

The Role of Religious and Moral Education on Behaviour Formation of the Basic School Child in Ghana



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ABSTRACT

A rapid decline in moral values and ethics among Ghanaian youth has brought inconclusive debates on how Religious and Moral Education (RME) contributes to students' moral developmental trajectory. This descriptive survey study, therefore, aimed to look into how Religious and Moral Education affected the behaviours of the basic school child. A proportional stratified random sampling technique was employed to select 130 students for this study. Data regarding the status of Religious and Moral Education and students' behaviours were gathered through a structured questionnaire. The data were analysed using the arithmetic mean and Pearson product-moment correlation. It was found that RME inculcates moral values into students as it covers the tenets of all three major religions in Ghana. It was further established that there was a decline in the reported indiscipline behaviours of students. However, there was no significant correlation between the state of RME and behaviour of the basic school child. It was concluded that disciplined behaviours are socially constructed and should be seen from social perspectives rather than the Religious and Moral Education landscape. This study recommended a strong collaboration between RME and Social Studies teachers in instilling moral, ethical and civic values in students. This collaboration is necessary for developing students with empathetic, moral and social learning competencies. This study contributes to Ghanaian moral education discourse by clarifying the limited influence of RME on behavioural formation among basic school learners.

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Publication History

Received: 6th July, 2025

Accepted: 12th November, 2025

Published online:

30th December, 2025

To Cite this Article:

Kumi, Faustina Mantebea, James Divine Danyoh, Anthony Mensah & Phyllis Agyeman Nyarko.

"The Role of Religious and Moral Education on Behaviour Formation of the Basic School Child in Ghana,"

E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences 6, no. 15 (2025): 4414 - 4428, <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.202561516>.

Keywords: Religious and Moral Education, Disciplined Behaviours, Basic School Child

INTRODUCTION

Religious and Moral Education (RME) aims to fulfill Ghana's mission of forming responsible and productive young people by exposing them to suitable material and values.¹ The subject sought to reinforce the moral education that children receive from their households by addressing issues related to morality, religion, and education.² A study by Mensah on students' attitudes towards learning Islam in Ghanaian basic schools found that the RME curriculum is highly inclusive.³ This indicates that the RME

¹ Ministry of Education [MOE], *Religious and Moral Education Syllabus for Basic Schools* (Accra: Paramount Printing Works Ltd., 2003).

² Seth Asare-Danso et al., *Religious and Moral Education for Colleges of Education* (Kumasi: Jerusalem Press, 2014).

³ Anthony Mensah, "Pupils' Attitude Towards the Study of Islam in Ghanaian Basic Schools: A Survey" (University of Cape Coast, 2021).

curriculum in Ghana covers the three major religions. In view of that, Asare-Danso suggested that RME teachers should ensure that students acquire moral values through effective teaching methods in the subject.⁴ This implies that moral values should be instilled into students during the RME instructional period.

Another significant study by Boafo et al. examined the factors influencing teaching and learning of Religious and Moral Education in Ghanaian Junior High Schools, revealing that the implementation of the RME curriculum is challenged by factors such as a lack of textbooks and qualified teachers in the subject area.⁵ Sambu noted that a significant issue within the field of Religious and Moral Education in elementary schools is the inadequate availability of teaching and learning resources.⁶ This means that the availability of teaching and learning resources remains a big challenge in the Ghanaian educational context. Religious and Moral Education may be primarily taught as a theoretical subject in many educational contexts, as opposed to being actively included in the overall development of students' moral and responsible behaviour. This fragmentation could lead to a gap between the concepts taught in the course material and how they are actually applied in terms of students' behaviour.

It has been observed that there is an alarming increase in school indiscipline, particularly at the Junior and Senior High Schools. Buheche examined the factors leading to wastage in both day and boarding schools within Mt. Elgon District, Kenya and concluded that students' tardiness and absenteeism are the main causes of declining academic standards.⁷ In Nigeria, Ige found that cases of tardiness, truancy, disobedience, bullying, stealing, rape, extortion, drug and alcohol addiction are common among secondary school students.⁸ The cases of indiscipline among students are not a new phenomenon in Ghana. Both the print and electronic media provide damning anecdotal publications on the widespread insubordinations in schools. For example, in 2019, the Daily Graphic reported a gruesome murder of a JHS teacher in Asiakwa by six youths.⁹ Another bizarre story was shared in which a third-year senior high school student whipped a junior student with a cutlass for disobeying him. If these teenagers had read RME in the basic school, why couldn't they apply the moral and ethical principles in the senior high schools? This is quite an intriguing phenomenon to behold.

RME as a subject has been one of the pivotal fulcrums of sound moral development. According to Chanda et al., religious education instruction plays a significant role in helping young people who are attending school to develop morality by fostering in them the proper attitudes toward societal responsibilities.¹⁰ Haidir et al. also conducted a study on the impact of Islamic religious education within the family and school environment on students' religious discipline.¹¹ They discovered that a positive and hygienic school environment influences the child's personal discipline.

