This is a virtue.

Chesaro (2003) added that discussion in Christian Religious Education leaves the teacher assured that the students are not just gaining academically but are also moulded spiritually and morally. However, Groenewegen (1993) argued that numerous teachers do not employ this approach, claiming it results in rowdiness, time-wasting, disturbances, and excessive noise.

Also, using songs and dance is a good Christian Religious Education teaching approach. According to Evening (1972), singing and dancing provided a most valuable opportunity to share and demonstrate community values. Furthermore, Levi (1989) claimed that some songs and dances carry deep messages that positively change the community's behaviour. Therefore, songs and dances are essential in teaching Christian Religious Education subjects because they arouse attention, create interest in the lesson and help the learners internalize the main ideas and values (KIE, 2006).

As regards the question-and-answer approach, the mental growth of the learner is encouraged (KIE, 2006). The question-and-answer approach stimulates the mental growth of the learner and as well encourages them to be active in searching for the truth (Lierop, 1992). The teacher's question raises a question mark in the learners' minds who begin searching for solutions to their problems (KIE, 2006). Moreover, Kerry (1982) noted that this approach helps to create a good relationship between the teacher and the learners.

According to KIE (2006), the project work approach allows the learners to apply life skills, creative thinking, critical thinking, and decision making. These life skills are acquired in the learning process and help the teacher assess acquiring knowledge, skills, and attitudes. In addition, projects help students grasp what it means to be a loyal citizen or committed Christian.

A project is an outstanding approach for character building. It trains the learner in planning, carrying out one's purpose, and strengthening the will and perseverance of the personality (Lierop, 1992). Gachegoh (1990) advanced that project is a better alternative to lecturing.

Adeyemi (1989) acknowledges the value of instructional approaches to the success of any subject in the syllabus. Most students feel that an effective social studies teacher must have a stock of approaches to draw and execute the teaching task. Therefore, any teacher education programme should help the teacher find the approach best suited to one's purposes, tasks, and the peculiar problems faced.

A study on the factors influencing the implementation of integrated English in selected public schools in the Kiambu District observed that time management and curriculum coverage have a bearing on teaching and learning effectiveness in schools. It confirmed that teachers' workload affected their effectiveness. Teachers with too many lessons and other tasks such as demonstrations cover the syllabus insufficiently. This makes the teacher rush over the syllabus as time passes, paying attention to methodology (Kiare, 2006).

Christian Religious Education teachers should be encouraged to attend in-service programmes, seminars, and courses to boost their efficiency and effectiveness. Appropriate teaching approaches are as such important, and teachers should vary them in lesson presentation to make learning interesting, focus on the learner's attention, and take care of the individual need of the learners (Amugune, 2005).

Teacher educators, quality assurance officers, and other stakeholders in teacher education should stress the use of learner-centered teaching in Christian Religious Education. The teacher must be encouraged to use learner-centred strategies than teacher-centred methods to teaching Christian Religious Education (Luvanga, 2003).

3.4. Roles of Christian Religious Studies Teachers in Instilling Moral Values among Students in Schools

Every Christian Religious Education must undergo training to cope with the demands of the subject. Teachers are expected, as a minimum part of their role, to have enough knowledge of their subject matter to know something about children's development and be capable of devising appropriate learning teaching experiences (Wright, 1987, p. 51). While supporting this assertion, Diana (2009) cautioned that schools need better teachers distinguished by being intellectually brighter, more liberally educated with huge mastery of the subject matter, and a better understanding of child development. According to her, the moral dimension of teaching and teachers has huge historical concerns in the teaching profession.

Teachers by themselves have a stake in the transmission of morals. Therefore, teachers must be good role models to the learners. During adolescence, learners need role models, and they tend to cope with these models from all professions close to them, whether mass media, parents and family, or their teachers (Buchner, 1997).

Teachers should uphold moral values as they are found to be the agents of social change (Kumar, 2010). While investigating teachers' character in the Netherlands, Sanderse (2008) found that numerous teachers recognize that they contribute to the moral development of children. Furthermore, it was revealed that learners tend to acquire character traits such as responsibility, tolerance, justice, honesty, care, etc. from teachers.

