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INVESTIGATING STUDENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF RME: A NOVEL ANALYSIS FROM TWO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN ATIWA DISTRICT OF GHANA

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore students' perceptions regarding the teaching and learning of Religious and Moral Education (RME) in Senior High Schools within the Eastern Region of Ghana. The research also sought to identify the factors influencing these perceptions and the challenges students encounter in studying RME. A cross-sectional survey method was employed to gather quantitative data from students. Participants were selected from two Senior High Schools in the Atiwa District, specifically Akim Sekyere SDA Senior High School and Kwabeng Senior High School, with a total of 200 respondents involved. Data analysis was conducted using statistical measures such as means, standard deviations, and percentages. The findings revealed that students believed that the RME curriculum should be updated to include emerging religious and moral issues, reflecting contemporary societal challenges. Moreover, the study highlighted that the teaching and learning of RME in these schools foster religious pluralism, promoting understanding and tolerance among students from diverse religious backgrounds. Interestingly, despite the presence of negative behaviors or poor examples set by some RME teachers, students were not discouraged from attending RME lessons. This suggests that students may separate individual teacher behavior from the value they place on the subject itself. Based on these results, the study recommended that the Ghana Education Service (Basic Education Division) consider incorporating relevant emerging issues into the RME curriculum during its periodic review. Such updates would ensure the curriculum remains relevant and continues to address the evolving religious and moral concerns facing Senior High School students in Ghana.

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INTRODUCTION

The current global concerns about immoral behaviors such as crime, drug abuse, homosexuality, and violence point to the need for a renewed emphasis on developing an inner guide, an ethical vision and good moral principles in every individual. This will position the individual in a better frame of mind to make sound moral judgments and to withstand the storm of moral decadence which has engulfed the world. Research findings tend to suggest that in a moral crisis situation, moral education could stem the tide. Campau (1998) maintains that the single subject approach is the most excellent way of inculcating values in young people. This stems from the fact that even though values permeate the curriculum of schools and are inculcated when teachers teach subjects such as history, the sciences, the languages, and mathematics as well as in co-curricular activities, some of the values in these areas are hidden or overlooked. Accordingly, there is high rate of moral decadence among Ghanaian students in recent times. Immoral behaviors, among Ghanaian students, range from indecent dressing, sexual promiscuity, excessive alcohol intake, and disrespect for authority. The incidences of immoral behaviors have created concerns among governments, religious organizations, the mass media, parents, teachers, and non-governmental organizations about the consequences of such behaviors. This is because they degrade the individual and destroy families, neighbors, and the entire society (Mumuni, 2006).

Thus, it is for this reason that the Ghana Education Service (GES) in the 1990s introduced the teaching and learning of Religious and Moral Education (RME) in the school curriculum from the Basic Schools, through the Senior High Schools and the Colleges of Education. The subject, RME was introduced in Ghanaian schools and colleges to develop understanding and tolerance for other people's faith among students; to help students acquire good moral values, to help students understand the difference between good and bad behaviors so that they can make informed choices. Moreover, the rest of the reasons for teaching RME were to expose students to their creator and the purpose for their creation; and to produce good, responsible, useful and patriotic future leaders (Ghana Education Service [GES], 1998). However, the teaching and learning of RME in Ghanaian schools have not been able to resolve this moral crisis. Immoral behaviors among students or the youth in the country today is on the increase. Thus, literature that has been developed on RME looks at the methodology of RME (Awuah & Afriyie, 2010), aims, professionalization, and approaches of RME (Cox, 2000). However, little work has been on the perception of students on the subject RME. As a moral educator, it is interesting to know student's views or expectations and to evaluate to what extent the introduction of RME has benefited them. RME as a subject that allows or develops core values in students is quite different from the perception of students towards it. The Longman Advanced Dictionary of Contemporary English (2008) defines perception as the way one thinks about something and the idea of what it is like or the way one

notices things through one's senses of sight, hearing, touch, and smell. Therefore, the underlying principles for the introduction of RME in Ghanaian Senior High Schools will not be achieved if the perception of students towards the subject is not favorable. There is therefore the need to examine students' perception towards RME as a subject studied among the students of the Senior High School. Also, there is a high incidence of moral decadence reported across the world. Media reports of increased sexual promiscuity, excessive alcohol intake, indecent dressing, drug abuse, and homosexuality have caused many people and organizations to declare a moral crisis situation in many nations (Mumuni, 2006). This affirms the extent to which the moral fabrics of some Ghanaian youth or students have degenerated. Ghana, for the past years has given priority attention to the teaching and learning of RME which is seen as a tool for reshaping the moral fabric of society. The curriculum for RME has been designated and being implemented from the Basic Schools through Senior High Schools to the Colleges of Education. This shows the seriousness government attaches to the program. In the Senior High Schools, RME is offered only by students who undertake general art courses. Many of the students therefore tend not to take the subject since they have other options. This stems from the fact that RME is not one of the core subjects even in the first year of academic life especially for students who offer Special Science and Mathematics programs. RME teachers therefore find themselves in a state of despondency as a result of students' perceived lack of interest in the subject. Therefore, the underlying principles for the introduction of RME in Senior High Schools may not be achieved if the perception of students towards the subject is not favorable. This follows the ideas expressed by Kundu and Tutoo (1999) that performance of people will not constitute the best if their perception towards what they do is not favorable. It is in the light of this that a study has to be conducted to investigate students' perception towards the RME program in the Senior High Schools in Ghana.

The general purpose of the study was to investigate and analyze students' perception towards RME program in Senior High Schools in Ghana. This assisted in diagnosing the challenges the students encounter in studying RME at the Senior High School level. Therefore, to address the issue of how students' perception towards RME would be, the study focused on the following research questions: (1) How do students perceive the subject, Religious and Moral Education? (2) What factors influence students' perceptions towards Religious and Moral Education? and (3) What challenges do students in Senior High Schools face in the learning of Religious and Moral Education?. The present research contributes to Religious and Moral Education literature in the following ways; first, the study could present a clearer picture of how the students of the Senior High Schools perceive the teaching and learning of RME. The findings from the study could be useful to curriculum planners in reviewing the current curriculum and planning for the future. Second, the findings from the study on the students' perception towards RME in Senior High Schools would help curriculum planners to identify moral values that should be inculcated in students in Ghanaian schools and colleges. Finally, the findings from the study on the challenges faced by students in learning RME in the Senior High Schools would help moral educators to select and use the appropriate approaches, teaching, and learning resources in the teaching of RME in Senior High Schools across Ghana. The remainder of the paper is arranged as follows; chapter 2 presents the theoretical background and the literature review for the study, Chapter 3 presents the research methodology, Chapter 4 presents the results and discussion. Finally, Chapter 5 presents the key findings, conclusion, and recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review: For the purposes of the study, the following theories were reviewed, perception, religious education, moral education, and morality.

