

**EXPRESSION OF MORAL VALUES TAUGHT IN THE CHRISTIAN  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SUBJECT BY SECONDARY SCHOOLS  
STUDENTS IN RONGAI SUB-COUNTY, KENYA**

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**ABSTRACT**

Cases of indiscipline such as student unrest, alcohol and drug abuse, truancy, and violence have risen in the Kenyan secondary school setting. This trend has raised questions regarding the role Christian Religious Education (C.R.E) in shaping the moral character of the youth. The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to which secondary school students in Rongai Sub-County express the moral values taught in the C.R.E. subjects. The research involved 4 discipline masters, 4 subject heads of C.R.E and 91 form-four students taking the C.R.E subject from 4 public secondary schools in Rongai Sub-County. Questionnaires were used to collect data from the subject heads and students while interviews were used to collect more information from the discipline masters. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions and percentages. Qualitative descriptions were also used in the presentation of data. Results established that C.R.E plays a significant role in shaping the moral character of students by providing them with an opportunity to learn and express themselves morally. Christian Religious Education is an effective means of making students acquire and express moral values. Based on these findings, the study recommends that C.R.E be a made a compulsory subject in secondary schools and the implementation of its curriculum be effectively supported.

**Keywords:** Christian Religious Education, moral values, secondary school, Rongai Sub-County

**1. INTRODUCTION**

One of the national goals of education in Kenya is to promote sound moral values. Education should provide for the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will to enhance the acquisition of sound moral values and help children to grow up into self-disciplined, self-reliant and integrated citizens (Republic of Kenya, 2001). Christian Religious Education (C.R.E.) seeks

to develop a positive attitude in the learner, towards God, the self, others and the environment in which he/she lives.

The inclusion of C.R.E. in the Kenya Secondary School Education Curriculum has been done with a purpose and goal, as it is the case with any other subject (Kowino, Agak, & Kochung, 2012). The learning of C.R.E. is geared towards promoting a whole round student, morally upright and academically sound. The many topics covered in the entire C.R.E. syllabus alongside Christian Ethics are sufficient to meet the expected objectives of the subject. At the end of the syllabus, the student is expected to have adequately been instilled with Biblical as well as healthy African traditional values (Itolondo, 2012). These values are expected to influence the student and mould him or her into a morally mature person in a position to make reliable rational decisions in all spheres of life situations. During C.R.E. class lessons the student participation and critical discussions often leave the subject teacher assured that the students are not only gaining academically, but also moulded spiritually and morally (Kowino *et al.*, 21012).

Despite the entrenchment of the C.R.E. subject in the secondary school curriculum, a myriad of disciplinary problems are still experienced in Kenyan secondary schools such as student unrest, violence, truancy, underage sex, and substance abuse (Wambo & Fisher, 2015). Although the area of concentration in this project is not to research the course and causes of student indiscipline, their prevalence tend to place the moral contribution of C.R.E. and Christian Ethics in a questionable scenario. It is this light that the current study sought to ascertain the efficiency of C.R.E. as far as the moral and academic moulding of the student is concerned.

## **2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

For a long period, the study of Christian ethics has become an integral part of the mainstream education curriculum (Astley, 2004). The reasons for this are not hard to detect. It has become a more widely held view that Christian ethics is central to Christian theology as a whole. Christian ethics that is, ethics based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been recognized for its ability to make individuals understand what is morally acceptable and what is unacceptable. Christianity is currently the largest religion in the world with 32% of the global population being affiliated with this religion. Islam is the second-largest religion as it commands a following that is equivalent to 23% of the world population (Mele & Fontrodona, 2016). For centuries, Christian ethics has provided basic principles that act as guides for people's actions. It has helped to inculcate values that are essential to society. The influence of Christian ethics is threatened by a myriad of issues including loss of credibility as a result of scandals in religious institutions, growing secularism, and weakening of the marriage and family institutions that form the basic unit for religious organizations.

Theologians are ever more concerned about the relevance of their discipline in a context where religious belief is on the decline and society had become multi-faceted and complex (Tilburt & Humeniuk, 2014). There is now no shortage of books on most substantive moral issues, written from a wide variety of theological positions. However, what is lacking are books within Christian ethics, which are taken at all seriously by those engaged in the wider secular debate. The fading role of Christian ethics was demonstrated in a study by Ogbuehi (2017) who observed that despite having the largest population of Christians in Africa, Nigeria is among the most corrupt countries in the continent. The study established that although over 85 million Nigerians affiliate themselves to Christianity, they do not apply Christian ethics in their daily life. Materialism, secularization, and western values have eroded the influence of Christian values.