From the foregoing, it can be observed that various studies established a causal relationship between religious studies and learners' behaviours with different methodologies.¹² Furthermore, many of these studies concentrated on the influence of the Islamic religion on the religious discipline of the youth

⁴ Seth Asare-Danso, "Religious Education in a Democratic State—The Ghanaian Experience," *Religious Education between Formation, Knowledge and Control*, 2012, 59–65.

⁵ Collins Boafo, Adam Konadu, and Charles K Twene, "Factors Affecting Teaching and Learning of Religious and Moral Education (RME) in Ghanaian Junior High Schools: A Case Study of CB Mensah SDA Junior High School," *Journal of Education and Learning Technology* 5, no. 1 (2024): 1–8.

⁶ A. Sambu, "Factors Affecting the Teaching and Learning of Religious Education in Primary Teachers," *International Journal of Science and Research* 8 (2018).

⁷ S. E. Buheche, "Factors Contributing to Wastage in Day and Boarding Schools in Mt. Elgon District, Kenya" (Maseno University, Kenya, 2011).

⁸ C.A. Ige, "Indiscipline in Nigeria: A Plea for Sustainable Disciplinary Measures," *Journal of Educational and Social Research* 3, no. 11 (2013): 233–39.

⁹ N. L. Bentil, "6 Teenagers Remanded over Asiakwa Teacher's Death," *Graphic Online*, 2019, <https://www.graphic.com.gh>.

¹⁰ Thelma Chanda Chansa, Enock Mutepuka, and Edwin Vinandi Phiri, "Impact of Religious Education on Pupil's Behavior: A Case Study of Selected Secondary Schools in Lusaka District, Zambia," *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews* 19, no. 03 (2023): 497–505.

¹¹ Haidir Haidir et al., "The Influence of Islamic Religious Education in Family and School Religious Culture on Students' Religious Discipline," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan* 15, no. 3 (2023): 3914–22.

¹² Haidir et al., "The Influence of Islamic Religious Education in Family and School Religious Culture on Students' Religious Discipline"; Rima Irmayanti, "The Obstacles Experienced by Schools in Shaping Religious and Disciplinary Characters in Senior High School Students," *Indonesian Journal of Character Education Studies* 1, no. 1 (2024): 14–25; R. A. Hakim et al., "Implementation of the Religious Activity Program in Growing the Religious Character of SMPN 1 Jenangan Students," *Journal of Islamic and Social Studies* 3, no. 2 (2022): 121–35.

and among senior secondary school learners.¹³ Besides, the findings of these studies cannot be extended beyond the study settings, predominantly Muslim communities. Therefore, this research used the cross-sectional survey design to systematically examine the role of RME in behaviour formation of the basic school child. Consequently, the study was designed to answer the following posers;

- 1) What is the state of RME within the Nkwatia-Aduamo community?
- 2) What behaviour does the basic school child frequently exhibit in the Nkwatia-Aduamo community?
- 3) What is the relationship between the state of RME and behaviour formation of the basic school child in the Nkwatia-Aduamo community?

LITERATURE REVIEW

State of Religious and Moral Education

The state of Religious and Moral Education (RME) has received global attention due to its perceived impact on the moral development of children.¹⁴ Many indicators have been proposed to measure the state of RME in schools. One of these indicators is the comprehensiveness and inclusivity of the RME curriculum.¹⁵ The RME curriculum in most jurisdictions accommodates cultural and religious diversity. The second indicator is the purpose of the RME curriculum.¹⁶ For instance, Chanda found that RME helps in shaping the character and behaviour of students, suggesting a high level of effectiveness in inculcating values. He further stated that RME enables students to behave in more acceptable ways.¹⁷ Graham highlighted that religious education helps in promoting social cohesion and community engagement through teaching values such as empathy, respect, and tolerance.¹⁸ Similarly, Adekunle posits that RME promotes interfaith dialogue and understanding, suggesting a high level of effectiveness in promoting cultural understanding.¹⁹ Johnson proposed the content-wide perspectives on the state of the RME curriculum.²⁰ According to Johnson, the RME curriculum adopted in the USA includes discussions on moral issues and contemporary issues, suggesting a high level of coverage.²¹ This implies that Religious and Moral Education informs students about moral and social issues, which help them fit into the larger society. Kumar also highlighted that the RME curriculum includes moral and contemporary issues that promote social awareness and responsibility among students.²² When the RME curriculum is enriched, it helps students to develop a deeper understanding of moral principles and their application in society,²³ and it also enriches students' understanding of global ethics and promotes intercultural dialogue. Chanda noted that Islamic topics are taught in RME classes, indicating a high level of inclusion. He further explained that almost all RME teachers in Zambia teach Islamic topics to enhance students' understanding of different faiths in the school setting.²⁴ Hayward emphasizes the importance of teaching about different

¹³ Irmayanti, "The Obstacles Experienced by Schools in Shaping Religious and Disciplinary Characters in Senior High School Students."

