

**Student Attitude and Choice Of Christian Religious Knowledge among Senior
Secondary School Students in Calabar**

Education Zone, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study assessed student attitude and choice of Christian Religious Knowledge in secondary schools in Calabar education zone. To achieve this purpose, one hypothesis was formulated. A review of related literature was carried out to examine what has already been documented on the phenomenon under study. The ex-post facto research design was considered most suitable for achieving the purpose of this study because the manifestations of the independent variables in the study have already occurred in the population. The simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting the four (4) local government areas used for the study. The proportionate simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting twenty-one (21) secondary schools and the seven hundred and three (703) senior secondary two students used for the study. A structured questionnaire titled student attitude and choice of Christian religious knowledge questionnaire (SACCRKQ) was the instrument used for collection of data in the study. The reliability of the research instrument was established through the Cronbach Alpha reliability method. Chi-square statistical tool was considered most appropriate for data analysis. The findings obtained from analysis of data and hypothesis testing revealed that there was a significant influence of attitude on students' choice of Christian Religious Knowledge in the study area. Based on these findings it was recommended among others that students with negative attitude towards Christian Religious Knowledge should be properly sensitized on the need to change their attitude towards the subject and appreciate its moral values.

Keyword: Attitude, choice, Christian religious knowledge, senior secondary school students

Introduction

The success of every student depends on the subjects or skills he chooses to offer. Human reasoning, hopes, aspirations, attitude and values are thus generally known to depend largely on the choice one makes. The degree of importance this variable (choice of subjects) hold on contemporary educational system, has motivated scholars to carry in-depth studies, on how to make secondary school students make choice of subjects to offer without the influence of external variables (Ndifon & Monity, 2019).

The case of Christian Religious Knowledge is a peculiar one in the sense that the choice of Christian Religious Knowledge by senior secondary school students is being influenced by some variables. As pointed out by Kasomo (2011), during the colonial era, Christian Religious Knowledge was a dominant school subject in the time table. This was because the missionaries used it as a tool to have converts. Virginia Wesleyan College News (2016) outlined the four major goals of Christian Religious Knowledge to include: introducing students to the diversity of religious beliefs and values (especially those which are a powerful presence in today's world); integrating religious perspectives with various academic disciplines; encouraging personal clarification of religious beliefs, values and orientation; and preparing students for religious vocations. Dare (2006) stated that the main goal of Christian Religious Knowledge in Nigeria was to produce honest, faithful and truthful individuals, who are morally, mentally and spiritually developed to protect the society. National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCC, 1992) stated the national objectives of Christian Religious Knowledge as follows: (1) To express satisfactorily intellectual capacity to benefit from further education in CRK. (2) Logically reduce or resolve tension and conflict arising from interplay of traditional practices and gospel value. (3) Demonstrate sound knowledge and appreciation of the moral value needed to live as a Christian in various stages of growth and development. (4) Demonstrate professional proficiency for teaching CRK in the primary and junior secondary schools. (5) Radiate attitude and values which are typical of mature and responsible member of the Christian community such as love, respect, honesty and service. (6) Express accurately and respectfully what the various churches and religious group beliefs and practices are and to further eliminate prejudice and intolerance. The summary of the above NCCE objectives of Christian Religious Knowledge is to ensure moral uprightness and to adopt sound moral values.

The high level of moral decadence and insurgencies in Nigerian nation is an indication that there is poor religious teaching in secondary school system. Christian religious knowledge (CRK) as one of the religious subjects taught in secondary schools in Nigeria takes a central position in ensuring moral and spiritual well being of individuals in the society. The key roles of CRK in equipping the individuals and ensuring high level of morality is made clear in the objectives of CRK at the senior secondary level which include; to provide more opportunities for Nigerian youths to learn more about God and thereby develop their faith in God; to enable the youths to accept Christ as their saviour; to help the youths develop Christian attitude and moral values (such as humility, respect, love, and justice, etc); to instill in the youth the spirit of tolerance, reconciliation, peaceful co existence and non-violence as well as to develop and foster in the youth the spirit of respect for all people and human life.