The report by Binn (1952) stressed the importance of religious ethics in education. This report was supported by the Education Commission of 1964 popularly known as the Ominde Report, which recommended the continuing participation of the church in the religious life of their former schools (Republic of Kenya, 1964). The Ominde Report stated that religious education ought to be taught in schools in line with an approved syllabus. It is a worthwhile subject that can be learnt and contribute to the overall development of students. The Ominde Commission recommendations found their legal backing in the education Act of 1968, which gave to the church powers to continue sponsoring their former schools (Republic of Kenya, 1968). The Ominde Commission also defined goals of education, which all subjects must strive to fulfil in order to make education relevant to life. Therefore, the teaching of C.R.E in Kenya has been justified on educational grounds as contributing to the fulfilment of national education objectives.

The first of these national goals is that of National Unity. Religious Education is supposed to fulfil this goal by promoting positive attitudes of mutual respect, which enable the youth to live together in harmony (Mwaka, Kafwa, Musama, & Wambua, 2013). This goal offers a challenge to the churches to show that Religious Education is not a divisive force and that people of different religions can live together in harmony. The goal has also influenced the development of a common syllabus for all Christian pupils. The second goal is that of national development both socially and economically (Republic of Kenya, 2015). Religious Education attempts to fulfil this goal by its emphasis on content relevant to life. This need for relevance to life is strongly reflected in the syllabus. The third goal is that of individual development and self-fulfilment. Religious Education is supposed to fulfil this goal by trying to foster sound moral and religious values in order to help the youth to grow up into self-disciplined citizens.

The fourth goal is that of social equality. Religious Education promotes this goal by fostering a sense of responsibility in the youth (Republic of Kenya, 2015). Religious Education also advocates a common syllabus for Christian students in all schools with courses based on their common Christian heritage. The fifth goal is that of respect and development of cultural heritage. Religious education assists the youth to respect other cultures (Mwaka *et al.*, 2013). To meet this challenge religious education curriculum developers have incorporated the study of African Religious Heritage in the syllabus. The sixth goal is that of international consciousness, where education is, supposed to help foster positive attitudes to the international community (Republic of Kenya, 2015). Religious Education teaches courses on contemporary Christian living in an effort to help the youth in enhancing appreciation of the current social, political, religious and economic issues affecting the world today.

The greatest value of religion is to teach people to be humble because of their great limitations (Itolondo, 2012). It tells human beings that they are created, and that however much they may celebrate this life, it is short, temporary and flowing like a river. Religion teaches human beings to be dependent on their creator. Even though African Religion puts human beings at the centre of the universe, it also shows them very clearly that they have their limitations. This is what drives them to their rituals, prayers, ceremonies, and trust in God. Even the greatest achievement of human beings is limited, and does not last forever (Kowinon *et al.*, 2012).

The views of Mbiti (1969) therefore can be construed to mean that Christian Religious Education provides Students with moral values by, which to live. From his views, students' need a good reason to convince them that they should be concerned with their neighbour, instead of looking out for him/her self and his/her interests. In the past, our clan and our tribe gave us that reason. But today our life goes beyond clan and our tribe. It is more complex and students are concerned with many things (Itolondo, 2012). They need a new reason, a more complex reason why they should be concerned with their neighbour and his welfare. Christian Religious Education gives them that reason. It starts with the very nature of man himself, why he is here on earth, how he should relate to his fellow human beings and God himself; how everything mortal is one day finished; and how each one of them must give an account of the days he lived here on earth.

According to Gay (1975), the moral crisis in the world has made it clear that schools can no longer evade their responsibilities in the area of moral education, which has four fundamental functions to fulfil. The first is moral autonomy that involves the development of a person whose identity is so secure that he or she can rely on the validity of his or her moral judgments and reach a decision independently. The second function is rationality that has to do with the willingness to discuss reasonably the moral obligations of interpersonal interactions leading to

independent, thinking (Chowdhury, 2016). The third is moral altruism, which deals with the concern for other people and placing their needs on equality with one's own. Last is moral responsibility where one is willing to accept culpability for his or her actions.

Similarly, Graham (1972) asserted that the ultimate goal of moral education is to raise the level of moral judgment and behaviour in such a way that they are based upon general moral principles. Masolo (1988) states that one of the sources of moral values in Christianity are the Ten Commandments. These commandments are like rules we learn in the family. They are divided into two parts: those that concern our duties to God as the father in a family, and those that concern our duties to other members of the human family at home, at school, in the village, or in the nation.