¹⁴ H. Tamasoki, "Current Status of Religious and Moral Education of Students," *Journal of Moral Education* 50, no. 22 (2021): 123–38; N. Santoro and P. H. Hinchey, "Moral Education in the Age of Globalization," *Education and Globalization Studies* 24, no. 3 (2012): 45; J. C. Conroy, D. Lundie, and V. Baumfield, "Religious and Moral Education in the Primary School," *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 18, no. 1 (2013): 47–62.; M. W. Ngigi, "Religious and Moral Education: A Case Study of Secondary Schools in Kenya," *University of Nairobi. Journal of Education Studies* 35, no. 4 (2017): 223–37.

¹⁵ T. Nkosi, "Religious and Moral Education in South Africa: A Comprehensive Curriculum," *South African Journal of Education* 39, no. 2 (2019): 123–35; J. Okonkwo, "Religious and Moral Education in Nigeria: Reflecting Cultural and Religious Diversity," *Journal of African Education* 45, no. 3 (2020): 210–25; J. Smith, "Challenges in Learning Religious and Moral Education: Student Perspectives on Content Difficulty," *Journal of Educational Research and Practice* 28, no. 3 (2017): 215–29.

¹⁶ M. Chanda, "The Impact of Religious and Moral Education on Student Character and Behavior," *Journal of Educational Development* 32, no. 3 (2019): 245–59; J. Graham, "Religious Education and Its Impact on Social Cohesion and Community Engagement," *Journal of Educational Research* 54, no. 2 (2017): 123–34.

¹⁷ Chanda, "The Impact of Religious and Moral Education on Student Character and Behavior."

¹⁸ Graham, "Religious Education and Its Impact on Social Cohesion and Community Engagement."

¹⁹ A. Adekunle, "Religious and Moral Education: Promoting Interfaith Dialogue and Cultural Understanding," *International Journal of Education Studies* 45, no. 3 (2017): 211–25.

²⁰ L. Johnson, "The Scope of Religious and Moral Education in the USA: Addressing Moral and Contemporary Issues," *American Journal of Education* 67, no. 4 (2016): 305–20.

²¹ Johnson, "The Scope of Religious and Moral Education in the USA: Addressing Moral and Contemporary Issues."

²² R. Kumar, "The Role of Religious and Moral Education in Promoting Social Awareness and Responsibility," *Journal of Moral Education* 48, no. 2 (2019): 178–92.

²³ Y. Chen, "The Impact of Integrating Contemporary Issues into Religious and Moral Education: Enhancing Students' Understanding of Moral Principles," *Journal of Educational Studies* 52, no. 1 (2020): 67–82.

²⁴ Chanda, "The Impact of Religious and Moral Education on Student Character and Behavior."

religions and worldviews in an unbiased manner.²⁵ This means that teachers who teach RME tend not to be biased when teaching the content of the RME curriculum.

The availability and adequacy of teaching and learning materials (TLMs) also influence the state of RME in schools.²⁶ In Ghana, Baba (2016) identified that the limited availability of essential textbooks, the shortage of furniture and library facilities, and inadequate classrooms are some of the key factors hindering the execution of the RME curriculum. A study conducted by Nkosi highlighted a low availability of textbooks for learning RME in public schools in South Africa due to limited publishing and distribution of resources.²⁷ Dlamini highlighted a low availability of textbooks for learning RME in public schools.²⁸ This means that textbooks which aid in learning RME as a subject are not available. Ekuban concluded that Religious and Moral Education studies are mostly challenged by the unavailability of textbooks. He further stated that the situation has been exacerbated by the fact that most students lack alternative learning materials.²⁹ Similarly, Adu-Agyem and Osei-Opoku observed that inadequate teaching and learning facilities, an overburdened curriculum, a high pupil/teacher ratio, and poor infrastructural facilities impact educational standards.³⁰ According to Adu, the presence of these factors is negatively influencing the learning of the subject matter.³¹ However, Thompson, in a similar study in the USA, found that there is a high availability of textbooks for learning RME in public schools. Thompson's findings, dissenting from the majority, suggest that there is a gap between Western and African educational systems in terms of the provision of resources to support students' learning.³²

The content of RME has been reported to influence the state of RME learning in many studies.³³ According to Smith, learning the RME content has been a significant challenge for most students.³⁴ In assessing students' difficulties in assimilating the content of RME, Brown suggested that teachers who demonstrate fairness during RME lessons and actively listen to students' perspectives, promote open and respectful dialogue in the classroom, tend to promote learning among students.³⁵ Johnson emphasized that RME teachers strive to treat all students equally, regardless of their backgrounds or beliefs, fostering a sense of belonging among the students.³⁶ Hayward emphasizes the importance of teaching about different religions and worldviews in an unbiased manner.³⁷

Finally, while there are enough RME teachers, surprisingly, most of them did not study RME as their elective during their college training nor participated in any workshop or in-service training on the subject.³⁸ Ogoma and Alaiyemola found that teaching of RME is hampered by a shortage of teachers. This poses a setback to teaching moral instructions in basic schools.³⁹ Finally, Lorraine highlights the role of religious education in promoting critical thinking and reflection, encouraging students to question and

²⁵ P. Hayward, "The Importance of Unbiased Education on Different Religions and Worldviews," *Journal of Religious Education* 59, no. 2 (2014): 98–112.

