

The Attitudes of Junior High School Pupils' Towards the Teaching and Learning of Religious and Moral Education

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Abstract: The study examined the attitude of JHS pupils toward the teaching and learning of Religious and Moral Education (RME) in the Assin Foso township in the Assin North Municipality. The quota, multi-stage and purposive sampling techniques were used in selecting 244 respondents from six Junior High schools (JHS). Data was collected through questionnaires. The instrument used for gathering data was questionnaire. The study revealed that schools cannot provide comprehensive education without RME, learning of RME prevents conflicts with teachers, parents, and others students, pupil should be made to study RME and many others. The study concluded that the students generally maintained a positive attitude towards RME. This was based on the fact that most of the students supported the teaching of RME in the schools, and were also in support of the fact that RME would help them to make good decisions about their lives. Similarly, the respondents generally had the attitude that RME was not destructive and was applicable to all religious beliefs.

Keywords: Attitudes, Teaching and Learning, Religious and Moral Education, Junior High School.

1. INTRODUCTION

There is a global outcry of the ascendancy of moral decadence in all spheres of life including high profile people like politicians, security services, judiciary, civil servants and the clergy. The youth and the unemployed are usually at the base in the media. This moral decadence has engulfed the world so much so that it is hampering national developments. Moral decadence in the form of selfish materialism driven by aggrandizement, implicit drug and alcohol abuse, unrestrained sexual appetites, self-centeredness, nepotism, terrorism, ritual murders, cyber frauds, corruption in all forms, violence, gross indiscipline among the youth such as hooliganism, arrogance, truancy, examination malpractices, vandalism and many more. These bad behaviours degrade the individual and bring harm to families, friends, neighbours, the country and the world as a whole. For instance, Park (1993) asserts that, the rapid social changes accompanied by economic development produce unpredicted value crises among Koreans. A “me – first” philosophy arose and materialism greatly increased. Egoism (selfishness, self-centeredness, and insensitivity), nepotism, and regionalism became frequent justification for breaking moral rules. Crime, drugs and violence in the quest for excessive money increased rapidly. Koreans began to realize that as they become affluent, they became impoverished in the moral and spiritual aspect of life. This situation is not different from what is pertaining in Ghana today. This has necessitated global call to fight this menace, because it has been realised that there is the need for a renewed emphasis on developing in every individual an inner guide, an ethical vision or, as Barcena, Gil, Jorer (1993 P.14) assert “a moral compasses” this will position the individual in a better frame of mind to make sound moral judgment and to withstand the storm of moral decadence, which has engulfed the world. Taking into consideration the extent to which democratic countries will require the vigorous, enlightened and principled participation of their citizenry in national development. Collaborative and collective reflection is seen to be an effective tool to battle out these menaces. This is affirmed by Howe (1996) when he said that these and

other trends cry for collective reflection on the necessity of and the means for the promotion of moral development on a global scale. Again, Hansen 1995 supports this assertion by stating that, many have called recently for adoption of a global ethics, a universal moral vision appropriate for the new age of human interdependency. Many people are suggesting ways to fight this social canker that is degrading our social and moral fabric, for instance, Churchill (2000) commends two approaches which he sees as key in resolving these controversies and to promote moral behaviour. The first, which is the traditional approach, lies in the formulation of a code of conduct in which “rules” are given to individuals and “enforced” by various authorities (such as the police or the priest). The second approach to moral development lies in a direction that seeks to empower individuals to develop their own moral conscience, such that they will make the right decisions and follow the right way of life, even at the sacrifice of their immediate interest. Sadly, according to Nash (1993) despite the good intentions of the authoritarian approach, it has often failed utterly, as when the so-called “civilized” societies engage in genocide. Hansen (1995) thinks that it is this second approach, which needs to be examined and pursued in any course of action to promote moral education because this approach upholds the inherent dignity of all individuals and indeed recognizes their intrinsic worth and capacity, of the oneness of humanity. Campbell (1997) posits that the principle of oneness must become the foundation of all ethics because there are common moral principles that have been in the past and will continue to become important elements in any programme of moral education. The world religions are also doing their best to help in fighting these destructive values. This assertion is confirmed by Rossiter (1995) for arguing that all the worlds’ religions have sought not only to define what is good and what is bad, but also to develop the inner faculty that can hold the individual to perceive and apply such ethics in difficult situations. The moral teachings of religions, also offer the basic framework for moral development once people look beyond the difference in religious rituals, cultural practices or theological dogma that have blinded so