Buchner (1997) further said that no printed or spoken word could teach young minds what they must be. Therefore, it is not the books on the shelves but what the teachers are themselves that can teach young minds what they must be. This means that the subjects teachers teach, their decisions, and how they react to classroom situations show their moral thoughts, emotions, and habits. As such, Buchner (1997) concluded that teachers are role models to students, and so influence students' moral development.

In his study on the role of Christian Religious Education in the moral development of secondary school students, Chesaro (2003) recommended that teachers ought to serve as examples of morality. Consequently, teachers must abstain from drunkenness, chain-smoking at school, and sexual relationships with their students.

Character education is made possible by teachers and parents striving to be good role models to the students (Lantos, 2001). Teachers' and parents' influence on students shapes student behaviour in society. Students often look up to their parents and teachers as role models on matters of unity, honesty, justice, fairness, responsibility, caring, respect and trustworthiness. Also, the school authorities have a role in shaping students' character, particularly enhancing unity as a value among students (Adeyemi, 2009).

The Koech Report (1999) reinforces what Ominde Report (1964) has recommended that religious organizations consider Religious Education as a subject expected to effect behavioural changes among learners. Religious Education ought to be taught by committed and practicing teachers of the faith.

However, Cox (1983) noted two practical problems confronting religiously committed teachers, which the teachers are to be conscious of. According to Cox, these problems include how to teach about one's religion without going beyond the curriculum and how to handle other faiths and ideologies without giving half-baked instruction. KIE (2006) argued that Christian Religious Education teachers are expected to have specific objectives derived from general objectives. Such objectives aid the teacher in opting a relevant content and appropriate teaching and learning resources; choosing suitable approaches to help achieve the objectives, and determining areas and methods of assessments.

3.5. Resources Used in Teaching Christian Religious Students to Enhance Moral Development

Teaching resources or teaching aids are critical in making learning effective and meaningful to learners. Feuter and Wegner (1983) stated that students learn best by doing and using various media, such as posters, sketches, charts, radio, comics, and films. This presupposes that keeping learners active through the use of different kinds of media makes learners understand the lesson better. As such, teachers are encouraged to use teaching-learning resources, not just for illustrations but for interactions, discussion, and discovery.

Moreover, KIE (2006) observed that a Teaching Christian Religious teacher must choose the most appropriate teaching-learning resources to reinforce lesson objective achievement and positive change of attitude and behaviour in the learners.

Teaching resources for Christian Religious Education are grouped into print media, electronic media, realia, and resource persons. These kinds of resources are known to be used in different levels of a lesson. According to KIE (2006), for example, a teacher could use a chart on the qualities of a good leader today at the introductory stage of a lesson. Print media or teaching-learning materials include textbooks, reference books, magazines, and newspapers (Munene, 1994).

Reading materials must be varied, appropriate to different age levels, and suitable for different activities. Textbooks should be written to cover the requirements of a particular curriculum (Fullan, 1994). During a study on teaching Christian Religious Education in Zambia's multi-religious secondary schools, Chizelu (2006) found that there was a lack of spirituality and morals in schools, creating dependency among the young people. This situation resulted from learners not being taught the Bible, which alone taught absolute standards of righteous living.

Groenewegen (1993) stated that realia were the resources that are made up of real objects of study in the teaching and learning process. According to Farrant (1967), education must be associated with daily life experiences since it introduces learners to plenty of visual experiences that the teachers could help us in teaching. For example, a visit to a marriage ceremony or crusade would introduce the learners to various moral values being taught. In a study in Botswana on teacher character education across the curriculum and the role of stakeholders at the junior secondary level, Adeyemi (2009) recorded that students must be allowed to visit and collect relevant data from individuals in the society who are known for an exemplary character. These included traditional rulers, clergymen and women educators, and those in business who contributed to their society's moral upbringing.

