



Contribution of Religious Subjects to the Development of Moral Behavior among Students in Public and Private Secondary Schools in Arusha City. Tanzania

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Abstract: This study assessed the effectiveness of teaching religious subjects in developing moral behavior among students in public and private secondary schools in Arusha City. The specific objectives were to examine the practices of teaching religious subjects, assess their effect on students' moral behavior and identify challenges experienced in teaching these subjects. The study was grounded in Lawrence Kohlberg's moral development theory, which posits that individuals progress through different stages of moral reasoning. The study employed a mixed-methods approach with a convergent design. The population included 34,300 students, 61 heads of schools and 901 teachers from 61 secondary schools. A sample of 100 respondents, comprising 6 heads of schools, 24 teachers and 70 students was selected using stratified, simple random, and criterion purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews and analyzed using inferential and descriptive statistics for quantitative data while qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis. Findings revealed that religious subjects are actively taught in both public and private secondary schools with greater emphasis in private schools ($p=0.000$). The teaching of religious subjects significantly contributes to the moral development of students though faced by a number of challenges including lack of professionalism. The study concluded that religious education contributes to the development of moral behavior among students and recommended that parents, religious leaders, and the government to emphasize the teaching of religious subjects so as to enhance moral development among the students.

Keywords: Religious, Behaviour, Bible, Islamic, Contribution

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1. Introduction

One of the roles of schools is to facilitate the development of the moral behavior of students by instilling ethical values, attitudes and character that are important for shaping students' academic and social lives (Hakim et al, 2020). However, moral decay among students in schools has remained a global challenge. For instance, Mastroianni and Gilbert (2023) reported that

teachers in middle and high schools in the United States have experienced incidents of student violence. Moreover, a report from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey of 2009 shows that 32% of high school students in the USA have engaged in fighting. In Canada, moral decay among secondary school students is prevalent in substance abuse and alcohol usage (Aderibigbe et al., 2022). Due to the existence of inappropriate behavior among students, the teachers may have to use much of

the time in solving such problems thus affecting the teaching and learning process.

Research in various parts of the world has established teaching and learning practices of religious subjects and their influence on moral behaviors among students. In European countries, including Ireland and Germany, religious education is integrated into the school system (Hyland & Bocking, 2020). Research also indicates that religious education plays a significant role in preventing drug abuse among youth in Europe (Lavric et al., 2022). This shows that European countries have seen the need of introducing religious subjects in their school curricula for the purpose of enhancing moral conduct among the students which will result into the preparation of professionals who are diligent, committed and who can behave appropriately.

In Arusha, incidents of moral decay among students are also common. According to Loishiye and Otieno (2022), secondary school teachers in Arusha are threatened by

students misbehaviour including drug abuse. Similarly, Ochieng (2022) reported that secondary school students in Arusha are highly vulnerable to drug abuse due to easy access of such drugs in the region. Moreover, Muneja and Iira (2022) reported bullying incidents to be common among secondary school students in Arusha. All these authors show that there is a problem related to moral decay among students in both public and private secondary schools in Arusha district. Thus, deliberate efforts are needed to address the situation so as to make the schools to be good places for teachers to teach and students to learn.

In public and private secondary schools in Arusha city, there are cases of students being expelled out of school due to different improper behaviours including the use of drugs, pregnancy, fighting and truancy. The statistics of students who were expelled from school due to such incidents from the year 2021 to 2024 have been presented in figure 1.

