

# The Role of Christian Religious Education on Secondary School Student Discipline in Lake Zone, Tanzania

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**Abstract:** This study was propelled by the fact that rampant moral decays in contemporary societies leave unanswered questions on integration of moral values in teaching. While this issue is global, Tanzania is not exceptional. Through survey research design, the present study investigated on the role of Christian Religious Education on Students' Discipline across Lake Zone Tanzania. Data was collected from teachers and students in 19 sampled secondary schools using questionnaire, interview schedule and Focus Group Discussion. The instruments were validated through expert judgment and a pilot study test yielded a Cronbach's Alfa of 0.9. Based on findings of this study, it was concluded that Christian Religious Education prepares learners to be morally upright. There is a significant difference in teachers' ratings on frequency of disciplinary cases between schools that teach Christian Religious Education and those which do not teach the subject, the rate being higher in schools where Christian Religious Education is not taught. Based on these conclusions, it is recommended that Christian Religious Education should be taught across Secondary Schools in Lake Zone, and Tanzania at large due to its power to reduce frequency of disciplinary cases. The government of Tanzania and other related agencies should train more Christian Religious Education teachers as the increase of CRE teachers will make it possible for the subject to be taught across secondary schools.

**Key words:** Christian Religious Education, Discipline, Morality, Divinity, Bible, Lake Zone, Tanzania

## 1. Introduction

Rampant moral decays in contemporary societies leave unanswered questions on integration of moral values effectiveness in teaching. While this issue is global, Tanzania is not exceptional. Decadence of moral values in Lake Zone, particularly, is expressed by such behaviors like the killing of people with albinism, corruption and violence against children (Ingber, (2013), Gilgoff (2013), *United Republic of Tanzania* (2011), Lindner (2014). These incidences are likely to threaten peace, harmony and tranquility which are key factors for the national development as well as for the development of individual citizens. This situation calls upon researchers, educators and other school stakeholders to come up with strategies that will guarantee disciplined school leavers. In response to this issue, this study investigated on the role of Christian Religious Education toward students' discipline in order to come up with informed recommendations that

would curb the issue of immoral behaviors in schools and society at large.

Religious education is one of academic subjects taught in secondary schools in different countries. In Tanzania, it is referred to as Bible Knowledge at Ordinary Level of secondary school (Form One to Form Four) and Divinity at Advanced Level of Secondary School (Form Five to form Six). Although it is regarded as one of academic subjects in Tanzanian Secondary Education, the subject is not considered for selection into higher education. This situation leads secondary school students to undermine it (Ngussa & Role, 2015) despite the fact that it is full of moral values. Since immoral incidents are being practiced by educated people (Jain, 2012, *United Republic of Tanzania*, 2011), there is a high demand for education systems in the country to find ways through which moral values can be integrated in the teaching and learning process.

Research has indicated that exclusion of moral education in school curriculum is among other factors, a major

causative for moral degradation in the society. Studies have further regarded Religious Education as the backbone of moral values (Kowino, Agaki & Kochung, 2012; Ilechukwu & Ugwuozor, 2014; Musongole, 2010), yet in Tanzanian, Christian Religious Education, whose primary objective is to prepare moral upright individuals in the society (*Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2007*) has not been properly integrated in Secondary School curriculum in the sense that it is optional and very few students have been taking it. In some cases, one out of hundreds of students in a class, may opt for Christian Religious Education subject, and in some cases, taking the subject independently, without any guidance from trained teachers (Ngussa & Role, 2015). Divinity subject, for instance, has always been taught by Church Ministers from various denominations, who may not have gone through teacher training courses, thus, differing from other academic subjects taught by trained teachers (*United Republic of Tanzania, 2011*). This suggests an existing problem which will be addressed by the present study.

### 1.1 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Kolberg's theory of Moral Development, which contends that adolescents tend to assimilate moral reasoning from those who are older and who appear to have reached a stage above them (Simanowitz & Pearce, 2003). The theory, therefore, explains how important it is for school systems to impart moral values in adolescents who, in the context of Tanzania, are in secondary school level of education (Form I to Form VI). This theory is supported by Harish (2011), Raley and Preyer (2010), and Winch and Gingel (2004) who argue that exclusion of Moral Education in school curriculum is a big contribution towards moral degradation in the society. Geiger and Turiel in Tuckman and Monetti (2011) have it that students who score low in moral judgment are likely to exhibit disruptive behavior in the school settings. This can cause disciplinary cases that may interfere with students' academic performance. With this regard, schools need to stimulate moral growth and encourage moral development in the students. This is as important as having students develop in other aspects of learning.