many people to the inherent oneness of religious truth. Even though, religion and other authorities are doing their best to help fight this social canker, a number of research findings tend to suggest that a moral crises situation, moral education could be employed to stem the tide. Many citizens in the United States (US), including educators and researchers concerned with education for democratic citizenship, are called for effective moral education of the youth when they were facing moral crises (Hoge, 1996). . The National Council of Churches in America (2002) in a five-year analysis of religious values in public education concludes “the public should recognise the function of religions in American life and maintain a climate friendly to religious education” (p.14). Again, Koreans in their moral crises saw that moral education is an essential tool to fight the immoral battle. Park & Chu (1996) maintain that research findings opened the eyes of the Koreans to realize that moral education is the core of every educational enterprise. The above statement is supported by (Bennet 1993, Kilpatrick, 1992) who have proposed moral education as remedy to moral decay among American youth. Hoge (1996) posits that a great and continuing purpose of education has been the development of moral and spiritual values. Hansen (1995), on the contrary, maintains that “moral values are caught not taught” (p.124). This stems from the fact that they take shape not through percept, but rather through the uncountable ordinary and informal contacts people have with other people in the environment such as home, the school and the community. Sidney (2004) also shares a similar view with the assertion that morality cannot be taught through the single subject approach because, “moral education is a lifelong process hence, it takes place everywhere and throughout a person’s life” (p.16). he further contends that moral education was not taught as a single subject in African setting rather, members, of the immediate and extended family, peer groups and the adults in the community taught the child the values of godliness, truthfulness, cleanliness, chastity, respect for humanity and human dignity, mutual aid and hospitality, respect for elders and legitimate authority in an eclectic (diverse) ways. Ellwood (1998) asserts that RE cannot be a tool for resolving moral crises). However, Campau (1998) maintains that the single-subject approach is the most excellent way of inculcating values in young people. This stems the fact that even though values permeate the curriculum of schools and are inculcated when teachers teach history, the sciences, the language arts, Mathematics as well as every curricular and hidden- curricular endeavour that schools nurture and promote; the paradox is that most of the time those values are hidden or overlooked or ignored. Rossiter (1995) argues that any religious education that does not take the spirituality and morality of the young who are automatically accustomed to a “global village culture”, which influences their lives into account “risk irrelevance and ineffectiveness” (p. 44). In Ghana, RME has been introduced at almost all the level of education as one of the media for fighting moral decadence in the society as well as providing answers to some problems of life which transcends human understanding. This is based on the aims of RME. Ghana Education Service for these reasons, Ghana has given priority attention to RME which is seen as a tool for re-engineering the moral fabric of the society in the past years. The aims are: to help pupils to develop an understanding and tolerate other people’s faith: to help pupils to understand the difference between good and bad behaviours: to help

pupils to become good and useful citizens of this country, capable of maintaining peace and understanding and to develop in pupils an awareness of their creator and the purpose of their very existence. Again the subject reinforces the religious and moral training the young acquire at home. However, it is unfortunate that some homes are not able to provide this type of training adequately, and therefore it becomes the responsibility of the school to do so in order to fill a need without which the young may not grow up into religious and moral responsible person. (GES, CRDD, 2000). In 1994, the Education Commission which was requested by the then Minister for Education to study and report on the state of moral and ethical behaviour in the country’s educational institutions agreed that the home has largely abandoned the fundamental role it has to play in the provision of religious and moral training for children. The commission observed that most of the problems of students’ indiscipline and general misdemeanour start from home. It added further that “it was now time to establish a closer relationship between parents and the school to provide the right kind of linkage for the moral and spiritual growth of the child (The Commission on Education In Moral and Ethics, 1994). Survey results provided by Chu (1996) on teacher perception of and attitude to religious education strongly underline the need for RE in schools because it will reduce tribalism, ethnic conflicts, nepotism and avarice that have become widespread in the social fabric and the body politic of many countries of the world. However, some discouraging comments from some students and teachers such “Am I going to preach after learning RME? Also, government’s action divergent to the current Professor Anamoah Mensah’s Education Reform Committee 2007’s recommendation and removed RME from the basic school curriculum has brought mix-feeling about the subject. The committee was mandated to overhaul education to reflect current situation due to the public outcry that the basic schools were overburdened with many subjects, therefore there was the need to reduce. This assertion was vehemently opposed by the Christian Council of Ghana and the Catholic Bishops Conference. The government responded by re-instating the subject but made it non-examinable (not examined externally) which did not go down well with the religious bodies and are still pressing for RME to be made examinable as it used to be (Daily Graphic, November 2007). These ups and downs handling of the subject which supports the above contention of Sidney (2004) has even worsened the case. It has put students who want to take the subject as their elective course in the state of clamour even though the subject has been re-introduced in the school curriculum. In spite of the fundamental role of RME in promoting and shaping the religious and moral lives of pupils, experience has shown that RME is a dull subject taught at Fosu College due to certain problems such as, the problem in textbooks and teaching methods are hampering the realization of the goals of RME. Dewey (1936) confirms this by saying that the disharmony between textbooks and student’s life experience creates problem with motivation and transfer of learning. RME is continuously criticised because stories or examples in textbooks are often irrelevant, overly (excessively exceedingly, very) abstract, and dull to students’ life experiences. It is an undisputable fact that perception and attitude are important concepts which encroach on human behaviour. Perception as a concept refers to designate inferred disposition, belief and opinion attributed to an individual, according to his or her thoughts,

