



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



## Impact of religious education on Pupil's Behavior: A case study of selected secondary schools in Lusaka District, Zambia

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### Abstract

The study examined impact of religious education on pupils' behaviour in the selected secondary schools in Lusaka district, Zambia. Specific objectives were; (a) To assess effectiveness of teaching religious education in secondary schools, (b) To establish the relationship between religious education syllabus and shaping pupil moral development, (c) To determine whether the Zambian government has policy framework interventions that support the role of religious education in building Zambia as a Christian. In order to meet the objective, descriptive and explanatory research design was used. Both qualitative and quantitative research approach were used to analyze and interpret data. Data was collected through oral interviews, questionnaires and observations. Furthermore, contributions by some Pentecostal churches and other religious were of importance to the education sector. The study sampled head teachers, teachers of religious studies and pupils of religious education. The sample size for the study was 100 respondents. The findings of the study were that values and practices helps progress in education. The role of Religious Education prepares learners to be morally upright and influences them to fear God and respect fellow human beings. Additionally, the findings revealed that the teaching of religious education is a critical component that enables the school going youth to acquire morality by instilling the right attitudes for social obligations and responsibilities in the society. Based on conclusions of this study, the researchers came up with the following recommendations; Religious Education should be taught in all secondary schools and Zambia at large due to its power to reduce frequency of disciplinary cases in schools, to impart practical ability for learners to discriminate between right and wrong and choose what is right in day-to-day life. The other recommendation is that the government of Zambia and other related agencies should train more Religious Education teachers as the increase of RE teachers will make it possible for the subject to be taught across secondary schools.

**Keywords:** Behaviour; Community; Moral Development; Pupil; Religious Education; Teaching and Values.

### 1. Introduction

One of the critical needs of any society is education. Education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, morals beliefs and habits (Musaku, 2019). The role of education in the transformation of lives is acknowledged by Wright (1993). UNESCO believes that education is a human right for all throughout life and that access must be matched by quality. From early in a child's life, education is provided through the process of socialization. Childhood socialization enables a child to assimilate the desired behaviour patterns of a particular society. Although informal education happens without deliberate planning, society has from time immemorial deliberately structured the learning process to ensure that desired outcomes are achieved. Masterton (2017), expresses the words of Plato and argues that education and admonition commence in the first years of childhood and last to the very end of life. This simply means that equipping children with the right foundation in education commences at the very early stages of a child's life. There are many different experiences that a family, community or a society can provide, but

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education tends to be the centralized focus where children must experience to stand on the right foundation in their lives.

One of the modes of provision of education is through Christian religious education. Christian religious education is defined as the process where by Christian learning takes place. It often involves teaching which enables practicing Christians to adopt and deepen their Christian belief, values and dispositions to experience and act in a Christian way (CDC, 2000). This has led to different teaching methods being employed, some of which have led to indoctrination and confessionalism in class. Religious education (RE) as it is taught in the schools of Zambia today has three main strands. First, it seeks to enable pupils to develop a knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and practices. Since Christianity has played such a significant part in the historical development of this country, its beliefs and practices feature prominently in the Religious Education programme of all schools. However, the law makes it clear that pupils should also be given opportunities to develop an understanding of the religious beliefs and practices of the other major religions represented in Great Britain as well (Kamuwanga, 2015). The religions that are usually taught in schools include Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism in addition to Christianity.

Western education was introduced to Zambia by Christian missionaries who used the school as an agent of evangelization and conversion. Religious Instruction (RI), the precursor of Religious Education (RE), was thus at the core of the curriculum and enjoyed high status with the highest number of contact hours. With the passage of time, the aims of Religious Education have changed as the case were during the 1977 Education Reforms when the syllabuses were changed to conform to the philosophy of *Zambian Humanism* (Carmody, 2014). Currently, the policy which underpins education in Zambia is given in the 1996 document, 'Educating our Future' Though not explicitly stated, Religious Education's goals of religious literacy, religious pluralism and liberalism are implied in the policy document, which states that the Ministry of Education has set the goals of producing a learner capable of being animated by a personally held set of civic, moral and spiritual values; demonstrating free expression of one's own ideas and exercising tolerance for other people's views; appreciating Zambia's ethnic cultures, customs and traditions, and upholding national pride, sovereignty, peace, freedom and independence (MoE, 1996).