Models and specimens uniquely appeal to children and attract their close attention better than a chart. He argued that a three-dimension character gives a better concept of reality than a two-dimension picture. Any teacher who is concerned about school children must, in essence, give thought to anything that is likely to help learners, particularly the teaching aids. Nevertheless, it was observed with regret that teachers do not use teaching aids after they leave training colleges. Though teaching and learning resources are useful in the teaching of Christian Religious Education, it was observed that most schools did not have enough resources (Farrant, 1967). Years back, Gachegoh (1990) found that schools did not have sufficient teaching of Christian Religious Education, and this affected performance in the national examinations. He recommended that quality and quantity of Christian Religious Education learning resources be provided in schools.

Christian Religious Education is one of the social studies with low status in primary schools among primary teachers and pupils. Teachers are confronted with many problems in teaching Christian Religious Education includes a lack of textbooks and high enrolment, making classes unmanageable. Learners in these schools were encouraged to share the few textbooks available, while the issue of large classes discourages teacher-learner interactions (Shiundu, 1980).

In a study on the analysis of the factors affecting achievement and enrollment in Christian Religious Education in public secondary schools in the Vihiga District in Kenya, Amugune (2005) established that schools lacked sufficient learning resources, particularly textbooks. Consequently, the study recommended that headteachers organise a book donation day for their schools. Besides, it was recommended that the cultivation of computer technology must be encouraged in public secondary schools so learners could fit in the ever-changing world. Due to this, teachers must be able to use drawings, pictures, wall writings, and other aids if learning has to happen efficiently.

4. Methodology

The main objective of this study was to examine students' perception of the importance of Christian Religious Studies in character development in senior high schools. A qualitative design was used for the study. The qualitative research design involves an interaction between the researcher and the researched. Verma and Mallick (1999) espoused that qualitative research collects data in the form of 'words' instead of 'numbers'. They concluded that qualitative research describes the life worlds of the participants from their perspectives. De Vos et al. also (2002) argued that qualitative research design is the research that elicits participants' accounts of meaning, experience, or perception. It produces descriptive data in the participant's own written or spoken words. The simple random sampling was to collect data from 100 students from Amaniampong Senior High School at Mampong in the Ashanti region of Ghana. The data were analysed with Excel. The response of each respondent was written down and tagged by a research identity, while graphs were used to present data.

5. Findings/Results

Do you study Christian Religious Studies?

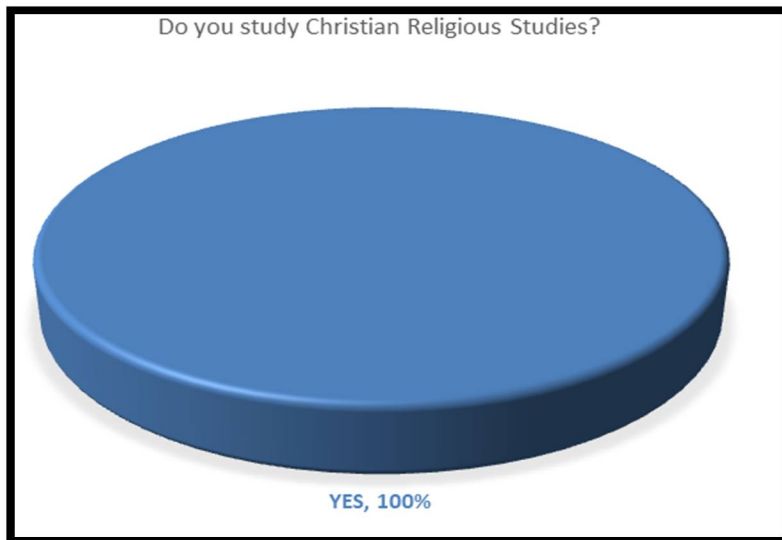


Figure 1: Students Who Study Christian Religious Studies

If yes, how much time do you spend studying Christian Religious Studies?