Currently, the subject has an optional status for students. Despite the fact that students choose Christian Religious Knowledge at the beginning of their senior secondary school classes, majority of the students drop the subject in their last year for other subjects. This poses a big challenge for the future of Christian Religious Knowledge (Anya, 2016). This is not a healthy development, rather, it is evidence of the shortfall in attainment of the goal and objectives of Nigerian education as enshrined in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013).

Attitude may influence students' choice of Christian Religious Knowledge. Kasomo (2011) stated that attitude is an index of an individual's thoughts and feelings about people, objects and issues in the environment. Thus, attitudes are crucial in understanding the way people perceive the world around them, as they determine what a person will see and hear and think and do, thus making them central to life. In this context attitude formation and change is an important part of identifying and explaining an individual's attitude to an object or issue. Kasomo carried out a study to investigate student attitude toward the teaching of Christian Religious Studies in Kenya in his findings. The positive group viewed the subject in terms of its usefulness, relevance and applicability in personal development, vocational training and improving the final grade in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). This view often predominated by undue textbooks and learning methods they liked. They desired relevant, less difficult, less broad and less repetitive topics.

The negative oriented group viewed the subject as useless, irrelevant and inapplicable in life. There were 41 respondents. In conclusion, the researcher maintained that the main concern lies on how CRK is treated and approached in the context of a public mentality that trusts more in the examinations and job opportunities than on being educated for life. It is my contention that CRK needs to be viewed not as a body of knowledge and skills to be unpacked from the world of work, but as a way of guiding and leading towards critical judgment and intelligent choices based on clear concepts, values and beliefs. It is against this background that this study is poised to investigate students' attitude and choice of Christian Religious Knowledge.

Statement of the problem

The interest for a research in this area was triggered by a sense of concern on number of students that eventually register for Christian Religious Knowledge in their senior secondary classes. With the current situation in Nigeria where youths of our time are involved in all sort of criminality ranging from cultism, terrorism, kidnapping, militancy, herdsman killing, suicide bombing, etc. Christian Religious Knowledge is supposed to be a dominant subject in secondary school because of its importance which are numerous. The importance may include: inculcation of good moral values, development of sound individual who are morally and spiritually upright, individual who are honest and truthful to develop the society. Despite the fact that many students enrol for Christian Religious Knowledge in their junior secondary classes in the state, available statistics as shown in table 1 showed a decline in their enrolment for WAEC/NECO examination. Again, looking at the performance of students on yearly basis, it would be seen that majority of the passes are concentrated on the ordinary pass not at distinction or credit level. The attitude is reflected also in negligible number of candidates seeking admission in B.Ed Christian Religious Knowledge (Kasomo, 2011).

TABLE 1

Statistics of those that enrolled for Christian Religious Knowledge and *how* the number decline from SS1-SS3 in Calabar education zone

Name of L.G.A	SS 1	SS2	SS3
Akamkpa	747	513	680
Akpabuyo	307	145	137
Bakassi	125	82	74
Biase	637	475	443
Calabar Municipality	3046	1020	487
Calabar South	1869	471	334
Odukpani	575	380	345

Source: Cross River State Secondary Education Board, Statistics Division (2016)

It is on this note that the question; does students' attitude influence their choice of Christian Religious Knowledge among senior secondary students arises. The implication is that if something is not done urgently, Art subjects especially Christian Religious Knowledge might be eradicated completely from secondary school curriculum.

The recent controversy following an alleged review of the national curriculum concerning teaching of religion that adversely affects CRK, Lawal (2017) in a statement published on the Guardian Newspaper of 29th June had it that, "it was to draw attention to a time-bomb, obnoxious, divisive and ungodly secondary school curriculum that the Federal Government is introducing and which we had earlier complained to the Presidency when the proposal for merger of the subject which occurred in 2013 and was approved by the National Council of Education and was implemented by schools in September, 2014". But for the swift intervention of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Christian Religious Knowledge would have been replaced with Civic Education.

It is against this background that this study was designed to investigate factors responsible for the fall in choice of Christian Religious Knowledge among senior secondary schools in Calabar education zone.