According to the *Zambian Ministry of Education*, Religious Education is the guiding of pupils by teachers in an open-ended and critical evaluation of different religions to discover what they alone can discover and what they alone can put into practice since God means different things to different pupils (Henriot, 2018). Despite many changes in recent decades, Christianity still has a significant place in the religious education curriculum in Zambia. It is unsurprisingly a central part of Religious Education within the Christian-based schools of a religious character (often called 'church schools'), but is also an important part of the curriculum in community schools. Under current legislation, Religious Education must 'reflect the fact that religious traditions in this country are in the main Christian, whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of other religious traditions' (Government 1996).

Christianity has played such an important part in the formation of our cultural heritage (Chiluba, 1991). It would be all but impossible to comprehend our society and its background without an understanding of the Christian story, an introduction to Christian doctrines and the historical development of the Christian church and consequently Western society. Mbiti (1986) states that the study of Religious Education with children helps to develop the children knowledge and understanding of Christianity and in some cases, not just Christianity but also other religious cultures and other belief systems. Previous studies have also shown that religious education has encouraged children to learn from various religious beliefs, values and culture while at the same time, exploring their own beliefs regarding their religion. This comprehensive study in primary schools has also help children to mature personally and socially as well as refining their psychological judgments and decisions on religious, moral and social issues, preparing them for life in a secular society (Musongole, 2010). Therefore, this study sought to examine the impact of religious education on pupil's behavior in at some selected secondary schools in Lusaka district, Zambia.

### **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

Christian religious education is ideal for inculcating the desired character in the learners, hence it constitutes a large part of character education but this is not the case in most schools (O'Brien, 2006). The main principle of good character is respect, truth, fair, and responsibility (Simuchimba, 2005) but this has not been observed in many schools. Education, in its own domain, has been part and parcel of our individual lives even from the inception of our respective lives. No wonder it is being described as a field of action in its own right. This is the practical aspect of education as those actions have in retrospect been accorded to us when we were growing up. John Wilson said that education should be seen as a tool of various authorities like a huge corporation, institutional settings, research institutes/universities, or better yet, that of a country (Henze, 2014). *Zambian Religious Education* has, since independence, developed from being confessional and denominational in the 1960s, through being

ecumenical and interdenominational in the 1970s, to being educational and multi-faith from the 1980s. Despite these changes, Zambian RE scholars have argued that the subject should become 'more transformative' in nature and that it should adopt a critical understanding approach (Ibid, 2005). Therefore, this study is an attempt to deepen understanding of this contested area of the role of Religious Education in a school curriculum.

### **1.2. The Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of religious education on pupil's behavior at the selected secondary schools in Lusaka district of Zambia.

### **1.3. Research Objectives**

The objectives of the study were to:

- Assess effectiveness of teaching Religious Education in secondary schools in Lusaka district.
- Establish the relationship between Religious Education syllabus and shaping pupil moral development in secondary schools of Lusaka district.
- Determine whether the Zambian government has policy framework interventions that support the role of Religious Education in building Zambia as a Christian nation.

### **1.4. Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of the study focuses on role of Religious Education and Zambia as a nation in line with the Ministry of Education (1996) stated aim of teaching learners Religious Education in an integrated school curriculum area from primary school to tertiary level of education (which is to shape the development of learners' personally held set of civic, moral and spiritual values). The current Religious Education syllabus contains topics on moral and spiritual value education but since both the syllabus and teaching and learning materials are not explicit, teachers and learners may not be aware that some of the topics are on moral and spiritual value education. The study is premised on the analysis of the impact of Religious Education on pupil's behavior in secondary schools. Hill, (2014) mentions that the behavioral aspect can be referred to values that can be divided into spiritual and moral categories. Moral values comprise peace, respect, love, responsibility, happiness, cooperation, honesty, humility, tolerance, unity, freedom, gratitude, cleanliness, and friendship. On the other hand, spiritual values consist of integrity, honesty, humility, respect for others, fair treatment, care and concern, listening, appreciating others, and reflective practice. Pupils partly acquire these values through Religious Education which is part of social and development studies. Due to variation in the emphasis placed in what is taught and how the value elements are explained during spiritual and moral education, children exhibit different levels of spiritual and moral understanding and behavior (Ilechukwu & Ugwuozor, 2014). Their understanding or appreciation of spiritual and moral values is consistent with their level of development and the quality of education received during values education.