²⁶ Ibrahim Baba, "Analysis of Cause and Effect of Boko Haram Insurgency in North-East Nigeria," *Journal of the Faculty of Graduate Studies*, 2016, 63; T. Ekuban, "Challenges in Teaching Religious and Moral Education in Public Schools," *Journal of Moral Education* 15, no. 1 (2020): 102–18; Nkosi, "Religious and Moral Education in South Africa: A Comprehensive Curriculum."

²⁷ Nkosi, "Religious and Moral Education in South Africa: A Comprehensive Curriculum."

²⁸ P. Dlamini, "Textbook Availability in Religious and Moral Education: A Study in Public Schools," *African Journal of Education* 18, no. 2 (2020): 112–29.

²⁹ Ekuban, "Challenges in Teaching Religious and Moral Education in Public Schools."

³⁰ Joe Adu-Agyem and Patrick Osei-Poku, "Quality Education in Ghana: The Way Forward," *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development* 1, no. 9 (2012): 164–77.

³¹ B. Adu, "Students' Perception of the Difficulty Level of Religious and Moral Education," *African Journal of Education Studies* 34, no. 1 (2016): 45–57.

³² G. Thompson, "Textbook Availability for Religious and Moral Education the USA," *American Journal of Educational Resources* 11, no. 2 (2017): 147–65.

³³ L. Brown, "Promoting Fairness and Dialogue in Religious and Moral Education Classrooms," *International Journal of Educational Research* 65, no. 2 (2020): 178–93; Smith, "Challenges in Learning Religious and Moral Education: Student Perspectives on Content Difficulty."

³⁴ Smith, "Challenges in Learning Religious and Moral Education: Student Perspectives on Content Difficulty."

³⁵ Brown, "Promoting Fairness and Dialogue in Religious and Moral Education Classrooms."

³⁶ Johnson, "The Scope of Religious and Moral Education in the USA: Addressing Moral and Contemporary Issues."

³⁷ Hayward, "The Importance of Unbiased Education on Different Religions and Worldviews."

³⁸ Ekuban, "Challenges in Teaching Religious and Moral Education in Public Schools."

³⁹ A. Ogoma and O. Alaiyemola, "Shortages in Teaching Moral Instructions in Primary and Secondary Schools," *Journal of Educational Challenges* 14, no. 3 (2018): 198–215.

evaluate their beliefs and values.⁴⁰ This means that Religious Education helps students to evaluate their own actions, beliefs and values. These behaviours are reviewed in the next session.

Students' Behaviours in Basic Schools

Disciplined behaviours of individuals are at the heart of every institution in achieving its established goals. It is commonly known that maintaining discipline is necessary to foster a supportive learning environment in schools.⁴¹ Disciplined behaviour is fundamental to effective teaching and learning in classrooms.⁴² This is because academic performance improves in environments with strong discipline.⁴³ According to Whisman and Hammer's study, approximately 29.6% of 160,480 students (from grades 3 to 11) in West Virginia, USA received one or more recommendations for inappropriate behaviours.⁴⁴ Similarly, Umezina and Elendu observed that indiscipline is prevalent among all levels of education in Nigeria, including primary schools.⁴⁵ In Kenya, disciplining students remains a significant challenge for schools.⁴⁶ For instance, a survey by the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) indicated that between 90% and 100% of primary school teachers in Kenya faced disciplinary issues with their students.⁴⁷ Gakure et al. found instances of students' indiscipline behaviours in the primary schools in the Gatanga District in Kenya.⁴⁸ Some of these indisciplined behaviours include sexual harassment, using abusive language, drug trafficking, possessing pornographic materials, etc.⁴⁹

Okoli identified several ways in which students exhibit disciplinary issues, including inappropriate use of cell phones, the urge to engage in exam malpractice, relationships with the opposite or same sex, exposure to social media platforms such as "2go," Facebook, Twitter, and home videos, as well as a desire to have fun.⁵⁰ Olatunji conducted a study on how self-regulation affects the academic performance of primary school students in Nigeria and discovered that students' ability to regulate behaviors could reduce actions leading to regret.⁵¹ Kumar emphasized that students struggle to break bad habits.⁵² This implies that students being able to regulate their own behaviours helps them take actions which lead to regret. However, Mischel found that students are good at resisting temptation due to their ability to use self-control strategies such as distraction and cognitive reframing to delay gratification effectively.⁵³ Campbell argues that teachers serve as moral role models, significantly influencing students' ethical development. This means that the consistency in teachers' behaviour positively influences students.⁵⁴

⁴⁰ A. Lorraine, "The Role of Religious Education in Promoting Critical Thinking and Reflection," *Journal of Religious Education* 62, no. 4 (2018): 301–15.

⁴¹ G. Masitsa, "Discipline and Disciplinary Measures in the Free State Township Schools," *South African Journal of Education* 30, no. 1 (2008): 41–57.

⁴² Amogne Asfaw Eshetu, "Indiscipline Problems of High School Students: The Case of Ethio-Japan Hidassee Secondary School (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)," *Journal of Education and Practice* 5, no. 37 (2014): 23–28.

