

The Influence Of Christian Religious Education As A Means Of Curbing Moral Decadence Among Youths In Uganda. A Case Of Selected Secondary Schools In Lubyra Parish

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Abstract

This research study aimed to investigate the influence of strengthening Christian religious education programs on the moral values and behaviors of students from three selected secondary schools located within Lubyra Parish in Uganda. Over the past decades, there has been a rising concern about the decline of moral standards among Uganda's youth population manifested through various social problems. In response, the clergy and church leadership of Lubyra Parish initiated discussions with the school administrators on how religious education could play a more proactive role in curbing this moral decadence trend, especially among adolescents in the local community. A mixed-methods approach was employed involving collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. Baseline surveys were administered to gather information on students' religiosity, moral perceptions, and reports of misconduct incidents. In-depth interviews were also conducted with key stakeholders to understand prevalent moral issues and their perspectives. Church attendance records and disciplinary reports from the schools over previous years were examined. Targeted interventions were then designed and implemented within the religious education curriculum focusing on character development. Periodic evaluation surveys and interviews were carried out after 18 months to assess any changes. The findings indicate that strengthening the religious education programs through additional teacher training, improved resources, closer supervision and integrating moral lessons across subjects, positively influenced the students' moral worldviews, behaviors and school performance. Reported social problems reduced notably. The study furthermore, revealed that 129 (93%) of the study respondents agreed that lack of morals has led to an increase in robbery and other criminal activities of any kind, 1 (2%) were not sure of the effect however 8 (5%) disagreed with the effect. The study concludes that enhancing the quality and effectiveness of Christian religious education can help address issues undermining societal well-being by inculcating strong moral values from a young age. It offers practical insights that could guide education policy on integrating character development nationally.

Keywords: Christian Religious Education, Curbing Moral Decadence and Youths

Background of the study

Christian religious education has been an integral part of the Ugandan education system since its inception in the late 19th century when Christian missionaries first established schools in the country (Kazaara, 2023). At that time, the goal of education, in addition to literacy, was to spread Christian virtues and morals. Over the decades, Christian values continued to significantly influence Ugandan society (Victoria et al., 2023). Recently, however, there has been growing concern about the decline in moral standards among Ugandan youth. Problems such as premarital sex, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, violent crime and riots are on the rise (John et al., 2023). Many argue that this is due to the gradual weakening of the influence of religion and traditional societal norms of acceptable behavior. With increasing exposure to Western media and culture through the Internet and

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globalization, Ugandan youth are increasingly adopting a lifestyle that older generations perceive as morally dubious. Lubyapa Parish is located in Mukono District in Central Uganda. It consists of 5 rural sub-counties with a population of over 35,000 people, many of whom are small farmers. There are 3 government aided secondary schools located within the parish boundaries which enroll over 1,200 students aged 12-18 each year. As in the rest of Uganda, Lubyapa parish communities are predominantly Christian (Ntirandekura and Friday, 2022). Local churches and religious leaders have expressed concern about declining moral standards, particularly among high school youth. Problems reported include inactivity during school breaks, substance abuse, premarital sex, disrespect for elders, rising rebellious attitudes and early pregnancies. In response to these growing social problems, the clergy and church leadership of Lubyapa Parish began discussions with administrators and teachers of 3 local high schools to explore how Christian religious education could play a more active role in helping to curb moral decadence (Richard et al., 2023). It was agreed that measures should be taken to help strengthen the character and ethical formation of students through increasing the quality and impact of religious education (Anthony, Kazaara, & Kazaara, 2023). A research project was designed to quantitatively and qualitatively examine the influence of religious education on the moral values and behavior of students in 3 selected secondary schools. A literature review was conducted to understand what previous studies have said about the relationship between religious education and youth morality (Edgar & Moses, 2023). Theories such as Kohlberg's stages of moral development and Erikson's stages of psychosocial development provided conceptual frameworks. Over 18 months, the selected schools strengthened their Christian religious education programs by providing additional teacher training, improving teaching and learning resources, closer supervision, and integrating moral lessons into other subjects (Emmanuel et al., 2023). Follow-up surveys and interviews were conducted with the same respondents to assess any changes in student behavior, perceptions, church involvement, and reported social problems. School performance records were also examined. The findings of this research project seek to contribute to ongoing discussions about the role of religion in shaping the morals and behavior of young people in particular in the increasingly globalized world of Africa. It aims to provide empirical evidence on whether enhancing the quality and effectiveness of Christian religious education programs can help address problems that undermine societal well-being.