Perception: Definition and Characteristics: Perception is a common concept in RME. According to (Wortman, Loftus, Weaver, & Atkinson, 2000), its meaning resides in the function it plays within a specific circumstance. In acceptance of this, Dember (2000) concludes that any definition of perception must automatically be to some extent hazy and provisional. Also, Fieldman (2001) defines perception from a psychological perspective, and maintains that perception is the sorting out, analysis, interpretation and integration of stimuli from a sensory organ. In other words, perception is the process by which a person interprets sensory stimuli into understandable forms. Wortman et al. (2000) posit that perception is a process by which the brain interprets the sensations it receives by giving them order and meaning. In this view, sensations and perceptions work together. The working together of sensations and perceptions stems from the fact that as soon as the brain receives sensations, it automatically interprets and perceives them. Hence, without sensation of a kind, perception cannot occur. Hence, the ability to perceive may differ from one person to the other due to variations in how perceptual systems are structured and how each individual sees the world in terms of knowledge, beliefs and expectations (Wortman et al., 2000). These processes in all cases can work to shape the way people perceive, attend to and interpret incoming sensory data. Thus, the attitude of a person depends on the way the person perceives things in the environment. In addition, the knowledge and belief systems as well as the expectations of a person to a large extent, determine the kind of opinion the person has about an issue or some object. This implies that the importance of RIVIE to the socio-economic development of Ghana depends on the knowledge, experiences, beliefs and opinions that it offers to students to help them perceive RME as positive.

Theories of Perception: One of the theories of perception which is relevant to this study is the core-content theory of perception. Dember (2000) maintains that perception is not a single designation but a group of interrelated parts. The elements, according to Dember (2000), consist of simple sensations integrated with images and/or ideas from past experiences. The images and sensations are often discernible upon analysis. However, some sensations form a core group or a social group. It is from the aggregate of this that meaning emanates. The meaning is a contribution which the images and sensations provide each other. Meaning therefore evolves out from context or more directly context is thought to be the meaning (Dember, 2000). Dember (2000) propounds the transcendental theory of perception which also has a bearing on this study. The theory stresses the notion that perception represents likelihood and reaction and it is a guide to action. He further contends that an organism infers the nature of an object by an unconscious judgment of what the physical object would most likely be. This produces a pattern which impinges on the sensory organs and it is capable of producing a number of patterns on the retinal image. The organism or individual is then confronted with a choice and perception may or may not be vertical. Dember (2000) declares that this theory also takes into consideration the importance of past experiences as an aid to perception. This does not only relate to particular objects but also to the nature of the world in which the organism finds itself. Thus, certain assumptions may occur and perception comes about in accordance with these.

Development of Perception: Historically, there have been two schools of thought on this issue. The first, called the empiricist view, holds the view that perceptual processes are largely a matter of learning. Babies enter the world with little or no ability to form depth perceptual constancies and so forth. To them, the world is one great blooming, buzzing, and confusing thing (Wortman et al, 2000). Only gradually do infants learn adult-like perceptions on the basis of cues the environment provides. In contrast to the empiricist view on development of perception, the nativist view of perceptual development maintains that learning alone cannot explain all perceptual processes. Perception arises as well from the way our sensory systems work. One-way psychologists have tried to address the question of perception is to look at the perceptual capabilities of new born or very young infants. Infants apparently appear to come

into the world with more sophisticated perceptual skills, and that infants even have some basic reasoning skills about the simple laws of motion (Wortman et al., 2000). Most contemporary psychologists believe that neither the empiricist nor the nativist viewpoint is adequate in itself (Slater, 2002). In every other aspect of human behavior, perceptual processes result from an interaction of inherited biological factors and specific learning experiences. Thus, what we see, hear and feel is partly the result of how our sensory systems are programmed and partly the result of what we have learned (Slater, 2002). According to Gibson and Spelke (2001), although perceptual development appears continuous rather than stage-like, five stages have been identified. First, as humans grow, their perception becomes more selective and more purposeful. Second, people become increasingly aware of the meaning of their perceptions whether pleasure or danger may come from the various objects or events they perceive. The third perception becomes more as people detect increasingly subtle aspects of stimuli. People become more efficient in picking up critical information from stimuli and this serves as the fourth stage of perceptual development. Finally, people become more proficient at generalizing perceived meanings from one situation to another. Perception therefore, influences people's emotions, needs, expectations, and learning. Thus, if the RME program in the senior high schools in Ghana is to succeed, there is the need for student's teachers to have positive perception about the program.

Religious Education: Definition and Characteristics: From Awuah and Afriyie (2010), religious education is the study of the beliefs and faiths of various religious groups in a scientific way. It aims at deepening and widening the individual's understanding of religious and moral issues so as to help make constructive judgments about different religions. It is not intended to win converts or adherents but purely as an academic discipline or pursuit (Awuah & Afriyie, 2010). Religious education is an aspect of the RME program in the Ghanaian educational system. The subject comprises three major religions in Ghana, namely, Christianity, Islamic, and African Traditional Religion (GES, 1998). In most instances, as human values are challenged by monetary and material values, there is an urgent sense of need for the values of the human spirit. This is the context in which there is a worldwide revival interest in spiritual and religious education (English, 2000). Human quest for meaning, for understanding of the nature of existence of the world around him/her and the desire to understand the fundamental questions that all people have asked about death, suffering, goodness and freedom are central part of what defines religious education (Ellwood, 2003). Ellwood (2003) maintains that religious education recognizes the changing nature of society including changes in religious practices and expression and the influence of religion in the community and the country as a whole. Religious education provides a process for young ones to be informed about the different manifestations of religion which they are to meet in society. Campbell (2002) also explains that in a pluralistic society, there exists more than one religious faith competing for the allegiance of the people; hence there is an element of conflict, freedom of choice, and awareness of co-existence. Religious education is therefore pertinent in pluralistic society. It can therefore be concluded that the world's religions have sought not only to define what is good and what is bad, but also develop the inner faculty that can hold the individual to perceive and apply such ethics in difficult situations. This can only be achieved if the religious educator adopts the right approaches to teaching the subject.

Historical Background of Religious Education in Ghana: In Ghana, religious education has become part and parcel of the school curriculum since the advent of formal education in the country. Before the 1880's, education in the Gold Coast was in the hands of missions namely, the Basel, the Wesleyan, the Roman Catholic, the Anglican, and the Bremen Missions (Oti-Agyen, 2007). In the missionary schools, religious education was much emphasized at all the levels, from the primary, middle, to the teacher training levels where students were trained primarily, to enter the seminaries to take up priesthood positions. Church and state relations in the management of education in Ghana started formally in the late nineteenth century. From Quist (1999), in this era, the colonial state, known as the Gold