### 1.2 Religion and Morality

A range of authors have indicated the place of religion on morality. According to Holmes (2007, p. 131), "the Bible places greater importance on moral virtues and character ..." He cites the beatitudes of Jesus in Matthew Chapter 5, for instance, as a good example of moral values in the Bible. Maiyo (2015) maintains that the concept of morality is traditionally associated with religion, since the ultimate judgment of what is right and wrong lies with God. Aroni (2003) has it that Christian Religious Education influences students to do things in the right way according to biblical teachings.

According to Horner and Westacott (2000), the goal of philosophy of religion is to deepen our understanding of

human existence. As put by Layman in Satris (2013, p. 24), "morality makes the most sense from a theistic perspective and that a purely secular perspective is insufficient." He further says that "the secular perspective does not adequately deal with secret violations, and it does not allow for the possibility of fulfillment of people's deepest needs in an afterlife." Farrant (1999, p. 12) has it that "religious beliefs influence human conduct and provide ethical standards by which people try to live." Satris (2013, p. 24) maintains that "religion provides a ground for morality, so without it there is no morality. Thus, a falling away from religion implies a falling away from morality." Bartkowiak (n. d.) argues that "exposure to a variety of religious beliefs ... is a necessary means to attaining the two goals of providing children with "open futures" and encouraging tolerance of religious diversity. Therefore, religious Education is one of strategies education systems can use to combat the prevailing moral decays in the contemporary societies.

### 1.3 Studies on Religious Education and Students' Discipline

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' peoples religious beliefs *and* ... inculcate values like honesty, reliability, respect for the law, tolerance, fairness, caring or compassion and non-discrimination (*United Republic of Tanzania, 2007*, p. 14). According to Kowino, Agak and Kochung (2012), the teaching of Christian Religious Education is a critical component that enables the school going youth to acquire morality by instilling the right attitudes for social obligations and responsibilities in the society. According to Musongole (2010), Religious Education deals with emotions, values, and feelings and leaves room for learners to make concrete decisions.

Christian Religious Education is taught at Secondary Schools in different countries of Africa. In Nigerian, it is viewed as a subject that helps to streamline students' thought, character, morality and aspiration. It fosters morals among students, teaching them to live in the world guided by moral ideas of loyalty to God, charity and justice to their fellow human beings. It inculcates in students positive attitudes and moral values such as humility, respect, love, kindness and spirit of forgiveness (Ilechukwu & Ugwuozor, 2014).

In Kenya, Christian Religious Education is regarded as a core subject that shapes the Secondary School youths into ideal personalities in the society. It is a subject that goes beyond the classroom, leaning more on character formation rather than knowledge acquisition. The main objectives of CRE education in Kenya, among others, 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 to make appropriate moral decisions in a rapid changing society (Kidakwa & Obonyo, 2004).

## 2. Research Methodology

### 2.1 Research Design

The present study employed survey research design to investigate on the role of Christian religious education on students' discipline in Lake Zone, Tanzania. Creswell (2008) considers survey as a popular design in education which is used to collect data from a sample using questionnaires to describe the attitude, opinions, behaviors and characteristics of the population. With this regard, a sample of students and teachers were determined to participate in the study. According to Briggs, Coleman, and Morrison (2012) survey is a method of collecting standardized data from a large number of respondents, using standardized forms for the purpose of generalizations. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006) further consider survey to involve collection of data to test hypotheses or to answer questions about people's opinions about issues under investigation.

This study further employed concurrent mixed research approach. According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2010), mixed approach applies to studies that concurrently employ both quantitative and qualitative methods rather than two or more methods that are purely quantitative or qualitative. They also maintain that to be classified as mixed method research the study must have design elements that reflect some or all of the features of both qualitative and quantitative research. While quantitative approach was used to measure differences among variables in question (Punch, 2009), qualitative approach was used to explain phenomena more deeply and exhaustively, attempting to make sense of it in terms of the meaning people bring. The qualitative data was in the form of open-ended information from the literature, interview schedule, and focus group discussions (Merriam, 2009; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010; Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2006).

