AN ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS ATTITUDE TOWARDS RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN PRINCE ABUBAKAR AUDU UNIVERSITY-ANYIGBA, KOGI STATE

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Abstract

This study investigates the attitudes of university students especially in Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba, Kogi State, Nigeria, towards Religious studies. By employing interviews and focus group discussions, this research explores the intersections of cultural background, personal beliefs, teaching methods, and socio-economic factors that shapes tudents' perceptions and attitudes towards religious studies. The findings reveal a nuanced and context-specific understanding of students' attitudes, highlighting the need for educators and policymakers to adopt a more inclusive and responsive approach to teaching religious studies. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on students' attitudes towards Religious studies, providing insights into the dynamics that influence students' engagement with religious studies in the university settings.

Keywords: Assessment, Students, Attitude, and Religious Studies

Introduction

The significance of religious studies in the university education cannot be overstated. As a discipline, religious studies provides students with a deeper understanding of the role of religion

in shaping individual and societal values, promoting tolerance, empathy, and critical thinking. However, despite its importance,there is a growing concern thatstudents' attitudes especially in Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba, towards religious studiesare becoming increasingly ambivalent, with many studentsviewing the subjectas irrelevant or unimportant.

Religious studies have historically played a pivotal role in shaping individual and collective moral frameworks, fostering cultural understanding, and promoting social harmony. In educational settings, the discipline serves as a platform for critical inquiry into religious beliefs, practices, and their societal implications. However, students' attitudes toward religious studies have been subject to shifts influenced by contemporary trends in education, secularization, and changing societal values. Understanding these attitudes is crucial to ensure that religious studies remain relevant and effective in fostering ethical reasoning, interfaith dialogue, and holistic education. This study seeks to investigate the attitude of university students in Kogi State, Nigeria, towards religious studies, with a particular focus on the complex and multifaceted factors that shape these attitudes. By adopting a nuanced and context-specific understanding of students' attitudes, exploring the intersections of cultural background, personal beliefs, teaching methods, and socio-economic factors that influence students' perceptions and attitudes towards religious studies**.**

Theoretical Frameworks

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 (76) view that the attitude with which we approach life is every day'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 (40) 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, 55).

Religion and Morality

Religion and morality have long been regarded as dual aspects of human existence, deeply intertwined yet distinct in their nature. Both concepts address human conduct, shaping individual and societal values, but they approach it from different perspectives. Religion is commonly understood as a system of beliefs, rituals, and ethical codes centered on faith in divine or supernatural powers. It provides a structured framework for understanding the purpose of life, moral duties, and the consequences of one's actions.

Morality, on the other hand, refers to the principles that govern human behavior in terms of right and wrong, often shaped by cultural, philosophical, and social influences. While religious traditions offer moral guidance through sacred texts, commandments, and teachings, morality itself is not always exclusively tied to religion. Secular ethical theories argue that moral reasoning can be based on human rationality, empathy, and societal norms rather than divine authority. This ongoing discourse raises fundamental questions about the origins and authority of moral values. Whether one views morality as a product of religious belief or as an autonomous framework, its role in shaping ethical conduct remains vital to personal integrity and social harmony.

The Role of Religion in Moral Education

Religion has over the time played a central role in shaping moral education by providing a foundation for ethical values, guiding principles, and moral conduct. Across different cultures

and civilizations, religious teachings have served as a moral compass, offering profound lessons on virtues such as honesty, compassion, humility, and respect for others. These teachings are embedded in sacred texts, oral traditions, and religious doctrines, shaping the way individuals and communities perceive morality.

Thus, one of the key contributions of religion to moral education is its ability to provide clear distinctions between right and wrong. Through religious stories, parables, and scriptures, individuals are exposed to moral dilemmas and ethical lessons that reinforce the importance of justice, kindness, and accountability. Many religious traditions emphasize the concept of divine justice, where moral actions are rewarded and immoral behaviors face consequences, reinforcing a sense of responsibility and ethical decision-making. Beyond individual morality, religion fosters a sense of collective ethical responsibility.

The Influence of Christian Teachings on Human Behaviour

Christian teachings have profoundly shaped human behavior across cultures and generations. At the heart of Christianity are core values such as love, compassion, forgiveness, and the pursuit of righteousness. These principles influence how individuals interact with others and their sense of duty toward society. One of the most profound teachings is the commandment to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31), which fosters empathy, selflessness, and kindness, even toward those who cause harm.

Christianity's emphasis on forgiveness encourages reconciliation, helping individuals let go of resentment and embrace peace. This belief in mercy has played a crucial role in shaping ethical behavior, reinforcing moral responsibility, and promoting harmony within communities. Moreover, Christian teachings emphasize humility and service, inspiring believers to engage in charitable acts and community service. Many hospitals, schools, and welfare organizations have been established by Christian groups as a direct reflection of these values.

Beyond individual morality, Christian principles have also influenced legal systems, social justice movements, and humanitarian efforts worldwide. The teachings of Christ have motivated leaders, activists, and ordinary individuals to advocate for human rights, care for the poor, and stand against injustice. This enduring impact demonstrates how Christian ethics continue to

shape societies, promoting a culture of generosity, moral integrity, and social responsibility across generations.