Coast, through educational laws, such as the Educational Ordinance of 1882 and 1887, recognized and accepted the fact that they could not, all by itself, provide, promote and sustain formal educational projects and activities in Ghana. The state therefore agreed to enter into partnership with the missions (churches) who had already consolidated their educational activities throughout the entire country following the establishment of numerous schools at the elementary, middle, and the teacher training levels of the educational ladder (Quist, 1999). However, the passage of these ordinances did not favor the teaching and learning of religious education. Under Clause 9 of the 1882 Ordinance, direct teaching of religious education was not to form part of classroom instruction at any government school but every 'Minister of religion' or a person appointed by him shall have the free access to any such government school. The purpose was to provide the Minister of religion the opportunity to give religious instructions to the children of the various religious denominations to which such a minister may belong at such times as may be appointed by the Local Board of Education (Quist, 1999). More so, during the colonial days, inclusion of religious education in the school curriculum was based on historical, ecclesiastical, and moral grounds and was bible based. The Colonial governments used the castles that were serving as trading posts for the establishment of the Castle Schools at Elmina, Cape Coast and the Christiansborg, Osu (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975). During this period, religious education was called Religious Instruction. The content was based on Christianity, and Bible passages were used to indoctrinate pupils. At the University and the Seminary levels, the title Divinity was used. The Religion Department began at the University of Ghana, Legon as the "Department of Divinity" in 1948. The name was changed to the "Department for the Study of Religions" in 1962, to reflect the circular and multi-religious character of the country. The change of name was also done to reflect the orientation of the Department as a sub-unit of a secular University, committed to the academic, rather than confessional approach to the study of religions. Furthermore, after the attainment of political independence in Ghana, President Nkrumah's Government proposed to introduce "Moral Teaching" in place of "Religious Knowledge" in the Basic School curriculum in 1962 but the change could not be affected (Presbyterian Synod Committee Minutes 25-26 April, 1962, Para. 1776). The policy failed since the religious bodies kicked against it because the religious aspect of the subject was not much emphasized. At the Secondary School level, Bible Knowledge was the title used at the General Certificate of Education "Ordinary" level, whereas Christian Religious Studies (C.R.S.), Islamic Religious Studies (I.R.S.) and West African Traditional Religion (W.A.T.R) were used at the General Certificate of Education "Advanced" Level.

In addition, in 1987, during the military regime of the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) under Fit. Lt. J. J. Rawlings, Cultural Studies was completely withdrawn from the Basic School curriculum. Concerns raised by the public following the removal of Religion from the school curriculum caused a National Education Reform Review Committee (NERRC) to be set up in 1994. Based on its recommendations, Religion was reintroduced, under the title Religious and Moral Education (RME) and a syllabus was developed by the Ministry of Education, Ghana in 1998. In 2002, a committee was set up by the President Kuffour administration to review the educational system in Ghana. It was headed by Professor Jophus Anamuah-Mensah, the then Vice Chancellor of the University of Education, Winneba. The Committee proposed that fewer subjects should be taught at the Basic School level and recommended that: "At the lower level, reading, writing, dictation and comprehension texts should incorporate concepts of Religious and Moral Education, Culture, Science, Hygiene, Agricultural Science, Life Skills and Civics and should be taught in an integrated manner" (Ministry of Education 2002, p. 3). Consequently, the subject was removed from the Basic School curriculum (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports 2004). Thus, the Methodist and Islamic Groups supported the teaching of RME in 2007 and in response to these public agitations, President Kuffour used his 2008 May Day Celebration speech to instruct authorities of the Ghana Education Service to re-introduce Religious and Moral Education as a subject on its own from the

2008/2009 academic year. With this presidential instruction, RME was restored into the Basic School Curriculum and has been taught up to date.

Moral Education: Definition and Characteristics: Morality as an aspect of RME refers to an area of human behavior concerned with judgment about what is right or wrong; bad or good; and what is acceptable or unacceptable. At first, moral education was only concerned with the indoctrination of what was believed to be desirable. Later, people had a new concept of morality. That is, people should be taught the new skills of making moral judgment. They have to learn to be rational and autonomous. For a decade, researchers such as Bennet (1993); Kilpatrick (2001) have proposed moral education as a remedy to moral decay. Encyclopedia of Educational Research [EER] (2002) also mentions three pioneers in the study of moral education, namely, Emile Durkheim, Jean Piaget, and Lawrence Kohlberg. Durkheim holds a moral socialization perspective which emphasizes students learning particular moral values that serve to define appropriate social behavior. In his work, 'Moral Education', he focused on socialization- the process whereby a person learns what to think, feel, and what to do through instruction and explanation, role models and group reinforcement. In this approach, students will learn pro-social moral values and behavior if educators actively indoctrinate them. The end can be achieved by two means. First, teachers must teach by role modeling. Teachers should be open and assertive about their opinions regarding what is right and wrong and make students practice pro-social behavior at school. Secondly, moral education should be integrated into the entire curriculum so that children can be thoroughly inculcated with the moral ideals and behavioral standards (EER, 2002). Another perspective held by Piaget on the historical roots of his Moral Development Theory can be found in his book, "The Moral Judgement of the Child". Piaget talks about three types of moral reasoning; amoral morality, heteronomous morality, and autonomous morality based on different understanding of concepts of respect, fairness, intentionality, and punishment. Piaget thinks that teachers can promote the development of children's moral reasoning by talking with them as equal collaborators in the search for knowledge. This approach assumes that people's moral judgment development proceeds through an invariant sequence of stages towards an increasingly adequate understanding of what is just or fair. Moral educators' aims are to provide the conditions that promote this natural development.

Islam: Belief in Allah is one of the sources of Morality. Allah is believed to be the creator of the universe and sustainer of life. Moslems therefore, try as much as possible to live sacred lives so that they may appear pure before Allah (Bari, 2009). Moslems believe the Holy Quran is an extant book. They also believe that the Holy Quran is an unadulterated word of Allah. Therefore, its instructions are well observed so that Moslems will enjoy the blessings of Allah. Moslems also believe in the Hadith literature as another source of morality. It contains the narrative reports of the preaching's, teachings, and decisions made by the Holy Prophet Mohammed. It is respected and revered as a major source of morality or book next to the Holy Quran (Fyzee, 2008). The Sunnah is also a book which is a source of morality in Islamic religion. It deals with the traditions and practices for the followers to emulate. The Ijma and Qiyas are other sources on morality in Islamic religion. The former contains the consensus reached by Islamic opinion leaders and seasoned lawyers whilst the latter contains logical conclusions that were made by the companions of the prophet after his death (Fyzee, 2008). Additionally, Ibrahim (2008) points out that the five pillars of Islam, which forms the fundamental doctrines of Islam provide a basis for morality. Moslems are enjoined to observe the five pillars to show how committed they are to Allah. The five pillars of Islam include the belief in the oneness of Allah (Shahada), fasting during the month of Ramadan (Sawn), the five times prayer of the day (Salat), Almsgiving (Zakat) and the pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj). Other sources of morality in Islam are belief in the Holy Prophet Mohammed and the Judgment Day.