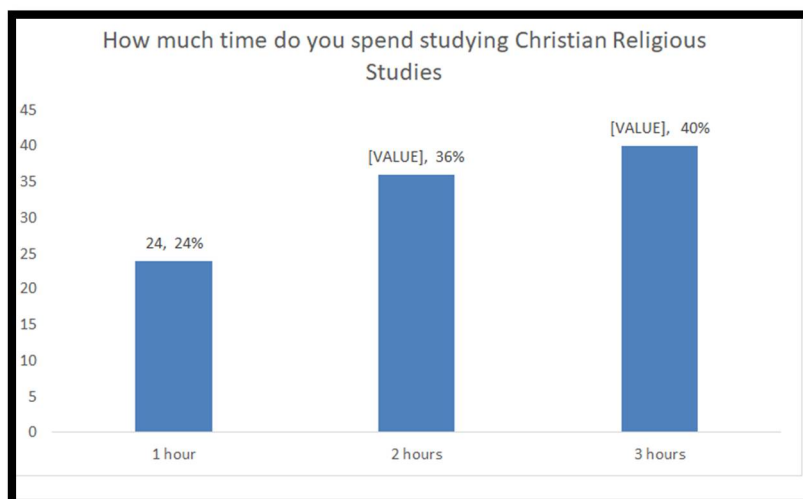


Figure 2: Time Students Spend Studying Christian Religious Studies

What is your favourite CRS topic?

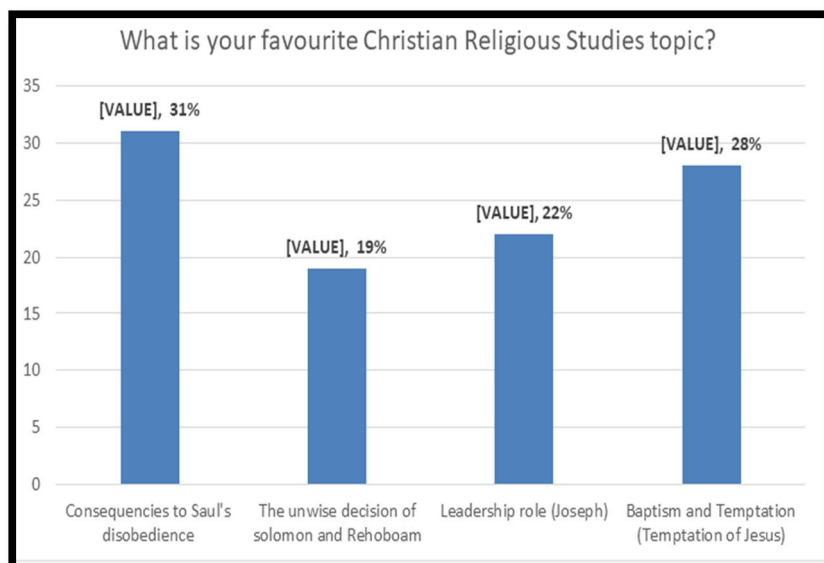


Figure 3: Students' Favourite Christian Religious Studies Topic

Do you think CRS contributes to students' character development in senior high schools?

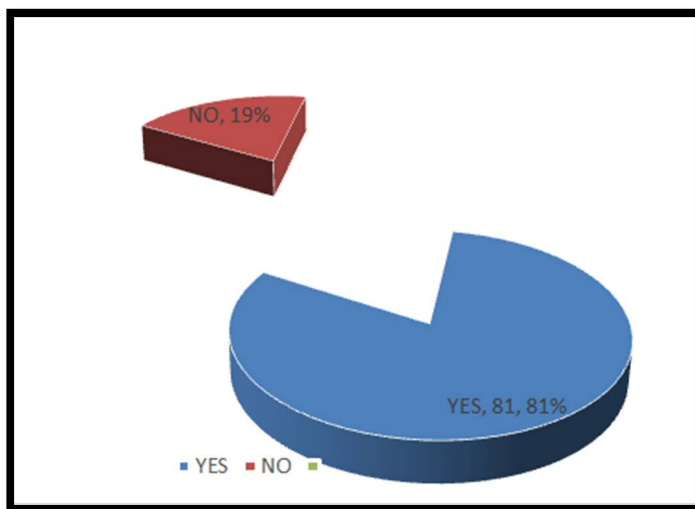


Figure 4: Contribution of Christian Religious Studies to Character Development of Students

How does CRS contribute to the character development of students in senior high schools?