### **3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

The study utilized the descriptive survey study since it sought to describe the current situation in secondary schools with regards to the expression of values taught in C.R.E. The study was carried out in Rongai Sub-County in Nakuru County, Kenya. The target population were form-four students, C.R.E subject heads, and discipline-masters in all the 8 public schools in Rongai Sub-County that offered C.R.E subject. From this population, a sample of 4 schools comprising of 91 students, 4 heads of C.R.E subjects, and 4 discipline masters were selected random and purposive sampling methods.

Questionnaires were used to collect information from students and heads of the CRE subjects in each school. The questionnaires were structured in nature in order to facilitate the use of statistical methods of analysis. Interviews were used to collect data from the discipline masters. Responses to each question in the questionnaires were coded, tallied and grouped accordingly to generate frequencies, which were then expressed in percentages out of the sample size of 91. Responses to the questions in the interview schedule were summarized and synthesized into themes.

### **4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

This study sought to establish how students express moral values acquired in the C.R.E subject. In order to ascertain the expression of moral values, the form four students were asked to describe how they would react to a thief found in the dormitory stealing.

**Table 1: How Respondents would react to a Thief in the Dormitory**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Report to the authorities	84	92.3%
Call for mob justice	4	4.4%
Do not report to the authorities	3	3.3%
Advise him to leave your property and steal your neighbours	0	0%

This study established that 92.3% of the respondents chose to report the thief to the authorities whereas 4.4% preferred to call for mob justice (Table 1). This implies that the students applied the spiritual and moral insights acquired in the teaching and learning of C.R.E. subject in making appropriate choices.

These findings concur with Gachathi's Report (1976), which stressed the role of Religion in providing a strict moral code for the community whereby the choice by the students to report the theft incident instead of causing death through mob justice signifies their respect for life as required by the ten commandments of the bible. The observation in Table (3) whereby no student (0 %) chose to advise the thief to leave the personal property and steal other peoples' property implies that the students have internalized the virtues of loving a neighbor much as one would love himself (Mathew 6:17-49). Masolo (1988) also stressed respect for other people and all that belongs to them.

In addition, respondents were asked to give their reactions concerning lost and found items in their school compound. Their responses are summarized in Table 2:

**Table 2: How Respondents would react to Finding a Lost Item**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Announce in the lost items notice board	88	97%
Use it	2	2%
Leave it where you found it	0	0%

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Destroy it	1	1%
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It was established that the majority of the students (97%) preferred to announce the lost and found item as opposed to 3% who preferred to destroy or use it. This underlines the significance of the teaching and learning of C.R.E. in secondary schools as outlined in the National goals of Education. Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Education System of Kenya found out that knowledge acquired in C.R.E. is not effective if it is not practiced in peoples' daily life-styles (Republic of Kenya, 1999). Such application includes worship, mode of dressing and general mannerisms. This study has established that C.R.E. provides an opportunity for the students to learn and express the moral values acquired.

The teachers interviewed in this study observed that words and even statements of faith do not necessarily result in action and that Bible knowledge is taught as part of the school curriculum, but seldom do they find much connection between a student's mark on the Bible, knowledge exam and his or her Christian living. Nevertheless, they noted that in most cases unless otherwise, C.R.E. students are rational while reacting to differences that might occur between students. This study established that teachers encounter a number of problems in the teaching and learning of C.R.E, for instance, lack of administrative support, and indifference towards C.R.E subject.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

Christian Religious Education is a valuable subject in its own right, for it helps the learner to look towards man's final goal and destiny. This study established that 92.3% of students chose to report a thief caught stealing to the authorities instead of lynching him. This is an expression of the teachings of the Ten Commandments that we must not kill. The observance of these commandments, especially the last six leads the, learners to exercise the virtues of respect for life, honour, and property, truthfulness and humility. This study therefore established that through the teaching and learning of C.R.E. students are provided with an opportunity to learn and express themselves morally. Christian Religious Education is an effective means of making students acquire moral values. Some of the values may not be exhibited immediately after they are taught but may come in handy later in the students' life.

From the findings and conclusion of the study, the study recommends that Christian Religious Education should be made compulsory for all students. To make the inculcation of moral values possible in the school, the administration should see into it that C.R.E teachers are empowered through provision of adequate teaching and learning resources. Provision of instructional

coaching would also improve the teachers' effectiveness in delivering C.R.E content resulting to greater change in students' behaviours. The Kenya Institute for Curriculum Development should also conduct regular review of the C.R.E curriculum so as to ensure that its content matches the needs and challenges experienced by modern-day students. Pastoral Care Programmes should be enhanced in all public schools and be handled by trained religious personnel who are able to relate the teaching and its moral implications.

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