ATR (Africa Traditional Religion): According to Gyamerah (2002), the first source of morality in ATR is the Supreme Being. He is all knowing, ubiquitous, and everlasting. That is why there is a proverb in 'Akan' which is literally translated as "if you want to speak to God, speak to the wind". The Supreme Being is held in high esteem and is believed to be the source of all moral values. To that effect, the Traditional African believer gives the Supreme Being some attributes such as 'Oboadee'-the creator. 'Ototorobonsu'- giver of rain, 'Twerweduampon'- the assurer or dependable, and 'Ohuntahunu'- the fearful one (Gyamerah, 2002). Therefore, belief in ancestors is an important source of morality in ATR. Ancestors are certain individuals of the past generations of a lineage who are said to have led virtuous and exemplary lives worthy of emulation by succeeding generations of the lineage. The ancestors are believed to be interested in the welfare of their descendants and ever willing to help them and treat them favorably. In this connection, they are believed to serve as the custodians of the traditional moral system (Gyekye, 2000). It is believed that the ancestors have the power to punish those of their earthly kinsmen who break the traditionally approved moral codes or fail to fulfill their moral obligations to their relatives while rewarding those whose lives are in harmony with the traditional moral codes. Also, Gyekye (2000) posits that in ATR, for someone to be regarded as an ancestor, certain qualifications are demanded. Among these are; the person must have lived an exemplary life worthy of emulation, must have died at old age and must have died a natural death. The person must not have been infected with any contagious disease such as tuberculosis, leprosy or epilepsy. He or she must have been a hero or heroine who has once led his or her people to war (Gyekye, 2000).

Moreover, the lesser gods are also considered as sources of morality in ATR. The traditionalists belief that the gods are messengers of the Supreme Being. Taboos which are forbidden behaviors in the society are regarded as a source of morality in ATR. Some of these taboos include incest, having sex in the bush and singing while bathing. These taboos are put in place to ensure strict observance and obedience of rules in the society. Violation of these taboos attracts greater sanctions so members of these societies try to abide by the set down rules in order to avoid being punished (Awuah & Afriyie, 2011). For example, it is a taboo to have sexual intercourse in the bush. The belief is that disaster in the form of drought will befall the society. There are also wise-sayings and proverbs. These are short and witty sayings that carry messages of good morals (Awuah & Afriyie, 2011). For example, the child 'cracks snail and not tortoise', which literally means that the child must behave as a child until he or she reaches the stage of adulthood before playing the role of adults. Folktales which are stories told are one of the sources of morality in ATR. These stories often have 'Kwaku Ananse' as the hero. The stories also have moral lessons at the end of each story. Other sources of morality in ATR include social norms, customs and traditions (Awuah & Afriyie, 2010).

Students' Perception towards Religious Education: As a moral educator, it is interesting to know students' views or expectations about religious education and to evaluate the extent they have benefited from religious education. A study carried out by Mumuni (2006) on perception of students towards RME program in selected Senior Secondary Schools (SSS) in the Upper East Region of Ghana revealed that students have very positive perception about RME. A total of 194 students, representing 66.3% of the students were in favor while 97 students, representing 33.7% of the students have low perception about RME. The students perceived RME as a tool for promoting religious tolerance and moral virtues (Mumuni, 2006). Accordingly, Abroampah (2007) suggest that among the students from the eight senior high schools in the Volta Region of Ghana, an overall 352 of the students, representing 88.2% perceived that RME is the core of any educational enterprise. The students also confirmed that moral education is needed in schools because it enables students to have education which leads to the total development of an individual. When asked whether religious and moral training should be left in the hands of the churches and parents, 70.6% of the students replied in the negative saying, the school has a role to play in the religious and moral training of the child by

complementing the efforts of the home and society in character development on religious and moral lines (Abroampah, 2007). According to Davidson and Stokes (2001), the students from five selected high schools in North Alabama have a perception towards religious education. In fact, high school students had an average mean of 3.19 on overall agreement on the five-point Likert Type Scale in which five was the highest level of agreement because they felt that it results in improved behavior. There was a positive correlation between the religious education instruction in high schools and its positive spiritual and moral values.

Challenges Facing the Teaching and Learning of RME: Mumuni (2006) conducts a study among two 294 SSS students in the Upper East Region of Ghana on challenges facing the teaching and learning of RME. From Mumuni (2006), it was revealed that an overall 72.4% of the students indicate that there are no recommended textbooks for the teaching and learning of RME. According to the students, the MOE does not provide a standard textbook on RME. Therefore, individual teachers prepare their own notes and dictate to them. Lack of recommended textbooks makes the learning of the subject very difficult. Majority of the students (that is 267, representing 91.0%) identify time allocation as one of the challenges facing the teaching and learning of RME. RME appeared only twice on the timetable. To them, the time was not enough to complete the syllabus and have in-depth knowledge of the subject. An overall 267 students representing 77.2% mention inadequate teachers in their schools to handle the subject. For instance, in one of the schools, the school chaplain, a priest was teaching RME from first year to the third year. Since RME was not a core subject and an unexaminable subject at the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE), majority of the students do not show interest in the subject. This led to students absenting themselves from RME classes and making fun of the subject (Mumuni, 2006). Furthermore, Abroampah (2007) identifies inadequate textbooks and instructional materials as some of the challenge's students face in the teaching and learning of RME in eight training colleges in the Volta and Eastern Regions of Ghana. The survey report reveals that most of the teachers rely on one textbook recommended by the Teacher Education Division (TED) of the MOE. Few teachers also prepare handouts for the students but they find them to be giving the same information as that of the textbook. This makes the learning of RME boring and monotonous. The study has shown that the time allocated to RME was inadequate. It had two credit hours and because the course outline was overloaded, most of the teachers were not able to finish their course outline (Mumuni, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: A cross-sectional survey was used for the study (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2005). This involved collecting data to answer research questions raised in the study. The cross-sectional survey was adopted as the most appropriate design for the study because it provided the study with the necessary data on students' perception on the teaching and learning of RME at the Senior High Schools at one point in time. As the study focuses on the perception of students' towards RME, the cross-sectional survey design enabled me to collect, -describe, and document aspects of the sampled students from the two schools in a situation as they naturally occur on the same day (Cohen *et al.*, 2009). However, the cross-sectional survey for the study could not account for the changing social processes of the students as they study RME over time. In the study, the cross-sectional survey could only account for the analysis of the overall data on the perception of the students' towards RME. In the survey, there were two phases. The construction of the questionnaire formed the first phase of the survey. This was achieved through reading of literature and interactions with some students, from the Senior High Schools outside the study zone, on their perception towards teaching and learning of RME. The questionnaire was pilot-tested with students from Methodist Senior High School, at Oyoko in the New Juaben Municipality in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The purpose was to determine the construct validity of the instrument and

to establish whether the instrument was reliable. At the second stage of the survey, the questionnaire was administered to the first-year students of two Senior High Schools in the Atiwa District in the Eastern Region of Ghana. This helped to investigate the students' perception towards the teaching and learning of RME in these Senior High Schools.

Sample and Sampling Technique: The total number of students initially selected from the population of the 373 students to participate in the study was 225. From Akim Sekyere SDA Senior High Schools, a total of 103 students were selected and a total of 122 students were selected from Kwabeng Senior High Schools. The sample size drawn from each school was informed with respect to the sample estimation table developed by Krejcie and Morgan (as cited in Cohen *et al.*, 2005; Sarantakos, 1997). The simple random sampling technique aided by the computer-generated random numbers was used to select the 200 students involved in the study from the two schools in the Atiwa District.