The purpose of the study is to investigate whether students' attitude influence their choice of Christian Religious Knowledge among secondary school students.

Research question

To what extent does the attitude of students influence their choice of Christian Religious Knowledge among secondary school students?

Statement of hypotheses

There is no significant influence of students' attitude on their choice of Christian Religious Knowledge.

Literature review

Attitude has a significance influence on students' choice. For students who are not serious with their studies, their choice is failure and vice versa (negative and positive attitude toward academic). This is confirmed by Mueller's (2016) view that the attitude with which we approach life is everyday's choice. We have the power to choose the position or perspective we will assume towards specific event and people in our lives. Students might develop positive or negative attitude towards a particular subject depending on what they see, hear and perceive. Lesson delivery in class might cause a student to develop a negative or positive attitude toward a subject. Others depend on the teacher's ability to deliver his or her lesson effectively. Omondi (2013) added that attitude is a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person or situation. Attitude influences an individual choice of action and responses to challenges, incentives and rewards.

The approach of a teacher in the class might influence student choice of subjects he/she teaches. The relationship between the subject teacher and the student determined if the student chooses the subject. The method the teacher used to teach determined how the students performed in the subject thus choice of subject. Although research has indicated that students have a larger preference for the knowledge that they can receive from a class rather than the instructor, it is the instructor who has a significant impact on how useful the subject can be (Wilhelm, 2004). Also, the preference of an instructor's lecturing style is very close to being as important as the quality of the value of the content. Students prefer subjects that are taught by teachers who are enthusiastic, well spoken, knowledgeable, caring, and helpful as opposed to instructors who are dry, inflexible, and unclear (Curran, Rosen, Feldwisch & Abell, 2006). If instructors are inflexible and unclear, they are much more likely to be difficult to learn from, which is a major concern for students (Smith, Feidwisch & Abell, 2006). If students are concerned about a teacher they are less likely to enroll in that class, and vice versa, according to the research done by Wilhelm (2004).

In the empirical work by Wilhelm (2004) conducted on form two students who are prepared to enter form three next year also have conception that science is difficult and some of them are thinking of dropping them. Out of 9 subjects they study, 54.8% of students believe mathematics is most difficult subject, followed by physics 21.4% and chemistry 7.1%, while arts subjects had 2.4% for English and Kiswahili, and 4.8% for Geography and History. Subjects they enjoyed most were Kiswahili 35.7% and Biology 21.4%. One student said because many students are frightened before joining secondary schools, therefore they start fearing science subjects and lose confidence when they learn those subjects. With the threats around, students

consolidate their perception that they will never perform well in science, they develop fear and at the end they drop the subjects. The researcher concluded that, most threats are fabricated by the society around. Students take into consideration that science is very difficult and finally react by performing poor in science to prove their beliefs that science is difficult.

Attitude are formed by students as a result of some kind of learning experience, if the experience is favourable, a positive attitude is form and vice versa (Olasheinde & Olatoye, 2014). In confirmation of the above, Sakariyau, Taiwo and Ajagbe (2016) carried out a study to investigate the attitude of secondary students toward science in Odeda Local Government Area of Ogun, Nigeria. Two hundred senior secondary school students consisting of 84 males and 116 females were selected from five secondary schools using stratified random sampling techniques. A 20 items attitude to science questionnaire on a five point likert scale was adopted for the study. The instrument has a reliability coefficient of 0.73 using Cronbach's reliability method. Frequency count and percentages were used to obtain an overall picture of students' attitude towards science while independent t-test was used to find out whether there was significance difference between the attitude of male and female students. Finding showed that a higher proportion of the students display positive attitude towards science.

Fasakin (2015) supported the finding by the researchers, he recognizes attitude as a major factor in subject choice. He also considered attitude as a mental and natural state of readiness, organized through experience exerting a directive influence upon the individual's responses to all object and situations with which it is related.