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

The finding of this study would contribute to the attainment of the aim of Religions education in Zambia as a Christian and would prove useful to a better understanding of how the subject can be tailored towards the attainment of religious literacy. The study also highlighted the importance of the subject on the current status of Religious Education in a school curriculum and Zambia as a Christian nation. Secondly, the research would provide a basis to alert prospective Christians and non-Christians to identify the roles of RE in school curriculum and corrective measures necessary in managing and understanding its importance in our education sector. The study findings might also be of help to Religious Education Curriculum Specialists and syllabus designers as it would further the debate on Religious Education as a curriculum subject. It might further be well placed to inform the MESVTEE's policy on religion in education. Researchers and Religious Education scholars, too, might find this study very helpful since it opens up ground for further research. The findings of this research would undoubtedly contribute to the body of knowledge for future reference.

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## **2. Research methodology**

### **2.1. Study Design**

The study adopted a descriptive cross sectional study design. It is descriptive in nature because it was designed to examine the impact of religious education on pupil's behaviour in secondary schools of Lusaka district. Kombo & Tromp (2016) further expand descriptive studies to include habits, opinions or any of the variety of education or

social issues. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. Qualitative methods were used in this study, not only were feelings and insights considered but flexibility of approach as well as needed to allow for discovery of the unexpected and in-depth investigation of the subject matter. Quantitative methods were used because of the component of numerical analysis in order to produce quantifiable, reliable data that were generalizable. Therefore, qualitative and quantitative approaches were triangulated in order to maximize the strengths and minimize limitations of each method.

## **2.2. Research Site**

The research was conducted in Lusaka district at some selected secondary schools in Lusaka district, Zambia from which respondents were also sampled.

## **2.3. Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure**

The population for the study comprised of head teachers, teachers of religious education and pupils of religious education. The target population was 1000. The sample size involved a total of 100 respondents which included four (4) head teachers, one from each selected school. Eight (8) teachers of religious education, two from each selected school. Eighty-eight (88) pupils of religious studies, twenty-two from each selected school. The study employed both purposive and simple random sampling on different participants from the selected schools.

## **2.4. Data Analysis**

The processes of data analysis were informed by the conceptual framework. It was done manually and the variables that were engaged included religious literacy, role of religious education and religious in a Christian nation. Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 26) and Microsoft Excel (version 16) to analyze both quantitative and qualitative data from respondents. The analysis involved comparing the interviewee responses with observations and the information gathered from related literature. Much of the data were analyzed as soon as it was gathered so as to reduce on misplacement owing to the large volumes of data that were gathered to come up with frequency tables, pie charts and bar graphs.

## **2.5. Ethical Issues**

Permission from DEBS office Lusaka was sought in carrying out this study. Since the study was conducted in schools, permission was sought from the authorities and the purpose of the study made known to all the participants beforehand. Interviews were not conducted on one-to-one basis; instead, participants were grouped and identified using their titles. An informed consent was sought before collecting information from the informants and guaranteed them with security of the information they provided. Furthermore, the main objective of gathering such information was made clear to the respondents. The researcher avoided pressuring respondents to take part in the research. Alternatively, permission consents, assents were obtained from respondents involved in the research and the research topic was strategically selected to ensure that there was no harm whatsoever to the research respondents. In this study, the researcher was fully conscious of the need to abide by the ethical rule of respecting the privacy of individuals taking part in the research. In the same way, all the respondents of the study were to remain unidentified to the public as all their valuable views, opinions and perceptions were only known by the researcher for use only in the research and participant's identities will forever remain hidden.