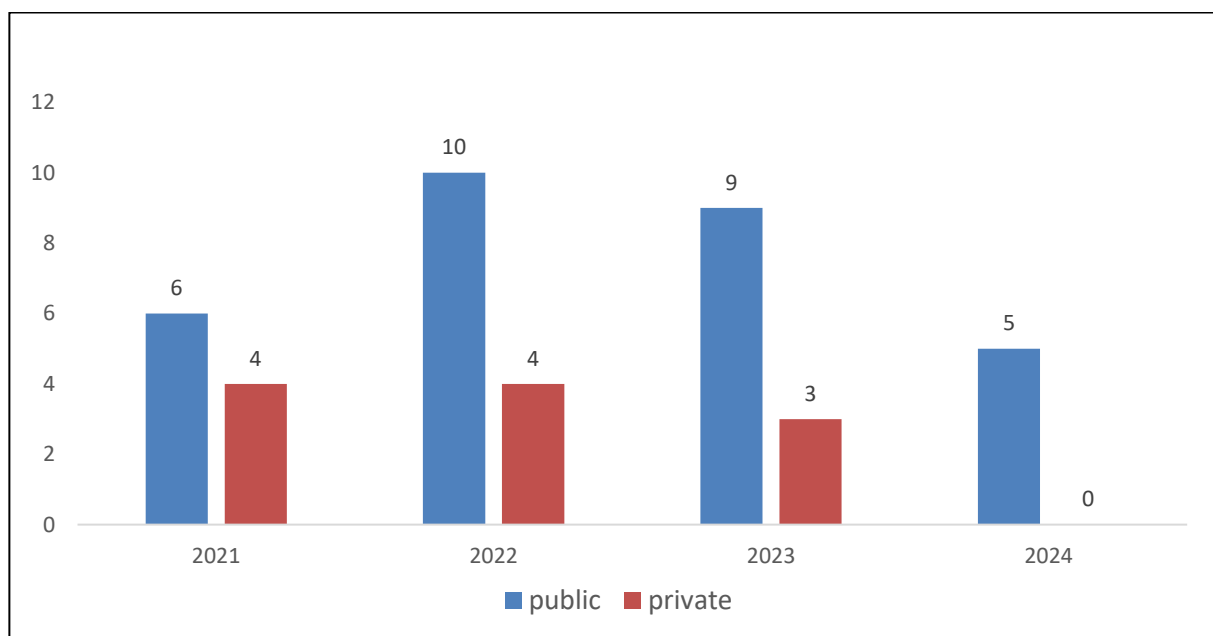


Figure 1: Number of Students Expelled from Public and Private Schools in Arusha City from 2021 to 2024

Source: SLO; Arusha city (2024)

The statistics in figure 1 show that in all the four consecutive years (2021 to 2024), the number of students expelled from public secondary schools is higher than that of students from private schools. This shows that moral decay in public secondary schools is relatively higher when compared to private schools. Since most of the private schools are owned by religious institutions, the teaching of religious subjects is given more weight compared to the public schools. Thus, there was a need for a study to be conducted to determine whether the teaching of religious subjects contributes to the

development of moral behaviour among students in public and private secondary schools in Arusha city.

The prevalence of moral decay among students is associated with several factors, including increased internet and communication technology, poor parental supervision, family separation, and negative attitudes towards religious education (Mwarabu et al., 2021). Recently, attention has been paid to the role of religious subjects in developing the moral behaviours of students. The religious subject is the systematic study of religion, encompassing the examination of religious beliefs,

rituals, symbols, myths, ethics, and social institutions across different cultures and historical periods (Smith, 2023). This is emphasized in the bible knowledge syllabus whereby living a holy life is one of the general competencies of learning bible knowledge (URT, 2023). Similarly, applying the doctrine of faith in daily life is one of the general competencies of learning Islamic knowledge in secondary schools (URT, 2023). This shows that the teaching of religious subjects is geared towards behaviour modification among students and raising their moral standards.

In Tanzania, religious subjects, including Bible knowledge and Islamic Knowledge are taught as optional subjects in secondary schools. These subjects are taught in ordinary-level secondary education. The curriculum for Islamic Knowledge was developed in 1996, while the Curriculum for Bible Knowledge was developed in 1998. Both curricula emphasize developing moral behaviors such as self-righteousness, obedience to God, and serving humanity (Ntawigaya & Mwenisongole, 2021). However, there is scarce literature on how the teaching of these subjects contributes to moral development of students. It is from this background the current study was conducted to assess the effectiveness of religious subjects on the development of moral behaviour among students in public and private secondary schools within Arusha city.

1.1. Research Questions

Specifically, the study addressed the following research questions;

1. What are the practices of teaching religious subjects among public and private secondary schools in Arusha city.
2. What are the effects of teaching religious subjects on the development of moral behaviour among students in public and private secondary schools in Arusha city.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study was grounded in the moral development theory, pioneered by Lawrence Kohlberg in 1958. The theory posits that individuals progress through different stages of moral reasoning as they mature. According to Kohlberg, there are three levels of moral development: pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional. The theory suggests that moral reasoning becomes more sophisticated and abstract with age and cognitive development. In the context of teaching religious subjects in public and private secondary schools in Arusha city, The theory shows the importance of structured moral education. Religious teachings often incorporate ethical principles and moral dilemmas that

can help students progress through the stages of moral reasoning. By engaging with these subjects, students can develop a deeper understanding of moral concepts, enhancing their overall moral development and helping them become more ethically aware individuals.

2.1.1 Strengths of the Theory

One of the advantages of the moral development theory is its structured framework for understanding how moral reasoning evolves. This framework was advantageous to the current study as it provided a clear lens through which to assess the effectiveness of teaching religious subjects on moral development among secondary school students. By utilizing Kohlberg's stages of moral development, the researcher systematically evaluated the progression of students' moral development in public and private secondary schools and looking at how the teaching of religious subjects impacts the development of moral behaviour. The theory therefore, helped the researcher to find whether the teaching of religious subjects contributes to the moral development among students.