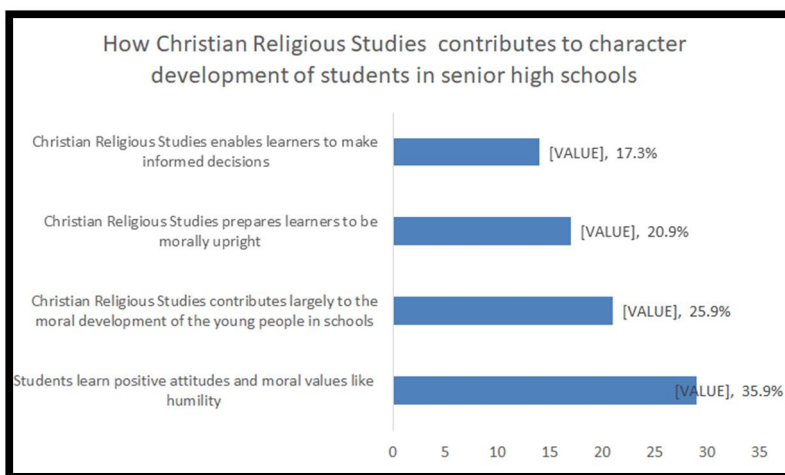


Figure 5: How Christian Religious Studies Contribute to Character Development of Students

What teaching method does your teacher often use to teach CRS?

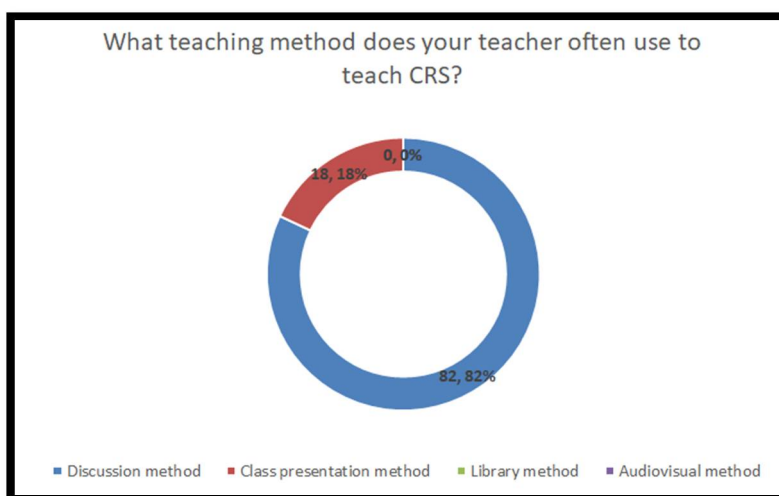


Figure 6: The Teaching Methods Teachers Often Use to Teach Christian Religious Studies

Have you ever observed a change in students' character development after your teacher used a particular teaching method to teach CRS?