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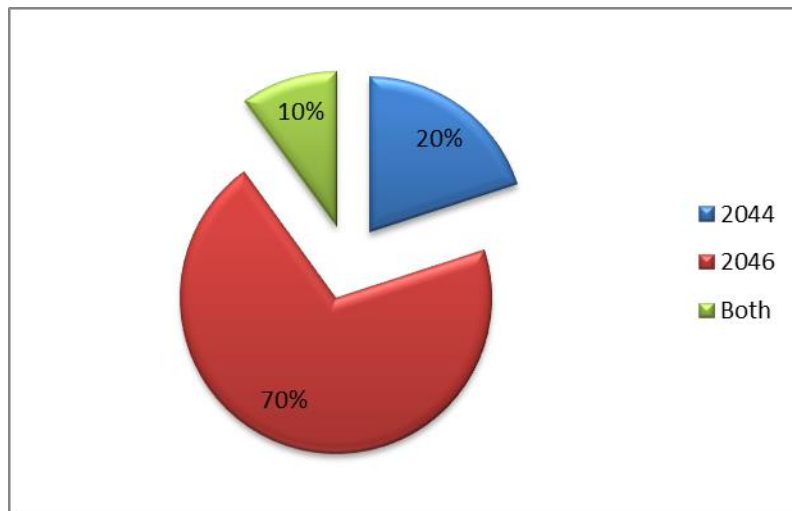
## **3. Findings and discussions**

The following findings and discussions were presented according to set research objectives:

### **3.1. Effectiveness of Teaching Religious Education in Secondary Schools**

#### *3.1.1. The Syllabus Used to Teaching Religious Education in Schools*

In order to establish which syllabus is used when teaching religious education at school between 2044 and 2046 in terms of advantages, challenges and opportunities in selected school were asked to give their views of the matter and below are the views of respondents.



Source: Author, 2023

**Figure 1** Syllabus Used to Teaching Religious Education in Schools

The figure above shows that the majority of the respondents 70% were using 2046 syllabus when teaching religious education and 20% were using 2044 syllabus while 10% of the respondents were using both 2046 and 2044 at their schools. The types of secondary schools in which the respondents teach have an influence on the Zambian educational context. These respondents who use syllabus 2046 have agreed because this syllabus is in line with the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation. Therefore, they see it as fulfilling such a declaration which is even found in the preamble of the Zambian Constitution (2016). Moreover, Comparisons were made between the two syllabuses used and religious affiliations. It is discovered that the majority of the respondents using 2046 are from Catholic/Anglican religious circles (70%), followed by some from Evangelical /Pentecostal (20%), and Indigenous Zambian Beliefs (10%). It is further revealed that all respondents from Indigenous Zambian Beliefs were using syllabus 2046 (100%). The respondents from Indigenous Zambian Beliefs who use syllabus 2046 which does not seem to favour their religious views frustrate those who are trying to use a Bible based syllabus by making appeals for its revision because it is not meeting their needs. The syllabus the respondents use has a significant relationship to the respondents' perceptions of the country's educational context and declaration as a Christian nation. The secondary school curriculum in Zambia considers religious studies as "an area of learning that helps to reinforce personal values and beliefs and respect for others' people's religious beliefs and inculcate values like honesty, reliability, respect for the law, tolerance, fairness, caring or compassion and non-discrimination. According to Kowino, Agak and Kochung (2012), the teaching of Christian Religious Education is a critical component that enables the school going youth to acquire morality by instilling the right attitudes for social obligations and responsibilities in the society. According to Musongole (2010), Religious Education deals with emotions, values, and feelings and leaves room for learners to make concrete decisions.