2.1.2 Application of the Theory

Moral Development Theory provided a valuable framework for exploring the influence of teaching religious subjects on the development of moral behaviors among students in public and private secondary schools in Arusha City. By examining how students progress through different stages of moral reasoning and values acquisition, the theory offered insights into the effectiveness of religious education in fostering ethical decision-making and moral development within the local cultural context. Through an integrative approach that considered both individual cognitive processes and socio-cultural influences, this study leverages Moral Development Theory to gain a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between religious education and moral behavior in secondary school students.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Practices of Teaching Religious Subjects

The teaching of religious subjects is common in developed countries as explored through various studies. For example, in the United Kingdom, Marshal (2024) found that integrating ethnographic and anthropological methods makes the teaching of religious education more relevant to multicultural realities. Similarly, Erduran et al. (2022) in England found that teachers consider the teaching of religious subjects to be significant as they used a number of pedagogical strategies to impart religious values. Furthermore, Saada (2023) examined Islamic religious education in Western societies and

found out that religious education promotes diversity and challenges extremism and thus contributes to global citizenship education. These studies altogether show that the teaching of religious subjects in developed countries is considered important and is approached with an emphasis on enhancing curriculum effectiveness, promoting multicultural understanding and integrating religious education with broader societal goals.

In the Asian and African contexts, there are variations in the manner at which religious subjects are taught in the schools. In Saudi Arabia, Aseery (2020) found out that religious subjects, particularly Islamic knowledge, are deeply integrated into the school curriculum, with methods like computer-based teaching, storytelling and physical activities. In Pakistan, Akram (2023) reported that methods such as role modeling and storytelling are commonly used. In Ghana, Mensah and Owusu (2022) found that teachers in mission schools demonstrated high pedagogical awareness related to the teaching of religious subjects. Similarly, Idoko (2022) reported that Islamic studies were often presented in a narrow perspective, lacking coverage of religious pluralism, which could negatively affect the teaching of Islamic religious subjects. These studies collectively highlight the diverse approaches to teaching religious subjects in Asia and Africa but also reveal significant gaps that the current study in Tanzania aimed to address by exploring both Christian and Islamic religious education in public and private secondary schools in Arusha city.

In the East African context, studies have explored the teaching of religious subjects in the schools. For instance, Othoo and Aseu (2022) assessed the impact of Christian religious education in Kenyan secondary schools and found that various teaching methods including class discussions, fieldwork, and storytelling, were employed. Buore (2023) examined the influence of Christian education on student discipline in Catholic-sponsored schools in Kenya and revealed a strong correlation between religious instruction and discipline. In Tanzania, Ntawigaya and Mwenisongole (2021) reviewed the contribution of religious education to ethical development while Daffa (2019) evaluated religious education in Tanzanian secondary schools and identified challenges such as insufficient teacher training and resources. These studies collectively show that the teaching of religious subjects is given consideration within different countries across east Africa.

2.2.2 Effects of Teaching Religious Subjects on Moral Development

The contribution of religious subjects to the moral development of students has been a focal point in various studies. Andrei (2023) emphasized the role of religious education in fostering emotional and spiritual intelligence, arguing that such integration is crucial for students to lead meaningful lives and develop self-awareness. Kavonius and Ubani (2020) also explored

this theme in their study on 9th grade students in Finland and found out that religious education and ethics instruction played a varied role in shaping students' worldviews. Aderibigbe (2023) contributed further by demonstrating how Islamic values in education foster tolerance and respect for diversity which are among the key aspects of moral development.

In the Asian context, Rahmat and Yahya (2022) investigated the effectiveness of an inclusive Islamic religious education teaching material model in fostering religious tolerance and reducing radicalism among students in Indonesia. They discovered that the inclusive model was more effective than traditional methods in promoting tolerance and combating radicalism. Similarly, Alfiana (2023) explored the influence of religious character on student learning outcomes in Islamic religious content at an Indonesian elementary school and found out significant effects on students' affective behaviors. Bahar (2022) analyzed the development of religious character through Akidah Akhlak education in Indonesia and found out that religious education has a significant role on instilling moral values like honesty and justice among the students. Lastly, Mandra (2023) found a strong positive relationship between Hinduism learning outcomes and students' emotional development in Indonesia. These studies altogether show that the teaching of religious subjects in the Asian countries is considered to be significant towards promoting the development of acceptable behaviours among students.

In the African context, Kesmen and Mellemut (2022) examined the effects of Christian Religious Studies (CRS) literacy on academic achievement. They found that students' poor performance in CRS was linked to ineffective teaching methods and societal moral decay. Additionally, Masath (2023) highlighted the importance of psychological assessment in addressing moral decay among students in Tanzania, emphasizing the need for societal collaboration to instill moral values. Finally, Ignatio and Hongoli (2022) explored factors contributing to poor performance in religious education within Morogoro Municipality, identifying challenges such as a lack of professional teachers. Though some of the studies show challenges related to the teaching of religious subjects, literature has linked the teaching of such subjects to the moral upright of the students. However, due to contextual and methodological differences, the current study was conducted in Arusha city to examine the contribution of religious subjects on the moral development of secondary school students in both public and private schools.