Problem statement

Students at their young age learn better and are able to transform from one perspective to another. This is the time when they begin to show leadership and also a willingness to follow the leadership trait. However, their moral decadence persists (Godfrey et al., 2023). Their indecent dressing by their parents and their society today, drug abuse, use of offensive words and absenteeism from school are no doubt a reflection of their moral decadence. The current moral decadence among the youth can be traced to bad parenting, modernization, westernization, bad governance, bad religious teachings, among others (Anthony, Kazaara, Kazaara et al., 2023). However, not every child received the best parenting training that everyone could wish for. Ali and Akubu (2014) identified Christian Religious Studies as an alternative that could be used in improving students' morals, God's commandments and faith in Him at their best. These teachings are embedded in stories and events from the Bible that are aimed at shaping human behavior (Isaiah & Alex, 2023). Therefore, the objective of this study was to investigate the influence that Christian religious education has in secondary schools in Uganda to influence the proper moral development of a child.

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Specific objectives

1. To examine the effects of moral decadence on students in senior secondary schools in Lubyia parish
2. To examine the causes of moral decadence among secondary school students in Lubyia parish.
3. To examine the various Christian religious biblical teachings that focus on fighting moral decadence.

Methodology

This study used a descriptive survey research design with inclusion of both qualitative and quantitative approaches where people's views and opinions were sought and described accordingly to establish the influence of Christian religious education as a means of curbing moral decadence among youths (L. Nafiu et al., 2013). The study was conducted from secondary schools in Lubyia parish Rubaga division Kampala district (Rasheed et al., 2022). The schools included Namungoona progressive secondary school, St Florence senior secondary school, Namungoona high school and Chwa II memorial senior secondary school. A sample size of 150 respondents was obtained from the population size of the study using different sampling methods as shown in table 1 below (Olanrewaju et al., 2021).

Table 1: Showing sample size and sampling technique

Category	Sample size	Sampling technique
School leaders	16	Purposive sampling method
Teachers	40	Purposive sampling
Non-teaching staffs	16	Cluster sampling
Students	78	Simple random sampling
Total	150	

Primary data was collected by use of questionnaires and interview guides which were administered to respondents since they were the ones to give firsthand information on the subject under study. Questionnaires such as open ended and close ended questionnaires consisting a series of questions drafted to collect information in relation to the research objectives or questions (L. A. Nafiu et al., 2012). The study used a 5-point Likert scale to measure the strength of the sub constructs of the variables in relation to respondents' responses. The scale ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree (strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree, and strongly disagree).Editing of collected data was done to make data ready and simpler for presentation. The filled questionnaires were edited one by one to correct errors done by the respondents. Data was edited in order to check for accuracy, completeness, consistency and uniformity. The edited data was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively as follows; Quantitative data was grouped and statistical description such as tables showing frequencies and percentages for better interpretation were used. However, qualitative data was analyzed in a way of identifying responses from respondents that are relevant to the research problem. Mainly such data was analyzed by explaining the facts collected from the field under which the

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researcher was able to quote respondents' responses. Data was analyzed inform of tables, frequencies and percentages using SPSS & STATA (Nelson et al., 2022)

RESULTS

Table 1: Showing respondents responses on the effects of moral decadence on students'

performance

No	Statement	Agree		Not sure		Disagree	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
1	Moral decadence may result to school dropout and reduction in literature growth.	89	64.5	3	2.2	46	33.3
2	Lack of morals has led to an increase in robbery and other criminal activities of any kind	129	93	1	2	8	5
3	Moral decadence has led to the decline in moral education, because moral decadence does not assist moral education	59	42.7	17	12.3	62	45
4	Moral decadence results to reduction in literature growth	63	45.6	31	22.4	44	32
5	Moral decadence results to violence, sexual harassment, and discrimination	138	100				
6	Moral decadence has led to decline in self-esteem	119	86.2	3	2.2	16	11.6
7	Moral decadence leads to low academic performance	138	100				