Furthermore, Waititu (2004) indicates that although the link between performance and attitude is not very strong, what is very clear is the strong relationship between attitude and the choice of a subject of study. Students' attitudes towards Christian Religious Knowledge affect their choice of the subjects. Generally, a negative attitude towards a given subject leads to lack of interest and when subjects are to be selected, as in senior secondary schools, it leads to avoiding the subject or course. Furthermore, a positive attitude towards a subject according to Omondi (2013) leads to a positive commitment that influences lifelong interest and learning. A student's attitude about an instructor has a large impact on their attitude toward a class (Curran & Rosen, 2006).

Omondi (2013) in another study carried out an investigation to ascertain whether attitude influence choice of biology in Kenya secondary schools, Sample size of 11 teachers and 150 students was drawn from the teachers and the students from form two to four A 4-point Likert scale was used. 1-1.49 represented strongly negative, 1.5-2.49 represented fairly negative, 2.50-3.49 represented fairly positive and 3.50-4.0 represented strongly positive. From the findings, students' attitude towards biology was fairly positive as shown by a mean of 3.325. In addition, students' attitude towards chemistry was fairly negative as shown by a mean of 2.461. Moreover, students' attitude towards physics was strongly negative as shown by a mean of 1.201. The mathematical calculations in physics may make the subject a preserve of very few learners. The study concludes that negative attitude towards a subject led to lack of interest. Quality of a subject has tremendous effect on whether a student chooses to enrol in a class.

Kasomo (2011) conducted a study to find out the impact of teachers and students' attitudes on the teaching of Christian religious education in Machakos secondary schools. The purpose of the investigation is to explain the attitudes of teachers and students with a view to drawing conclusions, which would be recommended for improving the status of Christian religious education (CRK) in secondary school. The sample comprised 37 secondary schools teaching CRK from form one to four. Responses on the attitude scale for each of the statements ran from strongly agree, through agree, disagree to strongly disagree. These four points were given simple weights of 4,3,2,1 and 0 to no answer, for scoring purposes, from the questionnaire, the study had also employed interviews. These values were reversed for negative attitude items so that high scores always indicated positive attitude, while low score represented negative attitude to the nature of CRK. All respondents' scores were standardized to level and spread of 0 to 100% using the formula $(x-54)(162/100)$. X stood for each case's total score, while 54 which was a level value was subtracted from x so that a zero level was obtained.

The results were then divided by 162/100 a value of spread, based on 100, a convenient level. All scores ended up ranging from 0(negative attitude) to 100(positive attitude). Individual attitude scores ranged from 4 to 100. The scale's mean was 72 and had a respondent's attitude scores was negatively skewed. The finding revealed that, the positive group viewed the subject in terms of its usefulness, relevance and applicability in personal development. While the negative oriented group viewed the subject as useless, irrelevant and inapplicable in life. There were 41 respondents (40 students and one teacher) who dismissed CRK as useless in life.

Wachira (2015) in yet another study investigated students' attitude on the role of CRK in the promotion of social cohesion. The study was conducted among Form four CRK secondary school students in Nairobi County, some of their teachers and a few education officers in the County. The target population was 5550 CRK students, 160 CRK teachers and 8 education officers. From this population a sample of 550 CRK students, 25 CRK teachers and 4 education officers participated in the study. The research findings were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. This finding is similar to what Kamau (2015) found when studying factors influencing implementation of Life Skills Education in schools. She found out that gender did not seem to affect students' response rather attitude to the subject.

In this context, the researcher studied how the students' attitude towards CRK influences their efforts towards social cohesion. This is because a person's attitudes help him or her interprets and responds to the environmental stimuli thereby influencing his or her reactions. Therefore a student who has a positive attitude of CRK is expected to manifest characteristics that will lead to sound judgement in conflicting social situations. This means that, a student who has a positive attitude on the role of CRK in social cohesion, is likely to use teachings acquired in the subject to interact in a cohesive manner. The author concluded that However, inspite of these positive attitudes and perceptions towards CRK, the majority of students given the chance would not continue studying the subject or would take it for the wrong reasons.