feelings and perhaps action tendencies which are organised with respect to a psychological object (Flavel, 1963). Flavel further stressed that, perception is one of the basis upon which a person's attitude towards something is formed. Attitudes generally means how one feels and behaves towards things, situations or people. It strongly affects how people perceive and respond to other people, events and ideas. It is a key to success. Attitudes do not show a one-to-one association with real behaviour because behaviour is complex and is determined by a number of factors which attitude is just one (Otchey, 2000). Again, Bennett and Simon (1991) maintain that a person's attitude has much to do with his ability to perform. Unfavourable attitude usually causes one to react aggressively or become evasive, whereas, a favourable attitude will cause a seeking behaviour. Kundu and Tutoo (1988) posit that the performance of people will probably not represent the best unless they have the right attitude towards what they do. Hilgard (1983) contends that people are likely not to put forth their best effort when they act half-heartedly. However, when they act with the whole heart, the force of habit and their emotions pull them. The underlying principle for the introduction of RME in the basic schools in Ghana will not be achieved if the attitudes of students towards the subject are not favourable. There is therefore, the need to examine students' attitudes towards RME programme at the Junior High School (JHS 3) in the Assin Fosu Municipality. The purpose of the study is to examine the attitudes of JHS pupils towards the study of RME. Specifically, the study is to examine the attitudes of JHS pupils towards the study of RME in Assin Fosu township.

2. METHOD

The design for the study was a descriptive cross-section survey design. Precisely, the descriptive survey design was employed in reporting attitudes of JHS pupils towards the study of RME. It was appropriate for determining and reporting opinions and views held by respondents relating to attitudes of JHS students towards the learning teaching of RME (Best & Khan, 1993 cited in Amedahe, 2002). The study population will include RME teachers, and JHS 3 students at Assin Fosu the capital of Assin North Municipality of Central Region. The total population for the study area is 606. Krejcie and Morgan (as cited in Sarantakos, 2005) suggest that for a population of about 606, a sample size of 244 is adequate and representative. Though the required sample size was 244, the actual sample size used was 155 made up of 150 JHS students and five JHS teachers representing 63.5 percent of the required sample size. The instrument used for gathering data was the questionnaire. The instrument was chosen because it is appropriate for surveys. They ensure greater anonymity and is less prone to researcher's prejudice. Questionnaire also offer a considerable and objective view on an issue because it allows respondents to consult their records and that many subjects would wish to write rather than to talk about certain issues (Sarantakos, 2005). The instruments involve both open and close ended questions to enable respondents choose from predetermined set of responses and as well respond to questions at their liberty to present detailed information that might not be captured in the predetermined choices. Data collected were analysed primarily using descriptive statistics.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

The study examined the demographic characteristics of the respondents, with regards to their sex, age, Form and religious affiliation. These variables were studied in order to provide the context within which the study was conducted, in order to allow for replication of the study and any comparison of the results to similar studies. The variables, which were captured under the demographic characteristics of the respondents, were also important for differentiating between responses, since aggregated responses may exclude some pertinent isolated concerns. The sex and ages of the respondents were first examined, as shown in Figure 1. It was found that, there were 79 male students, comprising 52.7 percent of the respondents and 71 female students, who formed 47.3 percent of the respondents. The difference in the proportion of males and females may be explained by the fact that, generally, in Ghana, the number of males in formal educational institutions tends to surpass the number of females (source). Thus, the findings were only a confirmation of the general male-female disparity in the formal educational system in Ghana (Figure 1).