Research Instrument: A questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire was developed by me. There were 22 items on the questionnaire which were sub-divided into four sections. Section A of the questionnaire dealt with demographic data of the students. The items in section B of the questionnaire gathered information on student's perception of RME. The factors influencing students' perception of RME were assessed using the items on the Section C of the questionnaire. The final section, Section D sought to find out the challenges facing the teaching and learning of RME. The responses to the items were based on a four-point Likert scale where Strongly Agree was 4, Agree 3, Disagree 2 and Strongly Disagree 1. The Likert scale is easier to construct and score. It produces more homogeneous scale; allowed the 225 students to indicate the degree or intensity of feelings and permitted greater spread of variance. The four-point Likert-type is preferred to the traditional five-point scale because the use of an odd number of responses in the center of the Likert-type may allow the respondent to use the 'not sure' or 'undecided' to avoid making a real choice. With an even number, respondents are 'forced' to choose between favorable and unfavorable perception towards RME. Perception carries strong emotional component and therefore, cannot be neutral.

Data Collection Procedure: A letter of introduction was obtained from the education department of VVU. With the help of this letter, permission was sought from the Head masters of the two schools. The purpose was to seek their consent to use their schools as the study centers, and to brief the authorities concerned about the aims of the study. After permission has been sought from the authorities of the two schools a briefing session was organized for the students who participated in the study about the purpose of the study. It also helped to prepare the minds of the students towards the questionnaire they were going to respond to. The administration of the research instrument was done on the same day for the two schools. The purpose was to prevent the students from having access to the questionnaire and possible discussion of the items before the hour for the administration of the instrument in the other respective schools. The data were collected during instructional hours. The students were allotted 30 minutes to respond to the items. After the 30 minutes, students who finished responding to all the items on the questionnaire submitted them and the rest were asked to complete the questionnaire after they have returned from the class they were to attend. However, some students failed to return the questionnaire. In all 200 (88.9%) of the students responded to the questionnaire and returned it. Hence, 11.1% of the students failed to return the questionnaire.

Data Analysis: The results from the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistics that were used to answer the research questions were means, standard deviations, percentages, and graphs. The mean score and standard deviation of a four-point Likert scale were calculated on each item on the questionnaire. With the help of the SPSS and Excel, the four-point Likert scale was coded as strongly agree; 4, agree 3, disagree; 2, and strongly disagree; 1. In analyzing the items on the Likert scale, a

mean score of 2.5 and above was explained as an agree statement and a mean score of 2.4 and below was explained as disagree statement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

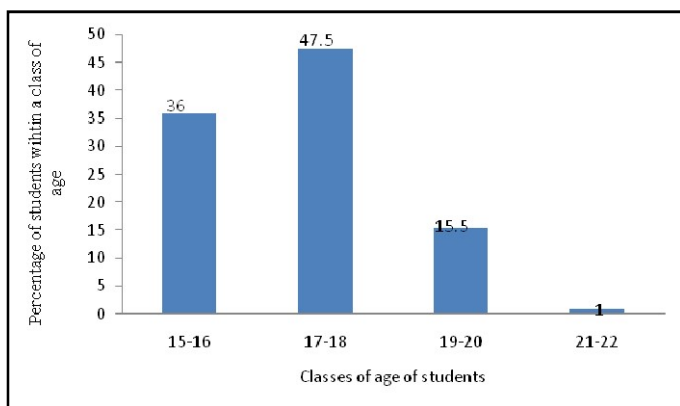
This chapter presents the analysis of responses and discussion of the research findings. The research questions were used as a guide for the presentation and discussions of the results. The analysis and discussions were centered on students' perception towards RMB. It concluded with the challenges of the teaching and learning of RME. The demographic data collected from the students were also presented and discussed as the preliminary data.

Biographic Profile of Respondents: The characteristics of the students who were involved in the study from the two schools of education in the Atiwa District of the Eastern Region of Ghana are presented under sex distribution, age distribution, religious distribution, and parental background. Accordingly, the distribution of the students with respect to the sex is presented in Table 1. From Table 1, it could be seen that 48.5% of the students involved in the study were male students from Akim Sekyere SDA Senior High School and 51.5% of the students involved in the study were female students from Kwabeng Senior High School.

Table 1. Distribution of Sex of Students

School	Sex	Frequency	Percent
Akim Sekyere SHS	Male	97	48.5
KwabengSHS	Female	103	51.5
Total		200	100

The findings from Table 1 above show that majority of the students who participated in the study were female students. This could be attributed to the fact that the number of students in first year from Kwabeng was more than those first-year students who offered RME from Akim Sekyere SDA Senior High School. The variations that exist among students in terms of age were also measured with item 3 of the questionnaire. The results on the distribution of the variation of ages of the students are presented in Figure 1. From figure 1, it could be seen that 36.0% of the students involved in the study were within the ages of 15 to 16 years and 47.5% of the students were of the ages within the range of 17 to 18 years. The results in Figure 1 further show that 15.5% of the students were within the age bracket 19-20 and only 1.0% of the students were within the age bracket of 21-22 years. The findings from Figure 1 show that majority (83.5%) of the students involved in the study were of 14 years and below, and that only few (16.5%) of the students were 15 years and above.

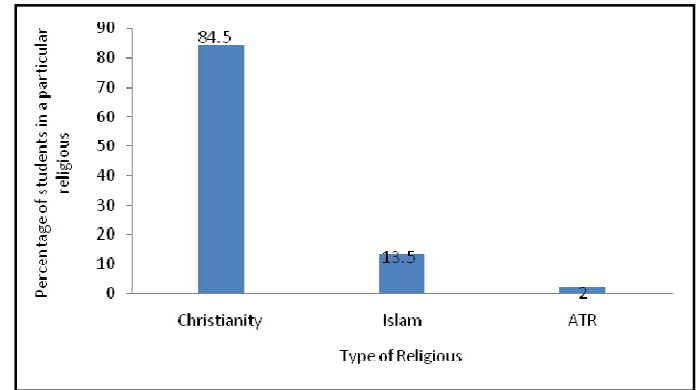


Source: field survey (2024)

Figure1. Classes of age of students involved in the study

The religious background of the students involved in the study was measured using item 4 of the questionnaire. This was necessary because the study was about the perception of students in the teaching and learning of RME, where one of the components is about religion. Figure 2 presents the results on religious background of the students.

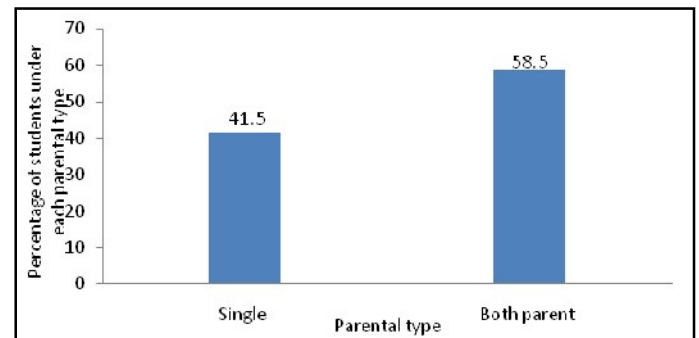
The results in Figure 2 show that an overall 84.5% of the students involved in the study belong to the Christian Religion and only 13.5% and 2.0% of the students belong to the Islamic Religion and ATR respectively. The findings from Figure 2 shows that all the students who participated in the study belong to one of the three known and recognized religious groups in Ghana. Hence, it could be said that the students were religiously inclined and that they appreciated the importance of RME in their everyday lives.