### 2.2 Population and Sampling Techniques

This study was conducted across 49 Secondary Schools, with Advanced Level Status from which a sample of 19 was determined under certain procedures. In order to come up with appropriate sample size, stratification strategies were applicable. Creswell (2008) suggests that stratified sampling is used when a simple random sampling would yield fewer participants in a specific category or when the population reflects an imbalance on a characteristic of a sample. Briggs, Coleman, and Morrison (2012) add that stratification is appropriate where the researcher is convinced that a particular variable is of such importance that he wants to assure that it is represented as it would be in the population. They further argue that "in stratified sampling, we first reorganize the sampling frame into groups whose members have common characteristics and then sample separately from these groups" (p.133).

With this regard, the 49 secondary schools in Lake Zone were divided into two major groups: Schools that teach

Christian Religious Education (10) and schools that do not teach Christian Religious Education (39). Since schools that taught Christian Religious Education were extremely fewer than those which did not teach Christian Religious Education, all the 10 schools that taught Christian Religious Education constituted the sample and systematic sampling determined a sample of those which did not teach the subject that is closer to 10. Systematic sampling is defined as the situation where the researcher chooses every  $n^{\text{th}}$  entity in the population systematically until the desirable sample is reached (Creswell, 2008). Martler and Charles (2005) further explain that systematic sampling is often done when all members of the population are named on a master list and the sample is drawn directly from that list where a name is chosen at random. With this regard, 39 schools that did not teach Christian Religious Education were arranged alphabetically, and every fourth school was selected, thus 9 schools from this cluster constituted the sample. Therefore, a total of 95 teachers from 19 schools participated in the study by filling the questionnaire. Focus Group Discussions were conducted with selected Christian Religious Education students and an interview schedule with teachers of Christian Religious Education.

### 2.3 Research Instruments

The following research instruments were used to gather data from students and teachers: **Questionnaire**: A self-administered questionnaire was filled by 95 sampled teachers. **Focus Group Discussion (FGD)**: Two round table Focus Group Discussions with students in schools where Christian Religious Education is taught were conducted. **Interview Schedules (IS)**: This involved teachers of Christian Religious Education.

### 2.4 Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

Validity means the individual's score from an instrument makes sense, are meaningful and enable the researcher to draw a good conclusion from the sample being studied (Creswell, 2008). Reliability, on the other hand, is considered as the extent to which the research findings can be replicated, meaning, if the study is repeated, it will yield the same results (Merriam, 2009). With this regard, several procedures were used to ensure acceptable validity and reliability of research instruments.

First, through expert judgment, experienced professors from the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton in Kenya, looked into the research instruments against research questions and subsequent hypothesis and recommended where necessary adjustment was necessary. Corrections were made accordingly by adjusting the content of questionnaire, interview schedules and Focus Group Discussion contents to suit the need of research questions. Secondly, a pilot study was conducted in two schools which are not part of the study sample where teachers filled the questionnaire, which was analyzed through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to

determine acceptable reliability co-efficiency. Table 1 indicates reliability of the questionnaire.

Table 1: *Reliability Results for the Questionnaire*

Name of Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Frequency of Students' Disciplinary Cases	12	0.9

## 2.5 Statistical Treatment of Data

Data from interview schedules, Focus Group Discussions and documents was coded, analyzed and arranged using thematic approach in order to come up with answers to research question one. Descriptive statistics was used to determine mean scores and t-test tested significant differences in research question two and its subsequent hypothesis.

## 3. Results and Discussion

The present study was guided by two research questions. The first was analyzed through qualitative approach while the second was done through quantitative approach.

### 1. *What is the view of school stakeholders on the Role of Christian Religious Education?*

As the aim of this study was to establish the role of Christian Religious Education on students' discipline, it was deemed necessary to find out the view of such school stakeholders as students, teachers and scholars. This research question was therefore analyzed through qualitative approach in terms of literature, interview schedule and focus group discussion.

According to Maiyo (2015), the teaching of Christian Religious Education helps in moral development of students in secondary schools. The subject moulds students to become responsible citizens, helping them to develop values and virtues that reinforce appropriate behavior. To ascertain further the role of Christian Religious Education, selected teachers were interviewed and students were involved in Focus Group Discussions.