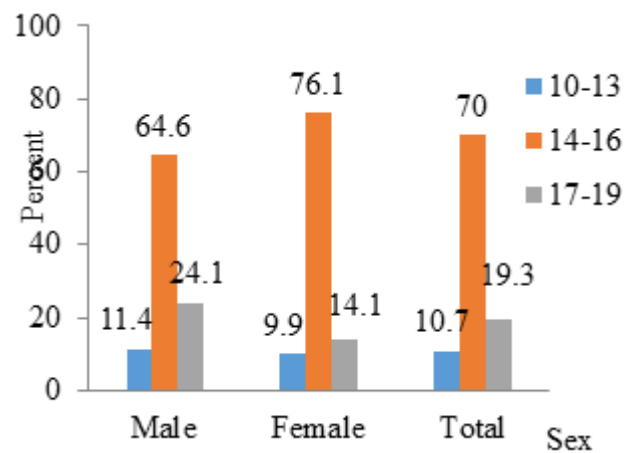


Figure 1: Sex of respondents by age

The study also found that most (70%) of the respondents were aged from 14 to 16 years. The disaggregated responses indicated that the majority of male (64.6%) and female (76.1%) respondents were within the age group of 14 to 16 years. Thus, it was found that, generally, most of the males and females were about the same age. This can be explained by the fact that, all the respondents were sampled from junior high schools and it was highly likely that the respondents would be of similar ages. Figure 2 represents the Form of the respondents by their sex. It was found that most (64.7%) of the respondents were in Form 2. This was also the case for the majority of the male (60.8%) and female (69%) students. In further examination, it was noted that a greater percentage of the males (24.1%) were in Form 3, in comparison to the percentage of females (9.9%) that were in Form 3.

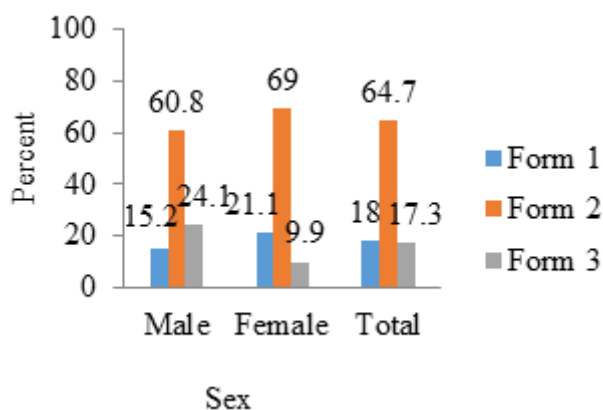


Figure 2: Form of respondents by sex

The religious affiliation of the respondents was also examined because, according to Anti and Anum (2003), individual religious beliefs have specific influence on the attitude towards other religions. Figure 3 represents the religious affiliation of the respondents based on their sex. In the classroom situation, conflicting religious beliefs may pose problems of understanding of religious education. In this study, 85.3 percent of the respondents were Christians, where as 14.7 percent were Moslems. In the disaggregated results, it was found that most of the male and female students were affiliated to the Christian religion.

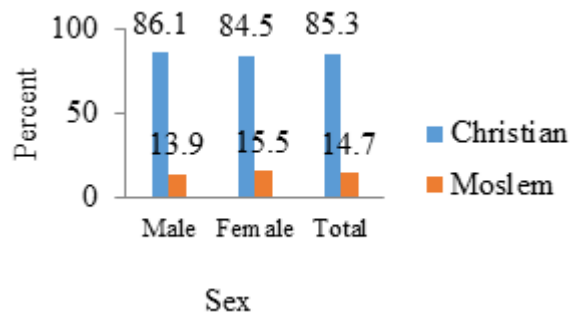


Figure 3: The religious affiliation of respondents by sex

According to the Ghana Statistical Service (2005), the most prominent religion in Ghana is Christianity. Therefore, the fact that an overwhelming majority of the respondents were affiliated with the Christian faith only confirms that Christianity dominates all other religions in the country. The title of the paper is centered 17.8 mm (0.67") below the top of the page in 24 point font. Right below the title (separated by single line spacing) are the names of the authors. The font size for the authors is 11pt. Author affiliations shall be in 9 pt.