### 3.1.2. Response on Differences in Pupils' Disciplinary Cases as Perceived by Teachers

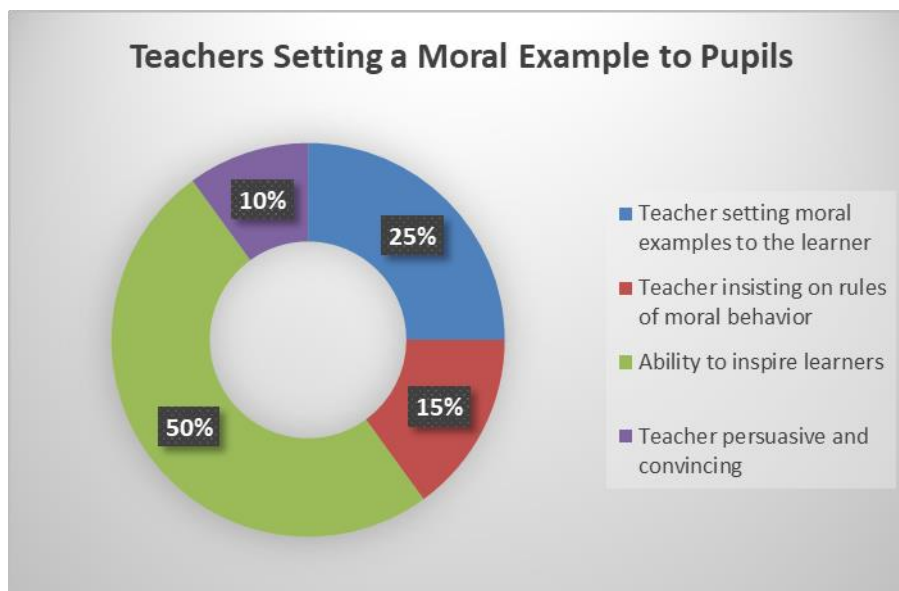
As it can be seen in Table 21 t-test for equality of means indicated significant difference in frequency of ten (10) disciplinary cases. The rate of disciplinary cases in all ten cases was higher in schools where Christian Religious Education is not taught as compared to schools where Christian Religious Education is taught. Particularly, teachers' general perception on students' disciplinary cases, premarital relationships and dodging from obligatory tasks was high in schools that do not teach Christian Religious Education and low in schools that teach the subject. Sabotage, student suspensions, pregnancy cases, riots, fighting, drug abuse and violence cases were rated low in both types of schools but still the mean scores in schools where Christian Religious Education is not taught was higher than in schools where the subject is taught. Therefore, it is inferred that there is a significant difference in teachers' ratings on frequency of disciplinary cases between schools that teach Christian Religious Education and those which do not teach the subject, the rate being higher in schools where Christian Religious Education is not taught than in schools where the subject is taught. This suggests that the teaching of Christian Religious Education helps to reduce rates for disciplinary cases in secondary schools under investigation.

**Table 1** Response on Differences in Pupils’ Disciplinary Cases

<b>Schools’ Mean Scores</b>			
Disciplinary Case	Teaching RE	Not Teaching RE	Sig. (2-tailed) Significance
Disciplinary Cases in General	2.36	3.12	0.00*
Premarital relations	2.16	2.88	0.00*
Dodging from obligatory tasks	2.33	2.88	0.00*
Sabotage Experiences	2.04	2.42	0.02*
Students Suspension	1.97	2.42	0.05*
Pregnancy Cases	1.64	2.30	0.00*
Students Riots	1.87	2.27	0.03*
Examination Malpractices	1.71	1.74	0.81
Student-Student Fighting	2.02	2.38	0.03*
Drug Abuse Experiences	1.58	2.00	0.01
Bullying	2.02	2.44	0.13*
Violence Cases	1.87	2.43	0.00*