Through interviews, teachers ascertained that Christian Religious Education is valuable in Secondary School Curriculum. One of interviewed teachers, for instance, had this to say: "We teach Christian Religious Education ... to improve the conduct of our students in order to produce moral upright individuals in the society" (Interview Schedule 1). "In this subject" the teacher added, "we strive to modify the behavior of students, mounding them to fear God and respect fellow human beings. In this way students are prepared to be good citizens in the society." This is in harmony with what Kowino, Agak, and Kochung (2012) wrote: The teaching of Christian Religious Education is a critical component that enables

the school going youth to acquire morality by instilling the right attitudes for social obligations and responsibilities in the society. It is also in harmony with the findings of Ilechukwu and Ugwuozor (2014) who in their similar study in Nigeria considered Christian Religious Education as the subject which "helps to streamline the thought, character, moral and aspiration of the students, offering hope for a future integrated, disciplined, harmonious, and progressive society. It further matches with the finding of Musongole (2010) in Zambia that Religious Education leaves room for freedom in making concrete decisions, dealing with emotions, values, and feelings.

The role of Christian Religious Education was further revealed by teachers in terms of preparation of faithful young people, leading them to abstain from premarital relationships. One teacher, for instance, cited the story of Joseph in the book of Genesis Chapter 39, whom the wife of Potiphar, wanted to sleep with forcefully, but the young man escaped: "This is contextualized in our contemporary life where youths are faced with similar temptations. Joseph becomes a good example to emulate. Through Christian Religious Education, the youths are influenced to abstain from pre-marital sex, which protects them from Sexually Transmitted Diseases." The influence of CRE for students abstinence from pre-marital relations was confirmed by the findings of Ngussa, Ndiku and Allida (2015) that premarital relations and frequencies of pregnancy cases as perceived by teachers and students themselves were significantly higher in schools that do not teach Christian Religious Education than in schools that teach the subject.

Christian Religious Education was also found to be a possible solution to moral issues like corruption, injustice and unfair treatment to the poor in the society. This was revealed by a teacher who cited the mission of John the Baptist in the Gospel According to Luke, which is central in both Divinity and Bible Knowledge subjects: "The book of Luke presents John the Baptist who challenged three groups of people to be morally upright: **Tax Collectors**-not to collect more than is required, **Soldiers**-not to mistreat people and **Rich People**- to help the poor" (Interview Schedule 3). The teacher added that these moral values are instilled into the mind of young people, something which makes Christian Religious Education unique in Secondary School curriculum. This is supported by the findings of Aroni (2003) in Kenya that Christian Religious Education influences students to do things in the right way according to biblical teachings.

Through Focus Group Discussions students gave their views on the role of Christian Religious Education. One student, for instance maintained that "Christian Religious Education helps us to acquire moral standards. Topics in Divinity subject for instance, give us practical knowledge that helps us to distinguish between right and wrong in day-to-day life." Another student said "Through Divinity subject, moral values are implanted in our minds so that we become mature and responsible citizens before God

and fellow human beings. So this subject is practical and valuable in secondary school curriculum.”

Students’ views on the role of Christian Religious Education were further expressed in terms of obedience to higher authorities. One student for instance, had these to say during focus group discussion session:

The theme of obedience can be learned in the story of Moses who led the children of Israel from Egypt to Canaan. Whenever Moses obeyed God’s voice, God blessed him and made him successful in his leadership. But when Moses disobeyed, God punished him. For example, when he was told to talk to the rock to give water, he struck the rock twice instead of talking to it. As a result, he was denied to enter the Promised Land. This teaches us that obedience yields blessings while disobedience brings calamities in life. So through the teachings of Christian Religious Education, we students are encouraged to be obedient to our teachers, our parents and even to higher authorities.

Another student established that “the Bible Knowledge teaches about forgiveness. In this subject we are taught to have forgiving spirit to those who wrong against us.” The

Table 2: Differences in Students’ Disciplinary Cases as Perceived by Teachers

SN	Disciplinary Case	Schools’ Mean Scores		Significance Sig. (2-tailed)
		Teaching CRE	Not Teaching CRE	
1.	Disciplinary Cases in General	2.36	3.12	0.00*
2.	Premarital Relations	2.16	2.88	0.00*
3.	Dodging from Obligatory tasks	2.33	2.88	0.00*
4.	Sabotage experiences	2.04	2.42	0.02*
5.	Students Suspension	1.97	2.42	0.05
6.	Pregnancy Cases	1.64	2.30	0.00*
7.	Students’ Riots	1.87	2.27	0.03*
8.	Examination Malpractice	1.71	1.74	0.81
9.	Student-Student Fighting	2.02	2.38	0.03*
10.	Drug Abuse Experiences	1.58	2.00	0.01*
11.	Bullying	2.02	2.44	0.13*
12.	Violence Cases	1.87	2.43	0.00*