3.2 Attitude of JHS pupils towards the study of RME

Table 1 represents the attitude of students in respect of RME as part of the educational system in junior high schools.

Table 1: Students' Views on Schools not Being Able to Provide Good Education without RME

Response	Sex		Form				Total f(%)
	Male f(%)	Female f(%)	One f(%)	Two f(%)	Three f(%)		
Strongly disagree	5(6.4)	5(7.2)	0(0.0)	8(8.3)	2(8.0)	10(6.8)	
Disagree	9(11.5)	4(5.8)	4(15.4)	6(6.3)	3(12.0)	13(8.8)	
Agree	24(30.8)	30(43.5)	12(46.2)	32(33.3)	10(40.0)	54(36.7)	
Strongly agree	40(51.3)	30(43.5)	10(38.5)	50(52.1)	10(40.0)	70(47.6)	
Total	100(100.0)	69(100.)	26(100.)	96(100.)	25(100.)	1478*(100.0)	

It was also found that the majority of the respondents in Form 1 (84.7%), Form 2 (85.4%) and Form 3 (80%) also either agreed or strongly agreed that schools cannot provide comprehensive education without the study of RME. Thus, the notion among the students that schools cannot provide comprehensive education without the study of RME was general, irrespective of their sex or Form. The perception of students about the influence of religious beliefs on RME was also examined, as shown in Table 2. In general, it was found

that 53.1 percent of respondents either disagreed (31.3%) or strongly disagreed (21.8%) that students may be unable to learn RME objectively because of their personal beliefs. In the disaggregated results, however, it was noticed that while most of the males (60.2%) disagreed to the statement, the majority of the females (55%) were in favour of the assertion that students may be unable to learn RME objectively because of their personal beliefs.

Table 2: Perception of Influence of Religion on RME Studies by sex and form

Response	Sex		Form		
	Male f(%)	Female f(%)	Christian f(%)	Moslem f(%)	Total f(%)
Strongly disagree	21(26.9)	11(15.9)	31(24.6)	1(4.8)	32(21.8)
Disagree	26(33.3)	20(29.0)	38(31.9)	8(38.1)	46(8.8)
Agree	22(28.2)	25(36.2)	39(31.0)	8(38.1)	54(36.7)
Strongly agree	9(11.5)	13(18.8)	18(14.8)	4(19.0)	70(47.6)
Total	(100.0)	69(100.0)	126(100.0)	21(100.0)	147*(100.0)

*Less than the number of respondents because of non-response

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Table 3 presents the results on the assessment of the respondents' opinion regarding the assertion that objective learning of RME will lead students to believe that all religions are equal and valid. The overall responses showed that 81.6 percent of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed to the statement. This was also indicated by the majority of the Christians (81.7%) and Moslems (81%).

Further examination of the results indicated that most of the respondents in Form 1 (92.3%), Form 2 (84.4%) and Form 3 (60%) also agreed that objective learning of RME will lead students to believe that all religions are equal and valid. The results, however, showed that the agreement to the statement became weaker as respondents progressed from Form 1 to Form 3. Thus, it was inferred that the respondents were likely to experience changes in opinions about RME as they progress to higher levels of junior high school education.

Table 4: RME Application to all Religions by Sex and Form

Response	Religion		Form			Total f(%)
	Christian f(%)	Moslem f(%)	One f(%)	Two f(%)	Three f(%)	
Strongly disagree	12(15.4)	5(7.2)	1(3.8)	8(8.3)	8(32.0)	17(11.6)
Disagree	6(7.7)	4(5.8)	1(3.8)	7(7.3)	2(8.0)	10(6.8)
Agree	16(20.5)	20(29.0)	6(23.1)	24(25.0)	6(24.0)	36(24.5)
Strongly agree	44(56.4)	40(58.0)	18(69.2)	57(59.4)	9(36.0)	84(57.1)
Total	78(100.0)	69(100.0)	26(100.0)	96(100.0)	25(100.0)	147*(10)