⁴³ Josephine W Gitome, Michael T Katola, and Bernard Gechiko Nyabwari, "Correlation between Students' Discipline and Performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education," *International Journal of Education and Research* 1, no. 8 (2013): 1–10.

⁴⁴ Andy Whisman and Patricia Cahape Hammer, "The Association between School Discipline and Mathematics Performance: A Case for Positive Discipline Approaches.," *West Virginia Department of Education*, 2014.

⁴⁵ Rose Nwakaego Umezina and Ifeanyi Chukwu Christian Elendu, "Perception of Teachers towards the Use of Punishment in Sancta Maria Primary School Onitsha, Anambra State, Nigeria," *Perception* 3, no. 2 (2012): 49–57.

⁴⁶ P. Njoroge and G. Nyabuto, "Discipline Management and the Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Nyamweya Division, Kisii County, Kenya," *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development* 3, no. 1 (2014): 1–13.

⁴⁷ Kenya National Examination Council ([KNEC], "Monitoring of Learner Achievement at Class 3 in Literacy and Numeracy," 2010, <https://knecc.ac.ke>.

⁴⁸ Roselyn Gakure, Patrick Mukuria, and Peter Paul Kithae, "An Evaluation of Factors That Affect Performance of Primary Schools in Kenya: A Case Study of Gatanga District," *Educational Research and Reviews* 8, no. 13 (2013): 927–37.

⁴⁹ M. O. Ouma, E. W. Simatwa, and T. D.K. Serem, "Management of Pupil Discipline in Kenya: A Case Study of Kisumu Municipality," *Educational Research* 4, no. 5 (2013): 374–86.

⁵⁰ N. Okoli, "Causes of Indiscipline in Nigerian Secondary Schools," *International Journal of Educational Research and Development* 4, no. 1 (2015): 1–10.

⁵¹ S. Olatunji, "Self-Regulation and Academic Performance of Primary School Students in Nigeria," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 107, no. 3 (2015): 633–45.

⁵² Kumar, "The Role of Religious and Moral Education in Promoting Social Awareness and Responsibility."

⁵³ W. Mischel, *The Marshmallow Test: Mastering Self-Control* (Little, Brown and Company, 2014).

⁵⁴ E. Campbell, "The Virtuous Teacher: Moral Education in the Classroom," *Teachers and Teaching* 20, no. 5 (2014): 538–51.

Thornberg and Jungert discovered that students frequently use moral disengagement as a way to rationalize behaviors such as stealing things without permission.⁵⁵ When students display indiscipline, they often skip school, which leads to gaps in their learning. This behavior also reinforces issues like lateness and other undesirable actions, including occult practices and truancy. According to a study conducted by Bucheche, students' tardiness and absenteeism are the main causes of declining academic standards.⁵⁶ Ige observed that current secondary schools are increasingly characterized by acts of indiscipline, including lateness, truancy, disrespect towards teachers, physical abuse of younger students, theft, sexual assault, extorting money from younger pupils, and wearing inappropriate or mismatched clothing other than the school uniform, drug and alcohol addiction among students.⁵⁷

Duckworth and Seligman assert that the foundation of effective discipline in schools depends on students recognising and respecting teachers' authority to guide their behaviour and learning.⁵⁸ In a classroom with thirty or more students, productive learning cannot occur unless someone has the authority to oversee, organize, and direct activities in a manner that is suitable, timely, and appropriate. The respect and esteem that educators are often accorded in society, especially that which is extended to them by parents and other influential figures, as well as their position in the profession, account for a large portion of their authority as educators. They additionally emphasized that to maintain effective managerial control, students' behavior must be governed by the school's rules and regulations. These rules can be explicitly communicated by teachers or might simply be inferred from students' actions. Therefore, it is essential for all schools to establish a code of conduct and ensure its proper enforcement.

Relationship between Religious and Moral Education and Students' Behaviour

Religious and Moral Education (RME) plays a crucial role in developing students' moral reasoning. Anti and Anum state that someone who receives RME training is better able to make moral decisions.⁵⁹ This implies that when students are taken through RME, they will be able to make sound and moral judgments about their own actions. Sulaiman et al. investigated how ethical sensitivity affects ethical decision-making, with religion serving as a moderating factor.⁶⁰ Their findings indicate that both ethical sensitivity and religiosity significantly impact ethical decision-making, and they noted that religion acts as a moderator in the relationship between moral sensitivity and ethical choices.

Elsayed carried out a study to examine how self-religiosity and the religious attitudes of fathers influence the moral codes of young people in both religious and non-religious institutions.⁶¹ This study produced some compelling outcomes. First, the study found strong correlations between self-religiosity and moral behavior, as well as between self-religiosity and the fathers' religious attitudes. Secondly, there were significant differences in the reported moral behaviour, self-religiosity, and fathers' religious attitudes between students in religious and non-religious schools. The results suggest a pathway-based relationship among the variables, indicating that religiosity and religious education positively influenced the moral behavior of young people.