Source: field survey (2024)

Figure 2. Students' religious background

Item 5 on the questionnaire was used to measure the parental background of the students involved in the study. The item specifically required the students to indicate whether they live with both parents and only one of their parents. The results are presented in Figure 3. Thus, from Figure 3, 58.5% of the students indicated that they lived with both parents and 41.5% of the students indicated that they lived in a single parental home. The findings from Figure 3 show that majority of the students participated in the study lived with both father and mother, and hence few-of the students live with either the father or the mother only.



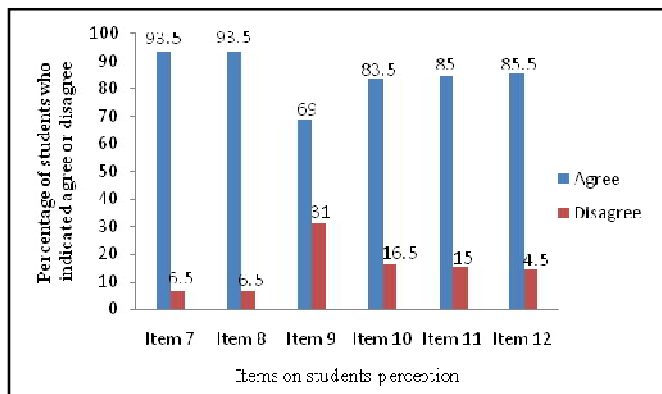
Source: field survey (2024)

Figure 3. Students' parental type

Research Question One: How do students perceive the subject, Religious and Moral Education?

Students' Perception towards the Subject, RME: The research question 1 sought to find out how students perceived the teaching and learning of RME at the senior high education level. To be able to answer this research question, the students were given questionnaires to respond to. The section B, which consists of items 7 to 12 of the questionnaire was used to measure the students' perception towards the teaching and learning of RME. The results are presented in Figure 4. Item 7 sought to find out from the students involved in the study feat200 the major responsibility of RME is to promote religious tolerance and moral values. From the results in Figure 4 on Item 7, an overall 93.5% of the students with a high mean ($M = 3.6$, $SD = 0.7$) indicated that they perceived that the major responsibility of the teaching and learning of RME at the senior highschool is to promote religious tolerance and moral values among students. Hence, only 6.5% of the students indicated that they disagree to the statement that

the major responsibility of the teaching and learning of RME at the senior high school is to promote tolerance and moral values. Hence, the findings from Figure 4 on item 7 show that the students perceived that RME is taught at the senior high schools in order to promote tolerance and moral values among students. This could be attributed to the fact that behavior of the students has improved morally and that they could tolerate their fellow colleagues better. The findings confirm the studies of Davidson and Stokes (2001); Mumuni (2006) where the students indicated that the teaching of RME has helped to improve their moral values and that they can tolerate other peoples in their respective communities.



Source: field survey (2021)

Figure 4. Students' perception towards RME

Additionally, item 8 of the questionnaire sought to find out from the students whether the emerging religious and moral problems should be put together and introduced into the RME curriculum. From Figure 4 on Item 8, it could be seen that an overall 93.5% of the students with a high mean ($M = 3.4$, $SD = 0.7$) indicated that the emerging religious and moral problems should be put together and introduced into the RME curriculum. The findings from Figure 4 on Item 8 show that majority of the students involved in the study perceive that any emerging religious and moral issues should be added to the colleges of education RME curriculum. Hence, only 6.5% of the students indicated that they disagree to the statement that emerging religious and moral problems should be put together and introduced into the RME curriculum. This could be that the majority of the students who participated in the study appreciate that during implementation of any curriculum, issues emerge with respect to modern trends which when factor into the curriculum during review helps to improve the quality of such curriculum. It could also be that the students involved in the study appreciate the positive influence of the teaching and learning of RME at the colleges of education on the religious and moral lives of the students. The perception of the students that emerging religious and moral problems should be put together and introduced into the RME curriculum of the colleges of education could have been influenced by the revelation of Campau (1998) which shows that very little of moral issues that occur in schools and colleges are incorporated into RME curriculum guides.

More so, item 9 of the questionnaire sought to find out the impression of students on the fact that the major responsibility of RME is to promote religious pluralism. The results in Figure 4 on Item 9 show that 69.0% of the students with a mean of 2.9 ($SD = 0.9$) involved in the study agreed that the major responsibility of the teaching and learning of RME in the senior high schools is to promote religious pluralism among students. Contrary, 31.0% of the students disagreed that the major responsibility of the teaching and learning of RME is to promote religious pluralism. The findings from Figure 4 on Item 9 show that the students who participated in the study perceive that the major responsibility of RME as a subject at the senior high school is to promote religious pluralism among students. This could be due to the fact that Ghanaians as whole and Ghanaian students in particular have been oriented to appreciate the existence of different groups within any given society and hence, should tolerate each other's views on governance, politics, religion, social, and economic issues. This is

because in a pluralistic society such as Ghana where religious groups compete for the allegiance of the members of the society, there are bound to be conflict, freedom of choice, and awareness of co-existence (Campbell, 2002). The finding that the major responsibility of RME is to promote religious pluralism could also be explained that students appreciate that the society is dynamic which include changes in religious practices as pointed out by Ellwood (2003). Furthermore, item 10 of the questionnaire sought to find out from the students that whether RME teaches students without indoctrinating them as well. From Figure 4, it could be seen on item 10 that an overall 83.5% of the students with a high mean ($M = 3.1$, $SD = 1.0$) agreed that RME teaches students without necessarily indoctrinating them. Only 16.5% of the students disagreed that RME teaches students without indoctrinating them. From Figure 4, the findings on Item 10 show that majority of the students perceive that the subject, RME at the senior high school in Ghana teaches students without indoctrinating them. Could this be that the RME teachers have remained professionals over the years in the discharge of their professional due to the level of how Ghanaian educates? The answer could be that of the explanation given by Awuah and Afriyie (2010) that religious education is an academic discipline which does not intend to convert students to certain religious persuasion. Hence, teachers of RME like all other teachers are trained to be professionals in discharge of their duties.