*Less than the number of respondents because of non-response

The study also explored the respondents' attitudes towards the usefulness of RME in their everyday lives. This was based on the fact that Chu (1996) maintains that one of the objectives of RME is to improve on the decision making of students. The results are presented in Table 5. It was found that, overall, 73.5 percent of the respondents strongly agreed and 22.4 percent just agreed that RME will allow them to make informed decisions in their life. This suggested that most of the students were of the view that, RME is practical and relevant to their everyday decisions. It was also noted that, the majority of the males (96.1%) and females (95.6%)

either agreed or strongly agreed to the assertion that RME will allow students to make informed choices in life. At different ages, all of the respondents between 10-13 years and most those between 14-16 years (96.2%) and 17-19 years (92.9%) agreed that RME will allow students to make informed choices in life. This suggested that the respondents maintained some positive attitudes towards RME in terms of its applicability to their lives. This contradicted studies that found that students exhibit apathy towards RME (Mathew, 1996).

Table 5: Usefulness of RME by sex and age

Response	Sex		Age (years)			Total f(%)
	Male f(%)	Female f(%)	10-13 f(%)	14-16 f(%)	17-19 f(%)	
Strongly disagree	1(1.3)	1(1.4)	0(0.0)	1(1.0)	1(3.6)	2(1.4)
Disagree	2(2.6)	2(2.9)	0(0.0)	3(2.9)	1(3.6)	4(2.7)
Agree	14(17.9)	19(27.5)	2(13.3)	24(23.1)	7(25.0)	33(22.4)
Strongly agree	61(78.2)	47(68.1)	13(86.7)	76(73.1)	19(67.9)	108(73.5)
Total	78(100.0)	69(100.0)	15(100.0)	104(100.0)	25(100.0)	147*(100.0)

*Less than the number of respondents because of non-response

The opinion of the students, with regards to their attitude towards the effects of RME on their moral values and attitudes, was examined by the study. The results are presented in Table 6, and they are also disaggregated according to the sex and age of the respondents. According to the study, 75.7 percent of the respondents strongly agreed and 21.6 percent just agreed that RME develops in students,

better attitudes and values. This supported Ghana Education Service (1998) views that RME aims to influence the morale behaviour of students and such positive attitudes are encouraging in respect of fulfilling the objectives of RME. The assertion was also supported by 96.2 percent of the male respondents and 98.5 percent of the female respondents who either agreed or strongly agreed to the statement.

Table 6: Influence of RME on attitudes and values by sex and age

Response	Sex		Age (years)			Total f(%)
	Male f(%)	Female f(%)	10-13 f(%)	14-16 f(%)	17-19 f(%)	
Strongly disagree	2(2.6)	0(0.0)	1(6.3)	1(1.0)	1(3.6)	2(1.4)
Disagree	1(1.3)	1(1.4)	0(0.0)	2(1.9)	0(0.0)	1(1.4)
Agree	17(21.8)	15(21.4)	4(25.0)	22(21.2)	6(21.4)	32(21.6)
Strongly agree	58(74.4)	54(77.1)	11(68.8)	80(76.9)	21(75.0)	112(75.7)
Total	78(100.0)	70(100.0)	16(100.0)	104(100.0)	28(100.0)	148*(100.0)

*Less than the number of respondents because of non-response

Further examination of the results showed that, most of the respondents between 10-13 years (93.7%), 14-16 years (98.1%) and 17-19 years (96.4%) agreed that RME develops in students, better attitudes and values. This suggested that the respondents maintained some positive attitudes towards RME in terms of its effects on their morale values and

general attitudes. This further emphasizes the claim that RME is aimed at getting students to think about religion and morality (Smart, 1968). The general attitudes of the students towards RME in the JHSs were also explored by seeking their opinions on some miscellaneous attitudinal factors as shown in Table 7.