3. Methodology

This study employed a mixed methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis to provide a comprehensive

understanding of the research problem. The convergent design within this approach allowed for simultaneous collection of qualitative and quantitative data, which were then integrated to enhance the validity of the findings through triangulation. By merging data from different sources, the design aimed to offer a more robust exploration of the research problem and produce well-rounded conclusions.

The study was conducted in Arusha City, Tanzania, which has a diverse population and a significant number of secondary schools. Arusha was selected due to its challenges with moral decay among students, such as drug abuse and bullying, which provided a relevant context for investigating the impact of religious subjects on moral behavior. With 61 secondary schools and a total population of over 600,000, the city offered a rich setting for the research, allowing for the examination of religious education's role in improving student behavior.

The target population included 34,300 students, 901 teachers, and 61 school heads from all secondary schools in Arusha city. The sample comprised 100 respondents, including six heads of schools, 24 teachers, and 70 students. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select school heads, teachers were conveniently selected and students were selected using stratified random sampling technique. Students were first stratified into 35 from public and 35 from private secondary schools. Thereafter, gender was considered in selecting form three and four students who participated in the study. Data were collected using questionnaires and interview

guide, with instruments validated through expert review and reliability testing. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive while qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis. The study adhered to ethical principles; ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, protection of respondents' rights and acknowledging cited work.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 The Practices of Teaching Religious Subjects in Public and Private Secondary Schools in Arusha City

The first research question of this study aimed at examining the practices of teaching religious subjects among public and private secondary schools in Arusha City. Data to address this question was collected from teachers, students and heads of schools. The students and teachers responded to closed ended questions in their respective questionnaires while the heads of schools were interviewed. The data obtained from the Likert scale were organized into percentages as presented in table 1. During the discussion of the findings, the percentage of strongly agree and agree were added to make the agree category whereas the ones for disagree and strongly disagree were added up to make the disagree category.

Table 1: Percentages of Teachers' (n=24) and Students' (n=70) Responses on Practices of Teaching Religious Subjects

Statements	SA		A		U		D		SD	
	TS	SS	TS	SS	TS	SS	TS	SS	TS	SS
Bible knowledge is one of the subject taught at this school	16.7	30.0	4.2	7.1	8.3	4.3	16.7	8.6	54.2	50.0
Islamic Knowledge is one of the subject taught at this school	50.0	45.7	20.8	14.3	4.2	2.9	4.2	5.7	20.8	31.4
Religion subjects are taught at this school at least per week.	58.3	75.7	16.7	12.9	8.3	5.7	16.7	2.9	0.0	2.9
Religious subject is taught using group discussions	37.5	30.0	20.8	31.4	16.7	5.7	20.8	10.0	4.2	22.9
Religious subject is taught using role plays	20.8	21.4	25.0	27.1	20.8	8.6	16.7	8.6	16.7	34.3
Religious subject is taught using mentorship	25.0	35.7	37.5	30.0	8.3	17.1	20.8	4.3	8.3	12.9
Students are given opportunity to engage in self-exploratory exercises	41.7	52.9	33.3	27.1	12.5	8.6	8.3	4.3	4.2	7.1
Students are not given opportunity to ask questions	33.3	8.6	0.0	7.1	12.5	7.1	16.7	8.6	37.5	68.6
Assessment methods include quizzes, tests and exams administered by teachers to measure retention and understanding	66.7	67.1	20.8	14.3	8.3	2.9	4.2	4.3	0.0	11.4
Teachers provide guidance and feedback when needed	54.2	72.9	29.2	21.4	12.5	1.4	4.2	1.4	0.0	2.9

Source: Field data (2024) Key: SA = strongly agree; A = agree; U = undecided; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree; TS= percentage of teachers; SS=percentage of students

Concerning the teaching of bible knowledge as one of the religious subjects, the data show that 20.9% of teachers and 37.1% of students agreed while 70.9% of teachers and 58.6% of students disagreed meanwhile 8.3% of teachers and 4.3% of students were undecided. The data suggest that a large percent of teachers and students disagreed with the teaching of bible knowledge as one of the subjects in their respective schools. This implies that bible knowledge is not given much consideration as one of the subjects taught in private and public secondary schools in Arusha city. Though there is a syllabus for teaching the subject in secondary schools as reported by Bennett (2022), the teaching of the subject has not reached its maximum. This suggests that there may be a number of challenges that hinder effective teaching of bible knowledge in the public and private secondary schools in Arusha city. Since one of the objectives of the subject is to enhance good moral conduct among the students, if the subject is not taught to great extents, the realization of such objective may not be reached. As a consequence, the development of moral behavior among students in the public and private secondary schools in Arusha city may be negatively affected.