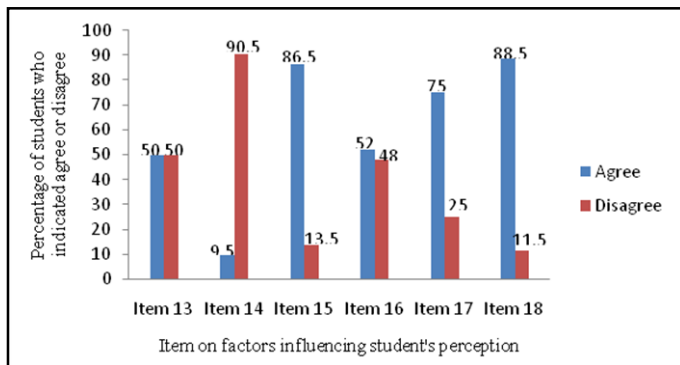
Accordingly, item 11 of the questionnaire sought to find out from the students whether the provision of adequate teaching and learning materials will enhance the objectives of RME. The results from Figure 4 on Item 11 show that a good number of the students (85.0%) with a high mean ($M = 3.4$, $SD = 1.0$) agreed that the provision of teaching and learning materials will enhance the objectives of the subject, RME. On the other hand, only 15.0% of the students who participated in the study disagreed that the provision of teaching and learning materials enhance the objectives of RME. From Figure 4, the findings on Item 11 show that the students perceive that provision of adequate teaching and learning materials will enhance the objectives of RME. The students' perception on the use of teaching and learning materials to enhance the objectives of RME could be attributed to the experience they may have had in other subject areas where teaching and learning materials are often used to enhance the achievement of objectives. Lastly, item 12 of the questionnaire sought to find out from the students who participated in the study whether it is possible to give equal time and treatment to all the major religion types in Ghana. From Figure 4, the results on Item 12 show that large number of the students (85.5%) involved in the study with a high mean ($M = 3.2$, $SD = 0.9$) indicated that they agreed that it is possible to give equal time and treatment to all the major religions in Ghana. Conversely, only 14.5% of the students disagreed that it is possible to give equal time and treatment to all fee-major religions in Ghana. The findings from Figure 4 on Item 12 show that the students perceived that it is possible to give equal time and treatment to all the three major religions (that is Christian, Islam, and ATR) in Ghana. This perception of students on RME was noted by the people of England in the 1870s where according to English (2000), the 1870 Educational Act made relic education a non-denominational in England.

Research Question Two: What factors influence students' perceptions toward Religious and Moral Education?

Factors influencing Students' Perception towards RME: The research question 2 sought to find out the factors that influence the perception of the students involved in the study towards the teaching and learning of RME in the senior high schools. The factors were measured with items 13 to 18 of the questionnaire to which the students responded. The percentages of students who indicated either agree or disagree to the statements are presented in Figure 5.

The item 13 of the questionnaire sought to find out whether some teachers' lack of proper approach in teaching RME was one of the factors influencing the students' perception towards RME. The results on Item 13 in Figure 5 show that 50.0% of the students involved in the study with a mean of 2.7 ($SD = 1.0$) indicated that they agreed

that some teachers lack proper approach in teaching RME, and that lack of proper approach to teaching was one of the factors that influence students' perception towards RME. However, another 50.0% of the students also indicated that they disagreed that some teachers lack proper approach in teaching RME. Since the mean of the distribution of the scores on Item 13 was calculated as 2.7 (SD = 1.0), it could be said that the students who participated in the study agreed that some RME teachers lack proper teaching approach. Could this perceived factor of some RME teachers not using proper teaching approach be attributed to inadequate professional RME teachers in the systems? This is because Mumuni (2006) found out there are inadequate teachers to teach RME at some secondary schools in the Upper East Region of Ghana.



Source: field survey (2024)

Figure 5. Factors influencing students' perception towards RME

It must be explained here that the choice of instructional approach for a particular topic has a rippling effect on the difficulty level of students in that topic and could influence students' perception toward the topic and hence, the subject. Also, item 14 of the questionnaire sought to find out from the students involved in the study whether they are quite discouraged in attending RME lessons due to the bad example and behavior of some teachers. From Figure 5, it could be seen on Item 14 that an overwhelming 90.5% of the students with a low mean ($M = 1.7$, $SD = 0.7$) indicated that they disagreed that the bad example and behavior of some RME teachers discouraged them from attending RME lessons. Only 9.5% of the students indicated that they agreed that the bad example and behavior of some teachers discouraged them from attending RME lessons. Thus, the findings from Figure 5 on Item 14 show that the students are not discouraged from attending RME lessons with respect to the bad example and behavior of some teachers. This finding shows that the influence of teachers on the moral values of students has weakened as in the case of the aftermath of the Vietnam War, where teachers lost their influence and power on students (Chu et al., 1999). Hence, there could be other factors that influence students to attend RME lessons at the Senior High Schools. Such factors that influence students to attend RME lessons may include the fact that the students are assessed and grade on RME in the end of three years of study organized by WAEC for Senior High School students. In addition, item 15 of the questionnaire sought to find out from the students whether inadequate teaching and learning materials make learning difficult since most of the lessons dwell on abstract matters. The results in Figure 5 on Item 15 show that 86.5% of the students with a high mean ($M = 3.4$, $SD = 0.9$) indicated that indeed inadequate teaching and learning materials in RME lesson made the subject more abstract and therefore learning RME difficult to them. Only 13.5% of the students indicated that they disagreed that inadequate teaching and learning materials in RME lessons made the lessons difficult. From Figure 5, the findings on Item 15 show that inadequate teaching and learning materials is one of the factors that contribute to students perceived difficulty in the subject, RME. Thus, the study outcome confirms the findings of Abroampah (2007) on the challenges facing the teaching and learning of RME that students from the eight Senior High Schools in Volta Region of Ghana indicated their difficulty in learning RME due to inadequate teaching and learning materials. Moreso, item 16 of the questionnaire sought to find out from the

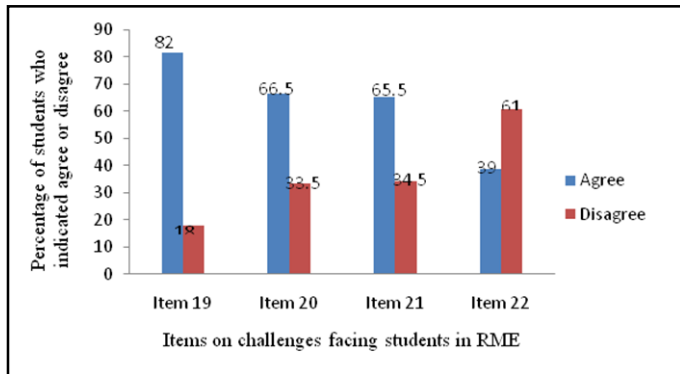
student's number of days in a week in the senior high school the students did not attend classes due to few teachers teaching RME and that so often several weeks pass by without any RME lessons. According to Figure 5, the outcomes on item 16 show that 52.0% of the students with a mean of 2.6 ($SD = 1.1$) indicated that they agreed that there were few RME teachers in the senior high schools that result in several weeks of not having RME lessons. However, 48.0% of the students involved in the study indicated that they disagreed with the statement "that in my school we have few teachers teaching RME, so often several weeks pass by without any lesson". The findings from Figure 5 on Item 16 show that one of the factors that influence students' perception towards RME is lack of RME teachers which results in weeks of no RME lessons. This could be attributed to the fact that teachers at the schools are normally invited by WAEC to be the examiners of the students' examination scripts. The marking section can at times take about three weeks which in turn affects the academic calendar of the schools. Hence, in such schools with few teachers teaching RME, students could be without RME teachers for almost three weeks. The lack of RME teachers at the senior high schools was also revealed by Mumuni (2006) as one of the factors that affected the teaching and learning of RME at the secondary school level. Mumuni (2006) went further to point out that in some schools the Priests were asked to assist in the teaching of RME. Mumuni (2006) then attributed this to the non-examinable nature of RME in the secondary schools.