Table 7: General opinions about RME

Attitude	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	f 57	50	23	17	147*
RME is destructive to personal commitment of students.	9 (38.8)	(34.0)	(15.6)	(11.6)	(100.0)

	f	102	24	10	11	147*
RME promotes conflicts with teachers, parents and other students.	9	(69.4)	(16.3)	(6.3)	(7.5)	(100.0)
	f	2	4	33	108	147*
RME develops the total personality of the learner.	9	(1.4)	(2.7)	(22.4)	(72.0)	(100.0)
	f	116	12	11	9	148*
RME should not be taught in JHS.	9	(78.4)	(8.1)	(7.4)	(6.1)	(100.0)

*Less than the number of respondents because of non-response

The study showed that most (72.8%) of the respondents disagreed to the assertion that RME is destructive to personal commitment of students. This supports several indications that the purpose of RME is to develop the morals of students towards commitment to good behaviour (Gyamerah, 2001). It was also noted that most (86.7%) of the respondents disagreed to the assertion that RME promotes conflicts with teachers, parents and other students. This was in support of general literature that RME aims at reducing conflicts based on religious differences and making all religions acceptable and co-habitable (Hansen, 1995). Furthermore, 94.4 percent of the respondents indicated that RME develops the entire personality of the learner. This supports the Gyamerah's (2001) notion that RME is value-laden and thus, develops the individual for society and professionally. Based on the respondents' review of RME, 85.5 percent of the students disagreed to the suggestion that RME should not be taught in junior high schools. This further confirmed the value or the importance that the students placed on RME. Thus, overall, the students were in support of teaching RME in junior high schools and had positive attitudes toward RME in the syllabus. The main text for your paragraphs should be 10pt font. All body paragraphs (except the beginning of a section/sub-section) should have the first line indented about 3.6 mm (0.14").

4. DISCUSSION

According to Chu (1996c), students are at the centre of education and their perception of and attitude to religious education (RE) strongly underline the need for religious education. Perceptions and attitudes also underlie the effectiveness of RME to reduce tribalism, ethnic conflicts, nepotism and avarice that have become widespread in the social fabric and the body politic of many countries of the world. This study therefore, examined the attitudes of students towards RE, based on the differences in their sex, age, class and religious affiliation. According to the results, 47.6 percent of the respondents strongly agreed and 36.7 percent just agreed that schools cannot provide comprehensive education without the study of RME. The responses confirmed indications by authors, such as Hirst (1973), Anti and Aum (2003) that religious and morale education is the basis of acquiring a sense of morality, which is important to all fields of education. In the disaggregated

results, it was found that, 82.1 percent of the males and 87 percent of females either agreed or strongly agreed that schools cannot provide comprehensive education without the study of RME. The study also found that while the majority of the Christians (56.5%) disagreed that students may be unable to learn RME objectively because of their personal beliefs, most of the Moslems (57.1%) agreed to the assertion. This showed some disparity in attitudes of the respondents based on their religious beliefs. The results, thus, confirm the fact that religious affiliation may underlie different opinions about RME (Hoge, 1996). However, in this study, the differences in opinions about the influence of religious beliefs on RME were not related to the respondents' religious affiliation. Therefore, despite the religious affiliation of the respondents, a significant majority of the respondents from both religious groups were of the belief that RME could validate all religious beliefs. The findings support Hilliard (1963) assertion that one purpose of RME is to create harmony among the religions and foster the acceptance of the various faiths. Thus, from the respondents' perspective, this was achievable through objective learning of RME. The study showed that most (72.8%) of the respondents disagreed to the assertion that RME is destructive to personal commitment of students. This supports several indications that the purpose of RME is to develop the morals of students towards commitment to good behaviour (Gyamerah, 2001). It was also noted that most (86.7%) of the respondents disagreed to the assertion that RME promotes conflicts with teachers, parents and other students. This was in support of general literature that RME aims at reducing conflicts based on religious differences and making all religions acceptable and co-habitable (Hansen, 1995). Furthermore, 94.4 percent of the respondents indicated that RME develops the entire personality of the learner. This supports the Gyamerah's (2001) notion that RME is value-laden and thus, develops the individual for society and professionally. Based on the respondents' review of RME, 85.5 percent of the students disagreed to the suggestion that RME should not be taught in junior high schools. This further confirmed the value or the importance that the students placed on RME. Thus, overall, the students were in support of teaching RME in junior high schools and had positive attitudes toward RME in the syllabus.

5. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the students generally maintained a positive attitude towards RME. This was based on the fact that most of the students supported the teaching of RME in the schools, and were also in support of the fact that RME would help them to make good decisions about their lives. Similarly, the respondents generally had the attitude that RME was not destructive and was applicable to all religious beliefs.

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