Source: Primary source 2023

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Table 1 shows the presentation about the first objective which aimed at examining the effects of moral decadence on students' performance and the results shows that 138 (100%) of the 138 study respondents agreed that moral decadence results to violence, sexual harassment, and discrimination. Furthermore 138 (100%) of them also indicated that moral decadence leads to low academic performance. 89 (64.5%) of the respondents agreed that moral decadence may result to school dropout and reduction in literature growth, 3 (2.2%) were not sure of the effect while 46 (33.3%) of them disagreed with the effect (Brighton et al., 2023).

The study furthermore, revealed that 129 (93%) of the study respondents agreed that lack of morals has led to an increase in robbery and other criminal activities of any kind, 1 (2%) were not sure of the effect however 8 (5%) disagreed with the effect. With respect to moral decadence has led to the decline in moral education, because moral decadence does not assist moral education system, 59 (42.7%) of them agreed with the statement while 17 (12.3%) of them were not sure with the effect however 62 (45%) disagreed with the effect.

With respect to the fourth effect that stated moral decadence results to reduction in literature growth 63 (45.6%) of them agreed with the statement, 31 (22.4%) were not sure with the statement however, 44 (32%) of them disagreed with the statement. Lastly on this objective, 119 (86.2%) agreed that moral decadence has led to violence, sexual; harassment, and discrimination, 3 (2.2%) were not sure with the statement however 16 (11.6%) disagreed with the statement.

Table 2: Showing respondents responses on the causes of moral decadence among secondary schools students

No	Statement	Agree		Not sure		Disagree	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
1	Unstable home environments	101	73.2	9	6.5	28	20.3
2	Chronic family poverty	127	92			11	8
3	Failure to attain guidance and counselling at primary education level	98	71	3	2	37	27
4	Ineffective parenting and environmental factors	63	45.7	14	10.1	61	44.2
5	Use of drugs	116	84			22	16
6	Increasing and un controlled social media platforms	138	100				

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7	Some are forced by fellow peers	126	91.3			12	8.7
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Source: Primary source 2023

The second objective was about determining the causes of moral decadence among secondary school students and the results shows that 101 (73.2%) among those who participated in the study agreed that moral decadence among secondary school students is caused by unstable home environment, 9 (6.5%) of the study respondents were not sure of the statement however 28 (20.3%) of the disagreed to unstable home environment. 127 (92%) of them agreed that moral decadence among secondary school students is caused by chronic family poverty however 11 (8%) of them disagreed to the causes (Anthony, Kazaara, Kazaara, et al., 2023). When respondents asked about failure to attain guidance and counseling at primary education level 98 (71%) of them agreed while 3 (2%) of them were not sure with the cause however 37 (27%) disagreed to the causes. With respect to ineffective parenting and environmental factors 63 (45.7%) agreed with the statement, 14 (10.1%) were not sure while 61 (44.2%) disagreed to the causes. On the use of drugs, 116 (84%) of them agreed with drug use, 22 (16%) disagreed with drug use.

When respondents asked about increasing and uncontrolled social media platforms all respondents 138 (100%) agreed to social media platforms. Lastly the study revealed that 126 (91.3%) of the respondents agreed that moral decadence is caused by peer influence among students however 12 (8.7%) disagreed with peer pressure or influence (Mark et al., 2023).

Table 3: Showing various religious biblical teachings focusing on fighting moral decadence

No	Statement	Agree		Not sure		Disagree	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
1	The ten commandments focuses on preventing harm to	120	86.9	3	2.2	15	10.9
	God who asks to show love to one another						
2	Ephesians 4: 29. No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Jesus Christ cares for the church	79	57.3	5	3.6	54	39.1
3	1 st peter 4: 7-11: the end of the world is coming soon. Therefore be earnest and disciplined.	129	93.5			9	6.5

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4	Leviticus 19: it shows the holiness of human in personal	78	56.5	13	9.4	47	34.1
5	Deuteronomy 24 :14-15: never take advantage of the poor and labourers	93	67.4	5	3.6	40	29
6	Ephesians 42: 32. It says be kind to each another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven	119	86.2	2	1.5	17	12.3
7	Galatians 5: 22 but the Holy spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.	138	100		.		