\*Difference is significant

As it can be seen in Table 2, t-test for equality of means indicated significant difference in frequency of ten (10) disciplinary cases. The rate of disciplinary cases in all ten cases was higher in schools where Christian Religious Education is not taught as compared to schools where Christian Religious Education is taught. Particularly, teachers’ general perception on students’ disciplinary cases, premarital relationships and dodging from obligatory tasks was high in schools that do not teach Christian Religious Education and low in schools that teach the subject. Sabotage, student suspensions, pregnancy cases, riots, fighting, drug abuse and violence cases were rated low in both types of schools but still the mean scores in schools where Christian Religious Education is not taught was higher than in schools where the subject is taught. Therefore, it is inferred that there is a significant difference in teachers’ ratings on frequency of

theme of forgiveness can be seen in the Lord’s Prayer in the Gospels According to Mathew and Luke which is a part of CRE syllabus in both Ordinary and Advanced Level.

**2. Is there significant difference in teachers’ ratings of students’ disciplinary cases between schools that teach and those which do not teach Christian Religious Education?**

This research question called for testing of the following null hypothesis by the use of Independent Sample t-test:

*HO There is no significant difference in teachers’ ratings of the rate of disciplinary cases between schools that teach and those which do not teach CRE.*

Analysis of this research question, with its subsequent hypothesis called for teachers to indicate their perceptions on 12 disciplinary cases in their respective schools. The frequency of disciplinary cases was presented in terms of mean scores and interpreted as follows: 3.50-4.00 = extremely high, 2.50-3.49= high, 1.50-2.49 = low and 1.00-1.49 = extremely low.

disciplinary cases between schools that teach Christian Religious Education and those which do not teach the subject, the rate being higher in schools where Christian Religious Education is not taught than in schools where the subject is taught. This suggests that the teaching of Christian Religious Education helps to reduce rates for disciplinary cases in secondary schools under investigation.

This suggests that Christian Religious Education is an agent for reducing disciplinary cases in secondary schools and is supported by Ilechukwu and Ugwuozor (2014) who argue that Religious Education helps to streamline the thought, character, moral and aspiration of students, offering hope for a future integrated, disciplined, harmonious and progressive society. The finding is also supported by the contention of Runyange (Retrieved November 1, 2015) who calls upon Rwandan educational

policy makers to consider Religious Education as a discipline and a body of knowledge whose theory can be translated into positive practice that conform to the national philosophy and history. In the context of Tanzania, whose national goal is, among others, to inculcate ethic, personal integrity, human rights, moral values and civic responsibilities in the youths (*Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2007*), the teaching of CRE can help to reduce frequency of disciplinary cases which have been revealed to be rampant in secondary schools and the society at large (Mbashiru, 2015; Joseph, 2015; Kandoya & Kiria, 2015).

### 3. Conclusions

Based on findings of this study, the researchers came up with the following conclusions with regard to the role of Christian Religious Education on students' discipline:

1. Christian Religious Education prepares learners to be morally upright and influences them to fear God and respect fellow human beings. It is a possible solution to morality issues like
2. Corruption, injustice and unfair treatment to the poor in the society, giving learners practical ability to discriminate between right and wrong and to choose what is right in day-to-day life.
3. There is a significant difference in teachers' ratings on frequency of disciplinary cases between schools that teach Christian Religious Education and those which do not teach the subject, the rate being higher in schools where Christian Religious Education is not taught.

### 4. Recommendations

Based on conclusions of this study, the researchers came up with the following recommendations with regard to the role of Christian Religious Education:

1. Christian Religious Education should be taught in all Secondary Schools across Lake Zone, and Tanzania at large due to its power to reduce frequency of disciplinary cases in schools, to impart practical ability for learners to discriminate between right and wrong and choose what is right in day-to-day life.
2. The government of Tanzania and other related agencies should train more Christian Religious Education teachers as the increase of CRE teachers will make it possible for the subject to be taught across secondary schools.
3. Parents and teachers encourage students to take CRE subject in order for them to be prepared to be morally upright, to fear God and to respect fellow human beings.

4. The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MOEVT) and other relevant authorities treat Christian Religious Education like any other academic subject, considering it in selection for Higher Education and sensitizing secondary schools to include it in subject combinations.

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