Azubuikie (2013) in a paper to determine the influential factors that affects the attitude of the students towards the study of vocational/Technical subjects (Home economics) in secondary

schools. A sample of five (5) secondary schools was randomly chosen from the educational zones. The level of students chosen was SSIII students. This was because it was perceived that the students have been more exposed to the study of some of the vocational/technical subjects. Thus, a total of 100 students were chosen as the sample size. The findings of the study revealed that factors of the items presented for analysis where proved to be factors that could influence the attitude of students towards the study of vocational/technical subjects.

Mokoro, Wambiya and Aloka-Peter (2014), in a study to investigate the influence of selected social factors influencing the students' attitude towards chemistry in Nyamaiya division, Nyamira county, it Was found that there is a statistically significant relationship between the teacher's characteristics and the students' attitude towards chemistry in Nyamaiya division, Nyamira district, Kenya. This finding is consistent with Kususanto, Fui and Hooi (2012), who found out that teachers' expectancy affected students' attitude towards science. Olusola and Rotimi (2012) similarly established that good lecturer–student interrelationships lead to the development of positive attitudes towards physics among the students. Furthermore, Kosgei, Mise, Odera and Ayugi (2013) also found out that as the number of teachers' years of experience progressed, students' attitude and academic achievement increased and vice versa. The implication of these findings is that teacher characteristics have a significant influence on students' attitude towards chemistry.

Methodology

The ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. The aim was to determine the extent to which attitude influence the choice of Christian Religious Knowledge. The research area was Calabar Education Zone. The population of this study consisted of all senior secondary school students in public and private secondary schools in Calabar education zone. Statistics from the Cross River State Ministry of Education shows that there are thirteen thousand, one hundred and thirty eight (13,138) SSS 1, 2 and 3 arts students in the eighty one (81) secondary schools in Calabar Education Zone as presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Distribution of senior secondary school students in public and private secondary schools by local government areas in Calabar education zone

S/N	LGA	No. of schools	No. of students
1.	Akamkpa	18	1940
2.	Akpabuyo	6	679
3.	Bakassi	3	337
4.	Biase	16	1555
5.	Calabar Municipality	16	4553
6.	Calabar South	7	2674
7.	Odukpani	15	1400

The proportionate stratified random sampling and proportionate simple random sampling techniques were used for this study. The schools in the zone were stratified into the seven strata, while simple random sampling technique was adopted to select the local government areas used for the study.

The sample for this study consisted of seven hundred and three (703) senior secondary school two (SSS 2) students being 40% of the population of the study, that was randomly selected from public and private secondary schools in four local government areas. They comprised both male and female students. This is presented in Table 3. The instrument used for data collection in the study was a structured questionnaire.

TABLE 3

Sample distribution of SS 2 students in four LGAs of Calabar education zone

S/N	L.G.A	Name of school	Sample
1	Akamkpa	Govt Sec. Sch., Akamkpa	139
2		Com. Sec. Sch., Old Netim	73
3		Comm. Sec. Grammar Sch., Oban	75
4		Com. Sec. Sch., Ikpai	24
5		Ojor Com. Presbyterian Sec. Sch., Ojor	55
6		Comp. High Sch., Mbeban	57
7		Treasure Child Sec. Sch., Awi	38
1	Akpabuyo	Sec. Sch., Ikot Edem Odo	57
2		Com. Comp. Sec. Sch., Akwa Ikot Edem	29
1	Calabar Municipality	Govt College, Ikot Ansa	189
2		Margaret Ekpo Sec/Women Voc. Educ. Centre	288

3		NYSC Demonstration Sec. Sch., Ikot Ansa	246
4		Govt. Sec. Sch., Nyaghasang	83
5		Govt. Sec. Sch., Ikot Efanga Mkpa	124
6		Govt. Sec. Sch., Akai Efa	-
1	Odukpani	Comm. Sec. Sch., Akpab Okoyong	101
2		Eniong Abatim Comp. Sec. Sch., Atan Anoyom	70
3		Govt Sec. Sch., Asang Eniong	7
4		Govt Sec. Sch., Obio Usiere	10
5		Govt Sec. Sch., Inua Akpa	47
6		Govt Sec. Sch., Atan Eki	37
			Total

Results

There is no significant influence of students' attitude on their choice of Christian Religious Knowledge.