Source: Author, 2023

### 3.2. Relationship Between Religious Education and Pupil Moral Development

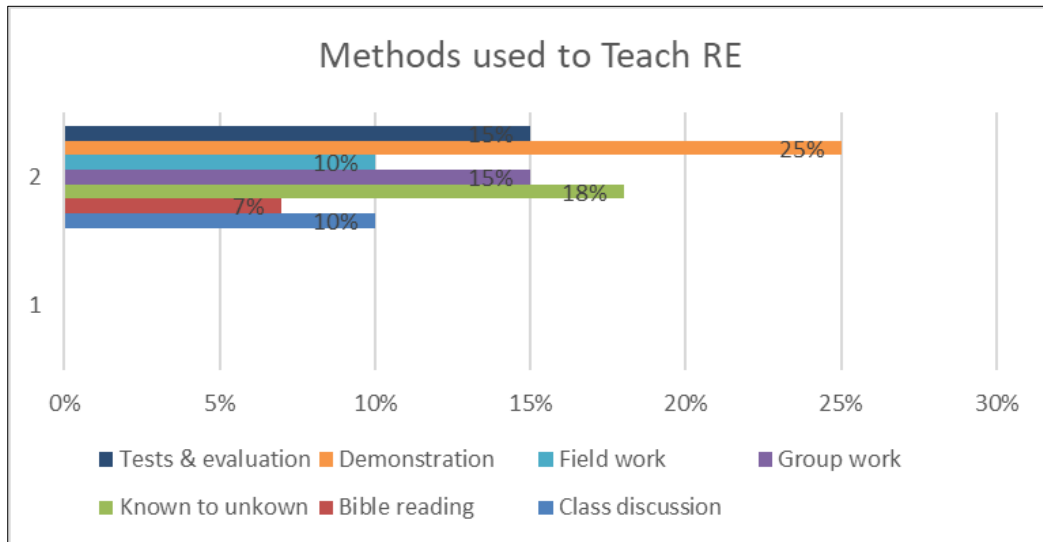


Source: Author, 2023

**Figure 2** Teachers Setting a Moral Example to the Pupils

The second study objective sought to establish the relationship between religious education and pupil moral development. The respondents indicated the methods that RE teachers use to transmit moral values both within the classroom and outside the class in the school environment. Teachers’ personal conduct as perceived by the students and their devotion to work were examined, as this, according to the literature reviewed, has an implication to the moral impartation with the students. Their interactions with the students in the line of duty in classrooms or outside classes have an implication on how much they can impact the students. In this section therefore, teacher’s workload, their

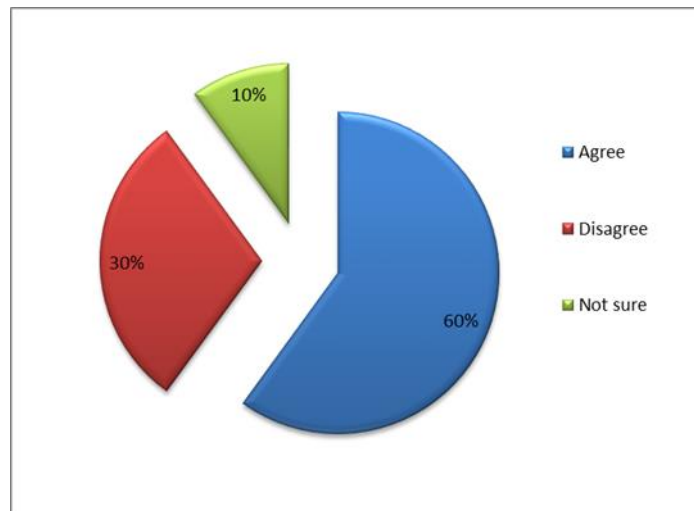
character or personality as perceived at the school and their adopted teaching methodologies- related data, were collected and analyzed with an aim of examining the role of RE in transmitting moral values among pupils.