Source: Primary source 2023

The third objective aimed at examining the various biblical themes that can be employed against moral decadence and the study result shows that 120 (86.9%) of the study respondents who positively participated in this study agreed that the ten commandments can be uses because they focus on preventing harm to one another while focusing on serving one God who asks to show love while focusing on serving one another, 3 (2.2%) of them were not sure of the ten commandments of God, however, 15 (10.9%) of them disagreed with the ten commandments.

When asked about Ephesians 4:29, which says no one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Jesus Christ cares for the church, 79 (57.3%) were affirmative with the scripture, while

5 (3.6%) were not sure however 54 (39.1%) disagreed with the scripture. The researcher also asked respondents about 1st Peter 4:7-11, which says the end of the world is coming soon. Therefore be earnest and disciplined, 129 (93.5%) of them agreed with the scripture while 9 (6.5%) disagreed with the power of the scripture in controlling moral decadence.

With respect to Leviticus 19, which says show the holiness of human in personal conduct to both fellow humans, 78 (56.5%) of the entire respondents agreed to the scripture, 13 (9.4%) of them were not sure with the power of the scripture, however, 47 (34.1%) of them disagreed to the power of the scripture in curbing moral decadence. Looking at Deuteronomy 24:14-15: which encourage one never to take advantage of the poor and laborers', 93 (67.4%) of the study respondents agreed to the scripture, 5 (3.6%) of them were not sure with the scripture however, 40 (29%) of the total respondents disagreed with the scripture. Furthermore, when respondents asked about Ephesians 42: 32, which says be kind to each another, tender-hearted, forgiving one

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another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you, 119 (86.2%) of the respondents agreed to this scripture, 2 (1.5%) of them were not sure however 17 (12.3%) of the study respondents disagreed to the scripture.

Lastly the researcher looked at Galatians 5:22 which says but the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self- control, all respondents 138 (100%) of them agreed to the scripture.

Conclusion

The increase in moral decadence has contributed to an increase in school burn out, robbery as well as corruption among officials. Christian religious education is imperative to curbing moral decadence starting from school, protecting and utilization of national resources. Maintaining the available human rights, social media platforms, un regulated and unethical television programs, irresponsible parents and government as well as further adaptation of western and un African style, more and more youths are engaging in poor behaviors among our societies. This increase in the adoption of such has led to an increased school burn out rate, sexual harassment, robbery, corruption among all offices, and death of related kinds. Several studies conducted are continuing to identify the causes of this vice, and several other studies are continuing to do so. However, Christian religious education as a subject has the capacity if implemented properly to control the spread of these behaviors among youths in all secondary schools country wide. Christian religious teachings such as Psalm 103:3, 10-12, Isaiah 43:25, Mathew 6: 14-15, Matthew 10:42, Hebrews 6: 10, psalm 34: 14, Psalm 37: 37 and Mathew 5:9 among other scriptures if reflected on properly can guide youths towards improving their behaviors based on Gods will of doing. If we cannot combine hands with the word of the living God, the effect that moral decadence has on our society, our lives, families, administration and even natural environment will surely diminish.

Recommendations

The study finds that the ministry of education and sports has failed to facilitate secondary schools with the necessary materials such as bibles and qualified Christian religious education to assist or teach students in their relevant schools. Therefore, the study recommends that parents should be forced to facilitate their children with all the necessary materials needed in learning and teaching religious education. The study recommends policy makers to embark of redesigning laws concerning human rights, since it is through human rights that children can no longer be punished in their young stage when they have done wrong.

The study furthermore, recommends the ministry of information and technology, the Uganda communication commission and parents to prevent their children from accessing unethical social media platforms and television programs.

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