The independent variable in this hypothesis attitude towards CRK which is categorized into positive and negative while the dependent variable is students' choice of Christian Religious Knowledge, which is categorized into Yes and No options. Chi-square statistical tool was used for analysis of data. The result generated from this analysis is presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4

Chi-square analysis of the influence of attitude to CRK On students' choice of Christian Religious Knowledge in secondary schools in Calabar education zone

Attitude to CRK	Choice of CRK		Total	Chi-square	Sig.
	Yes (%)	No (%)			
Negative	42 (43.30)	55 (56.70)	97	1.538	.215
Positive	301 (50.08)	300 (49.92)	601		

Not significant at 0.05; df = 1; Critical $X^2 = 3.84$

As presented in Table 4, the result of analysis of hypothesis four showed that the calculated X^2 -value of 1.538 is less than the critical X^2 value of 3.84 at 0.05 level of significance with 1 degree of freedom. This implied that the null hypothesis was upheld. Therefore, there is no significant influence of attitude towards CRK on students' choice of Christian Religious Knowledge (CRK) in Cross River State.

The result further revealed that 42 students representing 43.30 percent of students with negative attitude towards CRK were offering Christian Religious Knowledge while 55 representing 56.70 percent were not offering the subject. Again, the result also showed that 301 students representing 50.08 percent of students with positive attitude towards CRK were offering

Christian Religious Knowledge while 300 representing 49.92 percent of the students were not offering the subject in public secondary schools in the study area. This result showed that students with negative attitude as well as those with positive attitude towards CRK did not differ significantly in their choice of the subject in the study area.

Discussion of findings

The report of finding showed that the calculated X^2 value of .566 is less than the critical X^2 value of 3.84 at 0.05 level of significance with 1 degree of freedom. The implication of this finding is that there is no significant influence of attitude towards CRK on senior secondary school students' choice of Christian Religious Knowledge in secondary schools in Cross River State. The reason for this finding could be that students' choice of Christian Religious Knowledge is most really influenced by the fact that they have negative attitude towards the subject but it is rather attributed to their choice of career, which largely determine their choice of subject combination as required by their preferred future career. Though, students may have positive or negative attitude towards the subject, if it does not serve as a major subject required for their future career, they won't choose to offer the subject.

The finding of this study is in agreement with the finding of Mueller (2016) which reported that the attitude with which we approach life is a choice every day. We have the power to choose the position or perspective we will assume towards specific event and people in our lives. Students might develop positive or negative attitude towards a particular subject depending on what they see, hear and perceive. Lesson delivery in class might cause a student to develop a negative or positive toward a subject. Others depend on the teacher's ability to deliver his or her lesson effectively. Omondi (2013) added that attitude is a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person or situation. Attitude influences an individual's choice of action and responses to challenges, incentives and rewards.

The finding of this study also supported the finding of Waititu (2004) which indicated that although the link between performance and attitude is not very strong, what is very clear is the strong relationship between attitude and the choice of a subject of study. Students' attitudes towards Christian Religious Knowledge affect their choice of the subject. Generally, a negative attitude towards a given subject leads to lack of interest and when subjects are to be selected, as in senior secondary schools, it leads to avoiding the subject or course. Furthermore, a positive attitude towards a subject according to Omondi (2013) leads to a positive commitment that influences lifelong interest and learning. A student's attitude about an instructor has a large impact on their attitude toward a class.

Conclusion

The findings obtained from analysis of data and hypothesis testing revealed that there is no significant influence of attitude towards CRK and students' choice of Christian Religious Knowledge.

Recommendations

- i. Students should be sensitized on the need to choose Christian Religious Knowledge because of the moral values the subject transmits to students, so as to curb the incidence of negative vices like cultism.
- ii. School counsellors should encourage students who choose careers that require Christian Religious Knowledge as an option among other subjects to always opt for CRK as a better alternative to others
- iii. Students with negative attitude towards Christian Religious Knowledge should be properly sensitized on the need to change their attitude towards the subject and appreciate its moral values.

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