Source: Author, 2023

**Figure 3** Methods used to Teach RE According to Pupils

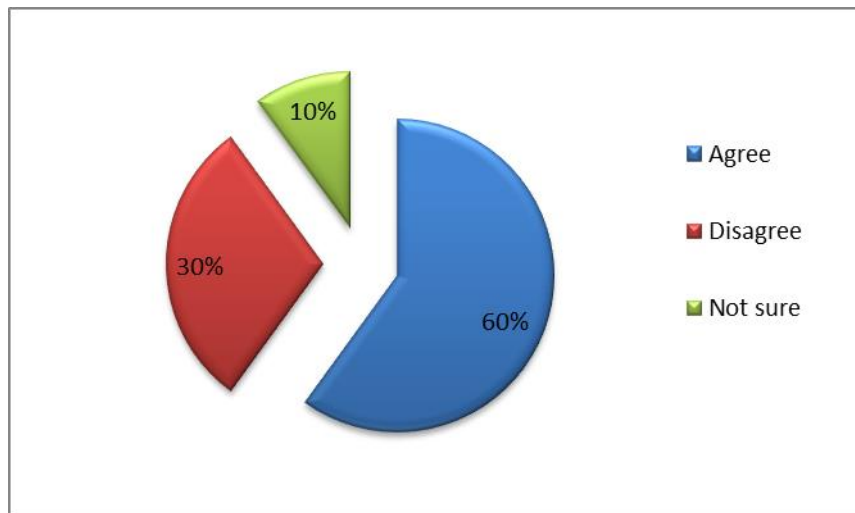
### 3.3. Policy Interventions that Support RE in Secondary Schools



Source: Author, 2023

**Figure 4** Response on Whether the Current RE Curriculum Motivates Pupils

This figure above shows that 60% of the respondents agreed while 30% disagreed that the current RE curriculum motivates pupils to show interest and openness to the beliefs and values of other religions. Nearly two-thirds of respondents do not perceive the current RE and Zambian a Christian curriculum motivating pupil to be open to the beliefs and values of other religions. Comparisons made with religious affiliations revealed that the responses were influenced by the respondents' religious affiliations. The Indigenous Zambian beliefs groups (10%) were not sure whether the current RE curriculum motivates pupils.



Source: Author, 2023

**Figure 5** Response on Whether the Current RE Curriculum content includes Beliefs, Practices and Values

Concerning the issue of RE curriculum content, whether or not, it includes beliefs, practices and values, 60% agreed, 30% disagreed and 10% were not sure. The data show that two-thirds of respondents agreed that the RE and Zambia a Christian content includes beliefs, practices, and values of all religions in Zambia. Comparisons made between the responses and religious affiliations revealed that most of those who agreed that the current RE and Zambia a Christian content includes beliefs, practices, and values of all religions were the respondents from the Evangelical/Pentecostals. Further comparisons with the syllabus used revealed that those who use syllabus 2046 (80%) agreed that the current RE content includes beliefs, practices, and values of all religions as compared to those who use syllabus 2044 (20%).

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on findings of this study, the researcher came up with the following conclusions with regard to the role of Religious Education on pupils' behavior, discipline and benefit. The findings indicated that the role of Religious Education prepares learners to be morally upright and influences them to fear God and respect fellow human beings. Additionally, corruption, injustice and unfair treatment to the poor in the society, giving learners practical ability to discriminate between right and wrong and to choose what is right in day-to-day life. Religious Education has the backbone of moral values. With this regard, schools need to stimulate moral growth and encourage moral development in the students. This is as important as having students develop in other aspects of learning. Further, the findings showed that there is a significant difference in teachers' ratings on frequency of disciplinary cases between schools that teach Christian Religious Education and those which do not teach the subject, the rate being higher in schools where Christian Religious Education is not taught.

#### Recommendations

The following are actions that should be taken on the basis of the findings of this study:

- The government of Zambia and other related agencies should train more Religious Education teachers as the increase of RE teachers will make it possible for the subject to be taught across secondary schools.
- Religious Education should be taught in all secondary schools and Zambia at large due to its power to reduce frequency of disciplinary cases in schools, to impart practical ability for learners to discriminate between right and wrong and choose what is right in day-to-day life.
- The Zambian situation is in a changing process and so is religious knowledge, therefore, the religious knowledge that is taught should constantly be revised to match with the declaration Zambia a Christian Nation.
- The Ministry of Education and other relevant authorities treat Christian Religious Education like any other academic subject, considering it in selection for Higher Education and sensitizing secondary schools to include it in subject combinations.
- The tertiary institutions such as Teacher Training Colleges/Universities offering RE training in Zambia revise their RE curriculum to make it more relevant to a Christian tradition.



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## Compliance with ethical standards

### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

### *Statement of informed consent*

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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## Author's short biography



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