Githaiga et al. explored how Christian Religious Education contributes to the development of moral reasoning among public secondary school students in Nakuru County, Kenya. The results showed that students' moral reasoning skills were generally average. Additionally, while there was no notable difference based on the school's location, the study found a statistically significant gender difference in moral reasoning, with females exhibiting higher levels than males.⁶² Another moral value that is taught in schools is responsibility. In addition to receiving strong theological and moral guidance in the classroom,

⁵⁵ Robert Thornberg and Tomas Jungert, "Bystander Behavior in Bullying Situations: Basic Moral Sensitivity, Moral Disengagement and Defender Self-Efficacy," *Journal of Adolescence* 36, no. 3 (2013): 475–83.

⁵⁶ Bucheche, "Factors Contributing to Wastage in Day and Boarding Schools in Mt. Elgon District, Kenya."

⁵⁷ Ige, "Indiscipline in Nigeria: A Plea for Sustainable Disciplinary Measures."

⁵⁸ Angela Lee Duckworth and Martin E P Seligman, "Self-Discipline Gives Girls the Edge: Gender in Self-Discipline, Grades, and Achievement Test Scores.," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 98, no. 1 (2006): 198.

⁵⁹ K. K. Anti and E. B. Anum, "Religious and Moral Education for Diploma in Basic Education Programme" (University of Cape Coast Centre for Continuing Education, 2003).

⁶⁰ R., Sulaiman et al., "The Role of Religiosity in Ethical Decision-Making: A Study of Islam and the Malaysian Workplace," *Journal of Business Ethics* 179, no. 1 (2022): 297–313.

⁶¹ D. Elsayed, "Religiosity and Adjustment in Muslim Minority Youth in Canada" (University of Guelph, Canada, 2022).

⁶² Pauline Wanjiru Githaiga, Joseph Mworai Wamutitu, and Lydia Nkatha Kinuthia, "Enhancement of Secondary Schools Students' Moral Reasoning through the Christian Religious Education Curriculum in Nakuru County, Kenya," 2018.

students who study RME benefit from assistance in fulfilling their obligations to the community. In this sense, a responsible person is one who carries out his or her duties assigned to him or her diligently. According to Okonkwo, the educational system does, in fact, have a moral ethos that is expressed in relationships, extracurricular activities, dress standards, honor codes, rules, incentives and punishments, as well as in the manner in which students and instructors are treated with respect.⁶³ Children learn in school what is typical, what is expected of them and what is right and wrong. To encourage morality in schools, school administrators recognize, praise and congratulate students who are conscientious, diligent, honest, kind, tidy and well-groomed. Moral education in schools always improves internal productivity and promotes proper behaviour that calls for dedication. In addition, a child must be morally sound in order to be disciplined. From this, it can be inferred that moral education promotes students' ability to make correct decisions and to differentiate between right and wrong.

In a study conducted by Chanda in some selected secondary schools within Lusaka District, Zambia, on the influence of Religious Education on students' behaviour, it was found that values and practices foster academic progress.⁶⁴ The study also highlighted that Religious Education plays a vital role in cultivating moral integrity among learners, encouraging them to fear God and show respect for others. Furthermore, it was noted that teaching Religious Education is an essential element that helps school-aged youth develop morality by instilling positive attitudes towards social responsibilities and obligations within the community. Similarly, research by Tabroni and Miftahur examining the impact of Islamic religious education on students' behavior at SMPIT Kharisma Darussalam Jomin Timur Kotabaru and Karawang concluded that Islamic religious education can positively influence students' morals when incorporated into their daily routines, especially through habitual practices, teacher exemplification, and reinforcement in boarding schools, leading to improved moral conduct.⁶⁵ By uncovering the relationship between the state of RME and students' discipline in studies outside the Nkwatia-Aduamo community, this study is worth considering. The outcome of this study offers evidence-based recommendations for promoting a more cohesive and effective approach to religious and moral education's influence on student discipline, thereby addressing the existing gap between pedagogical intentions and practical outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive cross-sectional survey design to collect extensive data from a larger population but with diverse characteristics at a particular time. The variables were not manipulated in the course of data collection, as the phenomenon under consideration already existed. Furthermore, unlike experimental This study was not designed to establish the cause-and-effect relationship as we have in the case of experimental research. Therefore, merely presented the prevailing conditions in terms of the perception of the state of RME and students' moral behaviours among the sampled population. This type of research design gives a more meaningful and accurate picture of events and seeks to explain people's views and behaviour based on data gathered at a particular time. Additionally, this research design helped to collect data, analyse and draw relationships between variables. The descriptive survey allowed the use of a questionnaire for the systematic collection of data, ensuring that the information gathered is both comprehensive and consistent. It also enhanced the generalizability of the results, as the study employed probability sampling techniques.

Population

The study targeted 193 Junior High School students in four public basic schools within the Nkwatia-Aduamo community. The primary language spoken by students within the Nkwatia-Aduamo community is Akan (Twi), while English is the medium of instruction at the public basic schools. The majority of the students are Christians with a mix of denominations.

⁶³ Okonkwo, "Religious and Moral Education in Nigeria: Reflecting Cultural and Religious Diversity."