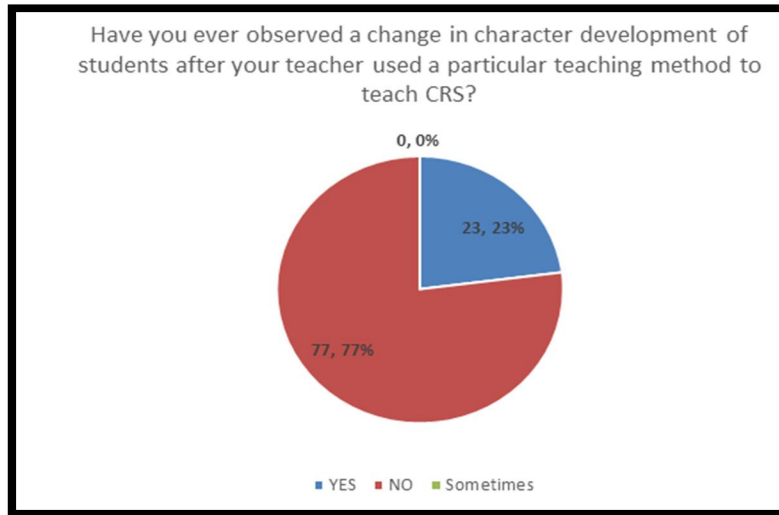


Figure 7: Students' Observation of a Change in Character Development of Students after Their Teacher Used a Particular Teaching Method to Teach Christian Religious Studies

Which teaching method caused the change in the character development of students after your teacher used it?

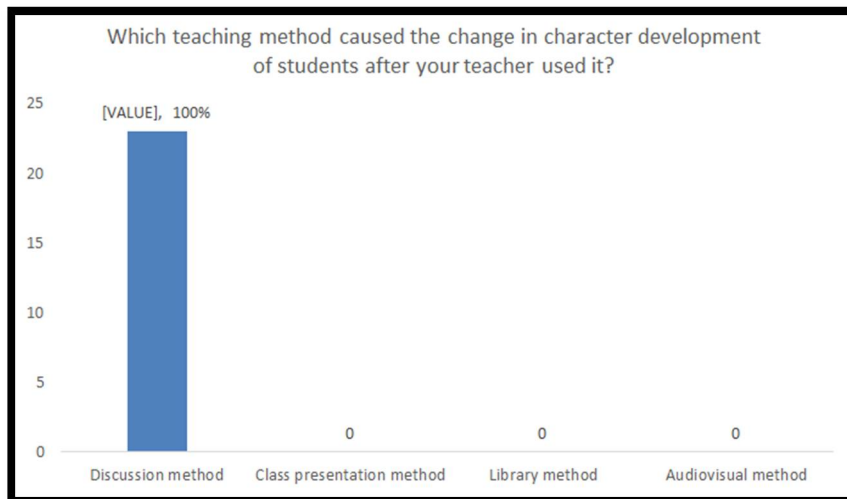


Figure 8: The Teaching Method That Caused a Change in Character Development of Students after Students Observed Their Teacher Used It

Do you support the teaching of CRS in senior high schools because it contributes to students' character development?

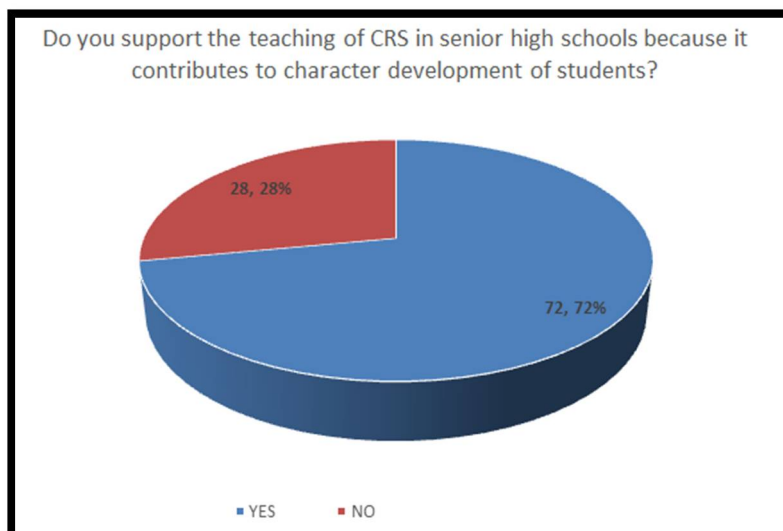


Figure 9: Support for the Teaching of Christian Religious Studies in Senior High Schools

The study showed that 100% of the respondents said that they study Christian Religious Studies.

Also, it was shown that 40% of the respondents said they studied Christian Religious Studies for 3 hours; 36% of them said they studied Christian Religious Studies for 2 hours, and 24% of them said they studied Christian Religious Studies for 1 hour.