During interviews with heads of schools, it was evident that the schools have allocated time for the teaching of religious subjects but a small number of students attend the bible knowledge lessons. This was responded by head of one public secondary school who said;

Our school timetable allocates two periods per week for the teaching of religious subjects. However, it is important to note that these subjects are not compulsory in public secondary schools. As a result, the number of students who join these lessons is limited (H1; personal interview, 7th May, 2024).

The response from the head of school implies the teaching of bible knowledge as one of the religious subjects is not given due consideration especially in the public secondary schools. This finding aligns with the quantitative data, which indicates a lack of consensus among teachers and students regarding the teaching of Bible knowledge. Such disagreement suggests that Bible knowledge is not given much consideration in both private and public secondary schools in Arusha city, despite the presence of a syllabus for the subject.

Concerning the teaching of Islamic knowledge as one of the religious subjects, the data reveals that 70.8% of teachers and 60% of students agreed with its inclusion. On the other side 25% of teachers and 37.1% of students expressed disagreement. Additionally, 4.2% of teachers and 2.9% of students remained undecided. This illustrates a level of support among both teachers and students for the incorporation of Islamic knowledge into the curriculum. This implies that Islamic knowledge is given higher considerations in the teaching curriculum as

compared to bible knowledge. These findings are in agreement with Mgonda (2020) who reported that the teaching of the subject is gaining momentum in the schools and it is seen as one of the strategies towards fostering moral development among the students. The teaching of Islamic knowledge emphasizes on respect for elders, obedience and fear of Allah which are essential for building up a nation with people with good moral values.

Regarding the frequency of teaching religious subjects at the schools, majority of both teachers (75%) and students (88.6%) agreed that religious subjects are taught at least once per week. On the contrast, a smaller proportion, comprising 16.7% of teachers and 5.8% of students, disagreed with the statement, while 8.3% of teachers and 5.7% of students remained undecided. This huge agreement among both teachers and students indicates a widespread recognition of the importance of religious education within the school curriculum. Drawing from the Ministry of education science and technology (MoEST) report from 2022, which outlines the structure of the academic year and the allocation of study time for religious subjects, it becomes evident that the educational system prioritizes the inclusion of religion in the curriculum. With equal distribution of periods and duration for both Bible knowledge and Islamic religion, the educational framework aims to ensure equitable access to religious education for students of diverse backgrounds, emphasizing its role in fostering students' moral and spiritual growth within the school environment.

Concerning the use of group discussion method in teaching of religious subjects, 58.3% of teachers and 61.4% of students agreed. On the other hand, 25% of teachers and 32.9% of students expressed disagreement with the use of group discussion in teaching religious subjects. Meanwhile, 16.7% of teachers and 5.7% of students remained undecided. The data suggest that most of the students and teachers agreed with the application of group discussion as a method used to teach religious subjects. According to Ferzat and Kuat (2021), the use of interactive teaching methods including group discussions is effective for instilling good morals among the students. Thus, the use of group discussion when teaching religious subjects in public and private secondary schools can help to modify students' behavior together with instilling good manners and the sense of cooperation among the students. In the groups, students can also learn acceptable behaviours by observing and listening from group members as suggested by the social learning theory.

The use of group discussion in teaching of religious subjects particularly Islamic knowledge was further reported by one head of school who even cited some aspects from the Holly books which the use of group discussion is important. The head of school had the following to say:

At our school, we employ group discussions extensively in the teaching of Islamic Knowledge. This method allows students to engage with the material on a deeper level and to learn from each other. For instance, we often use verses from the Holy Quran and Hadith to guide our discussions (H4; personal interview, 11thMay, 2024).

The response from the head of school implies that group discussions are highly valued in teaching Islamic Knowledge due to their importance in fostering deep engagement and peer learning. This aligns with the quantitative findings whereby majority of teachers and students agreed that religious subjects are taught using group discussion. The agreement suggests that group discussions are considered to be effective in developing students' moral behavior in public and private secondary schools in Arusha district. This approach not only enhances understanding of religious texts but also promotes cooperation, empathy, and ethical behavior among students and contributes to a well-rounded moral education. This is also in agreement to Aseery (2020) who found out the great emphasis on the teaching of Islamic knowledge especially in the schools that are owned by Islamic institutions. This shows that Islamic knowledge receives much attention in the private schools that are under the umbrella of Islamic faith.

During interviews, the heads of schools also reported the provision of guidance and feedback to the students aiming at modifying their behaviour. This was made evident as one of the heads of schools said the following:

The main focus in teaching religious subjects is to cultivate moral values among students. This being the case, our teachers are deeply committed to providing the necessary guidance to improve students' behavior, ensuring they grow into ethical and responsible individuals (H3; personal interview, 9thMay, 2024).