⁶⁴ Chansa, Muteputa, and Phiri, "Impact of Religious Education on Pupil's Behavior: A Case Study of Selected Secondary Schools in Lusaka District, Zambia."

⁶⁵ Imam Tabroni and Akbar Miftahur Romdhon, "The Influence of Islamic Religious Education on the Student's Conduct," *J. Multidisiplin Madani* 2, no. 2 (2022): 787–94.

Sampling Procedures

With an error margin of 5% and a confidence interval of 95%, a total of 130 students constituted the sample. Taro Yamane's formula was used to estimate an acceptable sample size.⁶⁶ The respondents were selected through proportional stratified random sampling, which involved dividing the population into distinct groups based on relevant key characteristics. This method ensured that each subgroup was adequately represented in the sample in proportion to its size within the total population. Within each stratum, participants were chosen randomly to reduce selection bias and provide each individual an equal chance of inclusion. A simple random, specifically, without replacement, lottery method was used to select respondents. A sample frame was developed for all the schools using the class registers obtained from lead mentors. The gender distribution was approximately 51% female and 49% male. Regarding age, about 61.3% of the participants were between 11 and 14 years old. Finally, the majority of the respondents (54.6%) were in Basic 9.

Instrumentation

In this study, a structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions was employed for data collection. The questionnaire was designed to gather data in a standardized way, which ensured consistency across respondents. The close-ended questions directed respondents towards specific answers, which reduced ambiguity and the potential for misunderstanding. This approach facilitated gathering data from a larger sample, allowing for the statistical analysis of quantitative data to draw statistical inferences. This approach facilitated gathering data from a larger sample, allowing for the statistical analysis of quantitative data to draw statistical inferences. The questionnaire was segmented into two sections, with Section 'A' collecting responses on the State of Religious and Moral Education (SRME) with 10 items and Section 'B' focused on Students' Behaviours (SB) with 10 items. The items were subjected to content validity. Experts in both Religious Studies, Educational Psychology, and Counselling Psychology reviewed the questionnaire items for relevance and accuracy in representing the domain being assessed. To assess reliability, Cronbach's alpha was employed to assess the internal reliability of the items. The reliability of the instrument was estimated using Cronbach's alpha. The outcome of the reliability co-efficient was 0.832. According to Taber, Cronbach alpha values of .70 or higher are considered adequate, with no cases of excessive item redundancy.⁶⁷ Using the Statistical Product for Service Solutions (SPSS, v.23), the researchers utilized mean and standard deviation to address research questions 1 and 2. Research question 3 was answered using Pearson product-moment correlation.

Ethical Considerations

The study did not contain the collection of sensitive information. However, as it involves human subjects, the respondents were debriefed on the purpose and data response sessions. Informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and the respondents' rights and privileges were discussed prior to the data collection.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The state of RME in Nkwatia-Aduamoia Basic Schools

The estimated mean of means = 1.958 was computed to analyse the state of RME descriptively in the study area. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of the State of Religious and Moral Education

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
The subject covers the three major religions	1.400	.551
Inculcates values and attitudes in me	1.469	.600
The subject covers both moral and contemporary issues	1.515	.638
There are textbooks available for learning the subject	2.669	1.067
Instructional materials are available for RME lessons	2.654	1.001

⁶⁶ T. Yamane, *Statistics: An Introductory Analysis*, 2nd ed. (Harper & Row Publishers, 1967).

⁶⁷ Keith S Taber, "The Use of Cronbach's Alpha When Developing and Reporting Research Instruments in Science Education," *Research in Science Education* 48, no. 6 (2018): 1273–96.

The teacher creates a conducive learning environment	1.708	.811
Teachers exhibit content knowledge during instruction	1.685	.778
The teacher teaches all topics that need to be covered	1.815	1.033
The teacher shows good morals during and after lessons	1.323	.560
The teacher gives feedback after marking the assigned exercises	2.285	1.170

From Table 1, the respondents acknowledged that the RME curriculum covers the three major religions in Ghana ($M = 1.400$, $SD = .551$). The respondents also indicated that the subject inculcates values and attitudes in them ($M = 1.469$, $SD = .600$). However, the respondents did not find the study of RME as difficult ($M = 3.108$, $SD = .982$). Finally, the respondents reported that RME textbooks for learning the subject are lacking ($M = 2.669$, $SD = 1.067$). The findings revealed that the subject matter covers the three major religions in Ghana. This agrees with the findings of Mensah, who revealed that the RME curriculum includes topics from Christianity, Islam and African Traditional religion, indicating a high inclusivity.⁶⁸ This is because the curriculum content covers teachings on Christianity, Islam and African Traditional religion. The findings show that inclusive religious education is of high benefit in its implementation. Again, it was revealed that the subject inculcates morals and values among students.