Moreover, it found that 31% of the respondents said that the consequences of Saul's disobedience are their favourite Christian Religious Studies topic. On the other hand, 19% of them said that the unwise decisions of Solomon and Rehoboam are their favourite Christian Religious Studies topic. In comparison, 22% of them said that the leadership (Joseph) is their favourite Christian Religious Studies topic, and 28% of them said that the baptism and temptation of Jesus is their favourite Christian Religious Studies topic.

Besides, it came to the fore that 81% of the respondents said that Christian Religious Studies contribute to the character development of students in senior high schools. In comparison, 19% said that they do not think Christian Religious Studies contribute to the character development of students in senior high schools.

In addition, it was revealed that 35.9% of the respondents said that Christian Religious Studies contribute to the character development of students in senior high schools by making students learn positive attitudes and moral values such as humility. Furthermore, 25.9% said that Christian Religious Studies contribute largely to the moral development of young people in schools; 20.9% said that Christian Religious Studies prepare learners to be morally upright, and 17.3% said that Christian Religious Studies enable learners to make informed decisions.

Again, it was established that 82% of the respondents said that the teaching method that their teacher often uses to teach Christian Religious Studies is the discussion method. In contrast, 18% of them said that the teaching method that their teacher often uses to teach Christian Religious Studies is class presentation.

It was as well-found that 77% of the respondents said that they observed a change in the character development of students after their teacher used a particular teaching method to teach Christian Religious Studies. In comparison, 23% of them said that they observed a change in students' character development after they observed their teacher used a particular teaching method to teach Christian Religious Studies.

Next, it came to light that 100% of the respondents said that the teaching method which caused the change in the character development of students after their teacher used it is the discussion method.

Lastly, the study recorded that 72% of the respondents said that they support teaching Christian Religious Studies in senior high schools because it contributes to students' character development. However, 28% of them said that they do not support teaching Christian Religious Studies in senior high schools because it contributes to students' character development.

6. Discussion

First of all, the revelation that 100% of respondents said they study Christian Religious Studies clearly shows that the subjects enjoy huge popularity among students. Consequently, it is safe to suggest the need for a clarion call for the Ministry of Education to provide schools with more teaching-learning materials to facilitate the teaching-learning of the subject. However, it can also be said that the realisation that 100% of respondents said that they study Christian Religious Studies cannot be construed that the subject is, in fact, popular among students. This is because students often study a subject not because they like it but because they have no choice.

Secondly, the score of 40% of respondents that said they study Christian Religious Studies for 3 hours calls for a quick and sober retrospection of the duration allotted to the teaching-learning of the subject in schools. In fact, considering the age of senior high school students coupled with other things such as inadequate textbooks and teaching-learning materials, education experts might suggest enabling teachers to deliver. However, in contrast, students grasp lessons, more than 3 hours should instead be made available for the teaching-learning of Christian Religious Studies.

Further, 31% of respondents said that the consequences of Saul's disobedience are their favourite Christian Religious Studies topic. 19% said that Solomon and Rehoboam's unwise decisions are their favourite Christian Religious Studies topic, which seems to suggest that the students can grasp the morals in Christian Religious Studies lessons and will learn from them. This is because Saul's story teaches us to exercise patience when facing a challenge. In contrast, the stories of Solomon and his son, Rehoboam, enjoins us to control our lust and avoid bad counsel, respectively.

Moreover, the realisation that 81% of respondents said that Christian Religious Studies contribute to the character development of students in senior high schools vindicates those who have always firmly held the view that the study of the subject affects the conduct of students. Consequently, it might provide them with fresh energy to advocate for introducing the subject to other levels of education in Ghana. It also gives credence to Ngussa and Makewa's (2018) position that Christian Religious Education prepares learners to be morally upright, influencing them to fear God and respect their fellow human beings.