The response from the head of the school implies a strong commitment to cultivating moral values among students through the teaching of religious subjects by providing the required guidance. This aligns with the quantitative data where majority of both teachers and students agreed on the importance of providing guidance and feedback. This agreement suggests that teachers in public and private secondary schools in Arusha city are dedicated to offering the necessary support to students. The provision of guidance and feedback plays a crucial role in developing moral behavior among students. By receiving timely feedback, students can correct their mistakes and adhere to the ethical guidelines emphasized in religious teachings, promoting a more responsible and ethical student body.

The study was conducted in public and private secondary schools within Arusha city. The researchers also wanted to find out whether religious subjects are taught in the public and private schools at different levels. To achieve this, the mean scores for practices of teaching religion subjects in the public and private schools were computed and an independent sample t-test was run to determine whether a significant difference existed. The test was done at 95% confidence as it is the one accepted in social sciences.

The findings from quantitative data were further supported by one head of a public secondary school who also indicated the teaching of bible knowledge is not being given due consideration in the public schools as compared to private schools as the head of school remarked that:

At our school, we emphasize the teaching of religious studies and have a dedicated period for it, but very few students register to take the national examination in Bible knowledge. This is unlike to private schools managed by churches where Bible knowledge is compulsory (H5; Personal Interview, 12thMay, 2024)

The responses from the head of school imply an emphasis on teaching religious subjects in public schools, but with limited student engagement, particularly in Bible knowledge. This aligns with the quantitative data showing a significant difference in mean scores between public and private schools that indicated a higher emphasis on religious subjects in private schools. The response from the head of school shows the disparity highlighting the compulsory nature of Bible knowledge in private schools due to their affiliation with religious institutions. This suggests that the perceived good behavior of students from private schools may be influenced by the comprehensive teaching of religious subjects, including Bible knowledge, a practice less prioritized in public schools.

4.2 Effects of Teaching Religious Subjects on the Development of Moral Behavior among Students in Public and Private Secondary Schools in Arusha City

The second research question of this study aimed to assess the effects of teaching religious subjects on the development of moral behavior among students in public and private secondary schools in Arusha city. Data to address this research were collected from teachers, students and the heads of schools. The teachers and students responded to a Likert scale with 10 statements expressing the relationship between the two variables. The response percentage for teachers who agreed and

those who strongly agreed were added up together as well as that for those who disagreed and strongly

disagreed. The response percentage for teachers and students are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Percentage Responses of Teachers (n = 24) and Students (70) on the Effect of Teaching Religious Subjects on the Development of Moral Behavior

Statements	SA		A		U		D		SD	
	TS	SS	TS	SS	TS	SS	TS	SS	TS	SS
Religious subject helps students to abstain from unacceptable behaviors	70.8	85.7	20.8	7.1	0.0	1.4	0.0	0.0	8.3	5.7
Religious teaching helps students to develop a moral character	54.2	85.7	20.8	12.9	12.5	0.0	4.2	0.0	8.3	1.4
Religious teaching helps students to develop sense of empathy towards others	54.2	84.3	33.3	12.9	4.2	1.4	8.3	0.0	0.0	1.4
Religious teaching helps students to develop a sense of respect toward others	50.0	88.6	29.2	11.4	4.2	0.0	8.3	0.0	8.3	0.0
Religious teaching helps students to make decisions ethically by differentiating between right and wrong	45.8	84.3	29.2	14.3	12.5	1.4	8.3	0.0	4.2	0.0
Religious teaching helps students to develop critical thinking by evaluating different perspectives and make informed decisions	50.0	68.6	37.5	27.1	4.2	1.4	4.2	1.4	4.2	1.4
Religious teachings encourage students to consider respect for diversity of other belief systems	41.7	68.6	25.0	18.6	20.8	5.7	4.2	1.4	8.3	5.7
Religious teachings helps students to develop purpose in life	45.8	77.1	41.7	20.0	0.0	1.4	12.5	0.0	0.0	1.4
Religious teachings helps students to develop ethical leadership principles for leading society	62.5	78.6	25.0	18.6	12.5	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4
Religious teachings helps students to develop empathy and compassion towards the needs of others	45.8	81.4	41.7	15.7	8.3	0.0	0.0	1.4	4.2	1.4

Source: Field data (2024) Key: SA = strongly agree; A = agree; U = undecided; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree; TS= percentage of teachers; SS=percentage of students

Concerning the influence of religious subjects on students abstaining from unacceptable behaviors, 91.6% of teachers and 92.8% of students agreed. On the other hand, 8.3% of teachers and 5.7% of students disagreed, while 0% of teachers and 1.4% of students remained undecided. The data suggests that most of the students and teachers agreed. This implies that religious subjects contribute to encouraging students to avoid behaviors believed to be unacceptable by societal and religious standards. Such avoidance of unacceptable behaviors is beneficial as it helps students to maintain a disciplined and principled lifestyle. These findings align with Komariah and Nihayah (2023), who asserted that Islamic religious education helps individuals refrain from actions prohibited by their religion. Therefore, the teaching of religious subjects is considered to be instrumental in promoting moral behavior among students by guiding them to adhere to socially and religiously acceptable conduct.