The findings agree with Asare-Danso, who suggested that RME teachers should ensure that students acquire moral values through effective teaching methods in the subject.⁶⁹ This is because moral values are instilled into students during the RME instructional period. This highlights the impact of RME in fostering moral and ethical behaviours. It was discovered that students do not find the subject matter difficult despite the non-availability of teaching and learning resources for the subject. These findings are in support of Sambu, who noted that a significant issue within the field of Religious and Moral Education in elementary schools is the inadequate availability of teaching and learning resources.⁷⁰ This is because the teaching strategies employed by RME teachers make the subject matter easy for students to learn, although the availability of textbooks and teaching resources is very low. This highlights how effective teaching practices in RME specifically address resource limitations. The implication is that the effectiveness of RME in this context demonstrates the importance of a well-rounded education that includes exposure to diverse religious perspectives, emphasizes moral and ethical development, and promotes social harmony. This suggests that RME is a critical component of the educational system, contributing not only to the intellectual and spiritual growth of students but also to the overall well-being and stability of the community.

Moral Behaviours of Students

The results on students' moral behaviours are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Analysis of Students' Behaviours

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
I find it difficult to give up bad habits	2.246	.611
I turn to make inappropriate remarks	2.300	.593
Sometimes, enjoyment and entertainment prevent me from completing my tasks	1.823	.628
I engage in activities that feel good at the time, but later regret	2.092	.640
I struggle to stop myself from doing something, even if I know it is wrong	2.208	.679
I often act impulsively without considering all possible options	2.300	.631
I give excuses for not performing my duties	2.408	.643
I threaten and bully my juniors and younger siblings	2.623	.588
I become angry when I am corrected for doing something wrong	2.369	.624
I take people's things without permission	2.592	.679

⁶⁸ A. Mensah, "Religious Misconceptions and Stereotypes in Urban Ghana: Challenges for Christian-Muslim Relations," *Journal of African Studies* 45, no. 3 (2021): 89–102.

⁶⁹ Asare-Danso, "Religious Education in a Democratic State—The Ghanaian Experience."

⁷⁰ Sambu, "Factors Affecting the Teaching and Learning of Religious Education in Primary Teachers."

As shown in Table 2, the students report that they don't give excuses in performing their duties (M = 2.408, SD = .643), threaten and bully juniors and younger siblings (M = 2.623, SD = .587), absent themselves from school without permission (M = 2.554, SD = .671), become angry when corrected for doing something wrong (M = 2.369, SD = .624) and take people's things without permission (M = 2.592, SD = .679). From research question 2, it was revealed that students exhibit behaviours related to discipline. Notably, the students say they don't offer explanations for why they can't complete their assignments, that they intimidate and harass younger siblings and juniors, that they skip school without permission, and that they steal goods from other people without consent. These findings run counter to Bucheche's findings, which highlighted that students' tardiness and absenteeism are the main causes of declining academic standards.⁷¹ This suggests a positive learning environment and high levels of student involvement. This highlights how important it is to comprehend the elements that lead to high levels of student participation and attendance. The fact that students reported less on undesirable behaviours indicates a positive trend in students' conduct. This implies that students are likely to internalize and exhibit positive behaviours in their daily interactions and responsibilities.

Relationship between the state of RME and students' behaviour

The Pearson Correlation test result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlation between SRME and SMB

	Students' Behaviour	
State of RME	Pearson Correlation	-.129
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.143
	N	130

As shown in Table 3, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated to examine the relationship between the level of Religious and Moral Education (SRME) and students' behaviour (SB). The results indicate a weak, negative correlation between the two variables ($r = -0.129$, $N = 130$). However, this relationship was not statistically significant ($p = 0.143$). Based on these findings, there is no evidence of a meaningful statistical relationship between the state of Religious and Moral Education and students' behaviour. These results contradict Chanda, who concluded that religious education plays a crucial role in helping school-aged children develop morality by fostering appropriate attitudes towards social duty and responsibility.⁷² This is due to the fact that RME alone does not have the same impact on students' discipline as other factors, including parental participation, peer pressure, and involvement in extracurricular activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Religious and Moral Education teachers continue to encourage students to recognize the significance of the diverse religious content of RME lessons, irrespective of their religious backgrounds. Also, the Ghana Education Service in the Kwahu-East District should provide public basic schools with adequate textbooks and other teaching and learning resources for effective teaching and learning of RME in public basic schools. Teachers should attend behaviour modeling courses hosted by the GES Human Resource Division. Among the advantages of such a program are techniques for dealing with disruptive and unwanted students' behaviour, as well as measures to curb them

CONCLUSION

RME provides students with a foundation of principles and teachings that guide their behaviour, decision-making and interaction with others, promoting social harmony, empathy and tolerance. Through religious and moral education, learners acquire the qualities of kindness, respect, and empathy that empower them to interact with others with kindness and empathy. The state of Religious and Moral Education in the Nkwatia-Aduamo community is average good in spite of the insufficient teaching and learning resources.

⁷¹ Bucheche, "Factors Contributing to Wastage in Day and Boarding Schools in Mt. Elgon District, Kenya."

⁷² Chansa, Mutepuka, and Phiri, "Impact of Religious Education on Pupil's Behavior: A Case Study of Selected Secondary Schools in Lusaka District, Zambia."

Students' exposure to all three forms of religion, among others, contributed to this revelation.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding the preparation of this manuscript.

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