Attitude of Students towards Learning

The attitude of students towards learning plays a crucial role in addressing their academic success and overall educational experience. Attitude refers to a learner's disposition, feelings, and mindset about learning, school, teachers, subjects, and the educational process in general. Positive attitudes towards learning often lead to better academic performance, higher levels of motivation, and a willingness to explore new ideas and concepts. On the other hand, negative attitudes can hinder progress, cause disengagement, and lead to poor academic outcomes.

Several factors influence students' attitudes toward learning:

First, the home environment plays a significant role. Students from supportive homes where education is valued tend to develop a positive attitude towards learning. Parents who show interest in their children's education, assist with homework, and encourage curiosity help foster a love for learning.

Secondly, the school environment and teaching methods also shape students' attitudes. Engaging and interactive teaching approaches that make learning enjoyable and relevant can spark students' interest.

Peer influence is another factor. Students are often influenced by their friends' attitudes toward education. If a student's peer group values learning and academic excellence, the student is more likely to adopt a similar mindset. Conversely, negative peer pressure can lead to apathy towards schoolwork.

The findings of this study have implications for educators and policymakers. By recognizing the importance of religious literacy and religiosity in academic settings, universities can develop strategies to promote students' spiritual growth and academic success. Some potential strategies include:

Incorporating Religious Studies into the Curriculum: Integrating religious studies into the curriculum can help students develop a deeper understanding of different religions and their impact on society.

Promoting Interfaith Dialogue: Encouraging interfaith dialogue can foster tolerance, understanding, and respect among students from different religious backgrounds.

Providing Support for Students' Spiritual Growth: Universities can provide resources and support to help students develop their spiritual practices and values.

Analysis of the Interviews

Ocheje, interviewed, in his view point, observed that there are low attitudes of students toward religious studies at the Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba and a lot of factors influence students' perceptions and interest in religious studies. This observation was purely from a personal experience from people around and working in the university. One of the reasons is the fact that home environment plays a significant role. Students from supportive homes where education is valued tend to develop a positive attitude towards learning. Parents who show interest in their children's education, assist with homework, and encourage curiosity help foster a love for learning. (Oral Interview).

Furthermore, it was also noticed in the words of Enemona interviewed, that students encounter certain challenges in studying religious studies this also has influenced their perceptions and interest in religious studies. The point was substantiated by Steven who says that, generally, there are unique teaching methods and resources employed in delivering religious studies lectures at the PAAU, Anyigba, it is believed that this particular issue could cause development of negative attitude by students in their choice of religious studies. (Oral Interview).

Emmanuel observed that there is a great deal of impact of students' attitudes toward religious studies on their academic and moral development. In an increasingly diverse and secular world, religious moral teachings continue to influence ethical discourse and societal norms. While interpretations may vary, the fundamental values promoted by religion integrity, empathy, and justice remain essential in fostering a more ethical and harmonious society. Thus, religion remains a significant force in moral education, shaping character development and guiding individuals toward a life of virtue and responsibility. According to Carter:

Religious institutions, such as churches, mosques, temples, and synagogues, often serve as centers for moral instruction. They organize programs for children, youths, and adults to teach moral values grounded in religious beliefs. These teachings emphasize the importance of personal responsibility, self-discipline, and service to others, nurturing a sense of community and social harmony (157). (Oral Interview).

Ogwuche also proposed strategies for improving students' interest and engagement with religious studies. Olusola and Ayodele recommend that engaging and interactive teaching approaches that make learning enjoyable and relevant can spark students' interest. Thus, Carter, in his work titled *The Role of Religion in Modern Education Systems* argues that: Teachers who create a friendly and supportive atmosphere also contribute positively to students' attitudes. In contrast, harsh disciplinary measures, outdated teaching methods, and a lack of encouragement can cause students to develop negative feelings toward school and learning (255).

Peer influence is another factor. Students are often influenced by their friends' attitudes toward education. If a student's peer group values learning and academic excellence, the student is more

likely to adopt a similar mindset. Conversely, negative peer pressure can lead to apathy towards schoolwork. Finally, I would be denoted that the central Idea of attitude of students towards learning, fostering a positive attitude towards learning requires a collaborative effort from parents, teachers, and society at large. When students see the value of education and are supported in their learning journey, they are more likely to develop a lifelong love for learning. (Oral Interview).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the assessment of students' attitudes toward religious studies at Prince Abubakar Audu University (PAAU), Anyigba, Kogi State, provides valuable insights into the diverse perspectives students hold regarding religion and its role within their academic and social lives. Some of the possible findings related to assessment of students' attitude towards religious studies were generally positive, but with some reservations. The study also found that students' attitude were influenced by their cultural background, personal beliefs, and teaching methods. This study highlights the significance of understanding students' attitudes towards religious studies in universities. By recognizing the importance of religious literacy and religiosity, educators and policymakers can develop effective strategies to promote academic success and spiritual growth.

Recommendations

Universities should consider incorporating religious studies into the curriculum to promote students' understanding of different religions and their impact on society.

Educators should be trained to address the spiritual needs of students and promote interfaith dialogue.

Further research is needed to explore the relationship between religious literacy, religiosity, and academic performance in different cultural contexts.

By implementing these recommendations, we can work together to address religious extremism, promote national unity, and foster inclusive and sustainable development. And by working together and addressing the root causes of religious extremism, we can build more resilient and inclusive communities that promote national unity and development (Ranstorp 2006).

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