This was further supported by one head of a private secondary school who even demonstrated some aspects of the bible which contribute to students' avoidance of bad behaviours, the head of school said:

The teaching of religious subjects, particularly the Bible, plays a crucial role in guiding students away from unacceptable behaviors. By

emphasizing moral principles such as compassion, honesty, and accountability, students are instilled with values that promote positive conduct and discourage wrongdoing (H3; personal interview, 9th May, 2024).

The responses from the head of school imply a strong belief in the influence of religious subjects, particularly the Bible, on students' avoidance of unacceptable behaviors. This belief is substantiated by the quantitative data which shows agreement among both teachers and students. This alignment suggests that religious education contributes to shaping students' behavior in accordance with societal and religious standards, promoting a disciplined and principled lifestyle. This is further supported by Marshal (2024) who put forward that integrating religious education in the curriculum deepens students' understanding and improves their moral conduct. This shows that the teaching of religious subjects has positive effects on the moral development of students in the schools.

Regarding the development of moral character through religious teachings, 75% of teachers and 98.6% of students agreed. In contrast, 12.5% of teachers and 1.4% of students disagreed, with 12.5% of teachers and 0% of

students remaining neutral. The data indicates strong support among students and teachers. This implies that religious teachings are considered by both teachers and students to be effective in fostering moral character among students, helping them to cultivate virtues such as integrity, responsibility, and ethical behavior. Developing a moral character is essential as it lays the foundation for students to become conscientious and upright members of society. These findings are consistent with Yudiyanto et al. (2023), who noted that religious studies instill noble morals and a sense of responsibility in students. Thus, incorporating religious teachings in the curriculum is essential for moral development in secondary education.

With respect to developing empathy through religious teachings, 87.5% of teachers and 97.2% of students agreed. Meanwhile, 8.3% of teachers and 1.4% of students disagreed, and 4.2% of teachers and 1.4% of students were neutral. The majority agreement among teachers and students suggests that religious teachings play a vital role in nurturing empathy among students. This implies that students who receive religious education are more likely to exhibit understanding and compassion towards others. Developing empathy is crucial as it enhances students' ability to build positive relationships and contribute to a more harmonious and caring society. These findings correspond with Andrei (2023), who highlighted that religious studies enhance emotional and spiritual intelligence, fostering empathy and social skills. Thus, religious education is crucial for developing empathetic and socially aware individuals.

Findings from the quantitative data were further supported with what was said by the heads of schools during interviews whereby the school heads also acknowledged the contribution of religious subjects on the cultivation of empathy among students. This was made evident as one of the heads of schools said:

Religious subjects specifically Bible knowledge, play a pivotal role in fostering empathy among our students. The Bible teachings emphasize on loving one another, caring for the ones in need and relating to one another in a friendly manner. Aspects of being humble and forgiving the ones who are wrong are also emphasized (H6; personal interview, 12thMay, 2024).

The responses from the head of school suggest a strong belief in the power of religious teachings particularly those found in the Bible to instill empathy to students. This belief is supported by the quantitative data, which shows an agreement among both teachers and students regarding the impact of religious education on empathy. This consistency indicates that religious teachings play a crucial role in fostering empathy among students, promoting compassionate and understanding behaviors.

The agreement between qualitative and quantitative findings highlights the importance of religious education in shaping empathetic and socially aware individuals, with implications for positive interpersonal relationships and moral growth.

In terms of ethical decision-making, 75% of teachers and 98.6% of students agreed that religious teachings help students to differentiate between right and wrong. However, 12.5% of teachers and 0% of students disagreed, with 12.5% of teachers and 1.4% of students being neutral. The high level of agreement among students and teachers indicates that religious subjects are effective in guiding students to make ethical decisions. This suggests that students benefit from religious teachings by gaining a clear understanding of moral principles. Making ethical decisions is critical as it ensures that students act with integrity and accountability, positively influencing their personal lives and communities. Saada (2023) concurs with the findings stating that religion enhances individuals' ability to distinguish right from wrong. Therefore, religious education is considered to be crucial for ethical development among students.

Regarding the development of purpose in life through religious teachings, 87.5% of teachers and 97.1% of students agreed. Meanwhile, 12.5% of teachers and 1.4% of students disagreed, with 0% of teachers and 1.4% of students remaining neutral. The high level of agreement indicates that religious education helps students find and develop their purpose in life. This implies that students gain a sense of direction and meaning through religious teachings, which can guide their actions and decisions. Having a purpose is important as it motivates students to set goals and strive for personal and academic achievements. Jannah (2023) supports this finding by stating that religious education helps students discover and develop their potential. Thus, religious education plays a crucial role in giving students a sense of purpose and direction.