In addition, 35.9% of respondents, who said that Christian Religious Studies contributes to the character development of students in senior high schools by making students learn positive attitudes and moral values such as humility, does not only confirm Ilechukwu and Ugwuozor's (2014) assertion that Christian Religious Education instills in students' positive attitudes and moral values such as humility, respect, love, kindness, and spirit of forgiveness, but also Waithira's (2006) contention that teachers' approaches to teaching Christian Religious Education, their personality and accessibility to learners affect moral development of the learners.

Besides, the fact that 82% of respondents, as the majority, said that the teaching method that their teacher often uses to teach Christian Religious Studies is the discussion method that goes to confirms the efficacious of the discussion method in teaching. However, it must be emphasised here that education experts advocate that teachers should use different teaching methods in the classroom to ensure effective teaching. Consequently, if teachers are often found to use

discussion methods to deliver Christian Religious Studies lessons, then relevant education inspectors or monitors must call them to order.

Again, the record of 100% of respondents that said that the teaching method which caused the change in the character development of students after their teacher used it is the discussion method, makes the position of experts that effective teaching is best achieved by blending different teaching approaches in the classroom untenable. So the question is, if the discussion teaching method can cause a change in the character development of students after its use in class, then there is no reason to suggest that its use alone in class is not enough to deliver. On that score, it is safe to conclude that the experts who think one teaching approach alone is not enough to achieve effective teaching-learning should go back to the drawing board.

Finally, a whopping 72% of respondents said that they support the teaching of Christian Religious Studies in senior high schools because it contributes to the character development of students and is a slap in the face of those who want the subject to be scrapped as a course of study in senior high schools. However, take it or leave, it is a significant victory for those who support its study in senior high schools because they believe it affects students' moral compass.

7. Conclusion

The study examined students' perception of the importance of Christian religious studies in character development in senior high schools. It showed that 100% of the respondents said that they study Christian Religious Studies. Moreover, it was found that 40% of the respondents, being the majority, said that they studied Christian Religious Studies for 3 hours, and 24% of them, being the minority, said that they studied Christian Religious Studies for 1 hour.

In addition, it was revealed that 31% of the majority of respondents said that the consequences of Saul's disobedience are their favourite Christian Religious Studies topic. In comparison, 19% of them said that the unwise decision of Solomon and Rehoboam is their favourite Christian Religious Studies topic.

Besides, it came to light that 81% of the respondents said that Christian Religious Studies contribute to the character development of students in senior high schools. However, on the contrary, 19% of them said that they do not think Christian Religious Studies contribute to students' character development in senior high schools.

Again, it was recorded that 35.9% of the respondents, being the majority, said that Christian Religious Studies contribute to the character development of students in senior high schools by making students learn positive attitudes and moral values such as humility. Whereas 17.3% of them, as the minority, said that Christian Religious Studies enables learners to make informed decisions.

Next, the study established that 82% of the respondents, being the majority, said that the teaching method that their teacher often uses to teach Christian Religious Studies is the discussion method, and 18% of them, as the minority, said that the teaching method that their teacher often uses to teach Christian Religious Studies is class presentation.

The study also brought to the fore that 77% of the respondents, the majority, said that they saw a change in the character development of students after their teacher used a particular teaching method to teach Christian Religious Studies. In comparison, 23% of them, being the minority, said that they saw a change in students' character development after they saw their teacher used a particular teaching method to teach Christian Religious Studies.

Moreover, it found that 100% of the respondents said that the teaching method that caused the change in students' character development after their teacher used it was discussion.

Lastly, it was shown that 72% of the respondents, being the majority, said that they support the teaching of Christian Religious Studies in senior high schools because it contributes to the character development of students. In comparison, 28% of them, as the minority, said that they do not support teaching Christian Religious Studies in senior high schools because it contributes to students' character development.

8. Recommendations

- The Ministry of Education (MoE) should provide schools with enough teaching materials to enable teachers to teach Christian Religious Studies to achieve the subject's objectives.
- Teachers must use different teaching methods in the classroom to make all students benefit from the subject.
- Government should pay teachers better salaries to motivate them to deliver.

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