The heads of schools also indicated that teaching of religious subjects especially the bible make the students to know why they were created and thus determining right paths. This was made evident by one head of a private school who said:

The teachings of the Bible emphasize the importance of everyone discovering their God-given purpose which in turn helps our students find direction in life. By understanding their unique purpose, students are better equipped to make meaningful decisions and pursue fulfilling paths (H3; personal interview, 9thMay, 2024).

The responses from the head of school imply a belief that Bible teachings help students discover their purpose in life and provide them with direction and meaning. This

aligns with the quantitative data where majority of teachers and students agreed that religious education aids in developing a sense of purpose. This conformity suggests that religious teachings play a crucial role in guiding students' actions and decisions, motivating them to set goals and strive for personal and academic achievements. The agreement between qualitative and quantitative findings highlights the importance of religious education in helping students understand their unique purpose which is essential for making meaningful life choices and pursuing fulfilling paths.

Concerning the development of ethical leadership principles, 87.5% of teachers and 97.2% of students agreed that religious teachings help in this regard. No teachers and 1.4% of students disagreed, while 12.5% of teachers and 1.4% of students remained neutral. The consensus among teachers and students indicates that religious education is effective in cultivating ethical leadership principles. This suggests that religious subjects help students to develop the qualities necessary for leading society with integrity and moral responsibility. Ethical leadership is essential as it ensures that future leaders act with fairness, justice, and respect for others. Suparjo and Saifuddin (2023) noted that Islamic education fosters righteous characters and noble morals, which are crucial for good leadership. Thus, religious education is fundamental in developing students' ethical leadership and guiding them to contribute positively to society.

Findings from the quantitative data were further supported by data from the interviews whereby head teachers showed the existence of a positive correlation between religious subjects and ethical leadership. One of the heads of schools even gave examples of some leaders who upheld ethical leadership as a result of being oriented on religious knowledge. The head of school said:

The teaching of religious subjects plays a pivotal role in shaping ethical leaders. For instance, the late President Magufuli, who attended a seminary school, and former CAG Prof. Asaadi, who upheld Islamic standards in all his activities are prime examples. Their religious education provided a strong ethical foundation that guided their leadership and decision-making processes (H4; personal interview, 11thMay, 2024).

The response from the head of school implies a strong belief that religious teachings contribute to the development of ethical leadership principles. This qualitative insight aligns with the quantitative data where majority of teachers and students agreed that religious education fosters ethical leadership. This consensus suggests that religious subjects help students cultivate qualities necessary for leading with integrity and moral

responsibility. Ethical leadership is crucial for ensuring that future leaders act with fairness, justice and respect for others. The alignment between qualitative and quantitative findings highlights the importance of religious education in developing ethical leaders as illustrated by examples like the late President Magufuli and former CAG Prof. Asaadi whose religious backgrounds provided a strong ethical foundation for their leadership. This conformity highlights the role of religious education in shaping students to contribute positively to society.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study concluded that religious subjects are practiced in both public and private secondary schools in Arusha city, with more emphasis being given in private schools (p-value = 0.000). These subjects include Islamic knowledge and bible whereby Islamic knowledge receives greater emphasis compared to Bible knowledge. These subjects are taught through regular weekly sessions integrated into the curriculum, with a focus on student-centered learning approaches and various assessment methods. Teachers play a crucial role in providing guidance and offering timely feedback to students, fostering active engagement in religious education. Thus, religious subjects are integral parts of the curriculum in both public and private secondary schools in Arusha city, facilitated by student-centered learning approaches.

The study also concluded that teaching religious subjects contributes to the development of moral behavior among students in both public and private secondary schools in Arusha city. It fosters ethical decision-making by providing students with frameworks for distinguishing between right and wrong. Moreover, religious education facilitates the development of moral character by instilling virtues such as integrity, responsibility, and compassion. Additionally, it cultivates empathy towards others by encouraging students to consider diverse perspectives and appreciate the needs and experiences of others. Furthermore, religious teachings promote critical thinking skills, enabling students to evaluate different viewpoints and make informed decisions based on moral principles.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Parents should actively support their children's engagement in religious education by fostering a positive attitude towards religious teachings and providing supplementary resources.

2. Religious leaders should advocate for the importance of religious education, collaborating with educational authorities to develop comprehensive curricula and offer teacher training.
3. Professional development programmes should be implemented to improve teachers' pedagogical skills and deepen their understanding of religious teachings. Additionally, the government should prioritize resources for religious education by developing clear policies, providing funding for teacher training, and procuring necessary materials.

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