Accordingly, item 17 of the questionnaire sought to find out from the students whether bad associations were extremely influential to developing negative perception of RME. From Figure 5, the results on Item 17 show that 75.0% of the students with a mean of 3.0 ($SD = 1.1$) indicated that they agreed that the perceived students' negative attitude towards RME was as a result of bad associations. Contrary, 25.0% of the students involved in the study disagreed that bad associations were extremely responsible for the students' negative perception of RME. From Figure 5, the findings on Item 17 show that the students' perception toward RME is influenced partly by bad associations. From the Ghana Education Service (1998), one of the aims of educating the citizens is to help them develop the ability to instill good behaviors from bad ones, and that if students' perception towards RME is influenced by bad associations, then it could be said that RME as a subject in itself is failing in this respect. This is because RME as one of the subjects at the colleges of education should help to train the students to be of good moral values. Hence, if students acquire good moral values as a result of RME, then bad associations may not be a factor that can influence student to have negative perception towards RME. Furthermore, item 18 of the questionnaire sought to find from the students whether parental encouragement influenced the students to have positive perception towards RME.

The results in Figure 5 on Item 18 show that 88.5% of the students with a high mean ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 0.9$) agreed that their parents encouraged them to have positive perception towards the teaching and learning of RME. Conversely, 11.5% of the students disagreed that the positive perception they have towards RME was influenced by their parents. The findings from Figure 5 on Item 18 show that one of the factors that influence students' perception towards RME is parental encouragement. Parental encouragement as one of the factors that influence student's positive perception towards RME as indicated by the students was not surprising as it has been the traditional role of Ghanaian parents before the advent of western education (Antwi, 1999) to educate their children to acquire some skills. According to Antwi (1999), education of children starts with the parents who continue to train the children mentally and morally, and hence will be interested in any subject that teaches moral values to the students. It could be said therefore that it was the influence of the Ghanaian public including parents that led to reintroduction of RME into the curriculum of basic schools in 2008/2009 academic after its removal by the implementation of the Government White Paper on the Anamuah-Mensah Educational Review Committee report (MOEYS, 2004).

Research Question Three: What challenges do students in the Senior High School face in the learning of Religious and Moral Education?

Challenges faced by Students in Learning RME: The research question 3 sought to find out the challenges that students face in learning RME in Senior High Schools. To be able to answer the research question 3, the 200 students who participated in the study were given a questionnaire to respond to. Items 19 to 22 from Section D of the questionnaire were used to measure the challenges that students face in learning RME. The percentages of the students who indicated agree or disagree to the statements are presented in Figure 6.



Source: field survey (2024)

Figure 6. Challenges faced by students in RME

Item 19 of the questionnaire sought to find out from the students whether lack of up-to-date textbooks on RME was one of the challenges faced by the students in learning the subject, RME. From Figure 6, the results on Item 19 show that 82.0% of the students with a high mean ($M = 3.2$, $SD = 1.0$) agreed that lack of up-to-date textbooks is one of the challenges faced by the students in learning RME, whereas 18.0% of the students indicated that they disagreed that one of the challenges that the students faced in learning RME was lack of up-to-date textbooks in the colleges of education. Therefore, from the findings in Figure 6 on Item 19, it could be said that one of the challenges faced by the students in learning RME is lack of up-to-date RME textbooks. The finding that the senior high schools lack of up-to-date RME textbooks confirms the studies of Abroampah (2007) and Mumuni (2006), where students indicated that there are no recommended RME textbooks for the teaching of the subject. In such schools, the students only depend on handouts prepared by the teachers. This could be one of the reasons why the students perceived that the subject, RME is difficult to learn. Again, item 20 of the questionnaire sought to find out whether one of the challenges faced by the students who were involved in the study was the massive failure of students in RME. The results in Figure 6 on Item 20 show that 66.5% of the students with a mean of 2.9 ($SD = 1.1$) agreed that the massive failure of students in RME is quite discouraging to them. From the results on Item 20, 33.5% of the students disagreed that the challenge the students faced in learning RME was the massive failure of students in RME. It could be said from the findings on Item 20 that one of the challenges that face students of RME is the massive failure of students in RME. Therefore, the failure of students in RME could be attributed partly to the inadequate professional RME teachers to handle the subject or partly to the lack of up-to-date textbooks on RME. The perceived inadequate RME teachers and lack of recommended RME textbooks for the teaching and learning of RME are factors that have effects on students' performance.

With respect to item 21 of the questionnaire, it sought to find out whether one of the challenges faced by the students who participated in the study was insufficient time for teaching RME. According to Figure 6, it could be seen that under item 21, 65.5% of the students with a mean of 2.8 ($SD = 1.1$) specified that one of the challenges faced by the students was the insufficient time allotted to the teaching

and learning of RME in the senior high schools. Nevertheless, 34.5% of the students involved in the study disagreed that the teaching and learning of RME is faced with insufficient time in the senior high schools. The findings on Item 21 from Figure 6 show that majority of the students perceive that one of the challenges faced with the students in learning of RME in the senior high schools is insufficient time allocation for the subject. Indeed, the perceived insufficient time allocation for learning RME is a challenge facing the teaching and learning of RME. Finally, item 22 of the questionnaire sought to find out from the students whether the teaching of RME is not practically oriented and that the concepts are unsuitable for the present world. According to Figure 6, the results on item 22 show that 61.0% of the students with a low mean ($M = 2.4$, $SD = 1.0$) indicated that they disagreed that the things taught in RME are impractical and unsuitable for the present world. With only 39.0% of the students who participated in the study agreed that most of the things taught in RME are impractical and unsuitable for the present world. Hence, from Figure 6, the findings on item 22 show that the students perceive that the impractical and unsuitable nature of RME for the present world is not one of the challenges students face in learning RME. This could be attributed to the fact the students appreciate that concepts in RME are practical in nature and that the concepts are of importance to the present world.

Key Findings, Conclusion, and Recommendation

Key findings

The study arrived at the key findings summarized below;

1. *Students' Perception towards RME, the students perceived that:*
 - a. RME is taught at the Senior Schools to promote tolerance and good moral values.
 - b. the major responsibility of RME is to promote religious pluralism among students.
 - c. RME teaches students without indoctrinating them.
 - d. it is possible to give equal time and treatment to all the three major religions in Ghana.
2. *Factors influencing Students' Perception towards RME, the students agreed that:*
 - a. teachers' lack of proper approach to teaching RME is one of the factors that influence students' perception towards RME.
 - b. lack of RME teachers at the colleges of education which results in weeks of no RME lessons is one of the factors that influence students' perception towards RME.
 - c. bad associations of the students in the Senior High School are one of the factors that has negative influence on students' perception towards RME.
3. *Challenges faced by Students in Learning RME; the students perceived that*
 - a. lack of up-to-date textbooks for learning RME is one of the challenges that students face in learning RME.
 - b. massive failure of students in RME examinations is one of the challenges face with students in learning RME.
 - c. Insufficient time allocation for teaching and learning of RME is one of the challenges students face in learning RME.

CONCLUSIONS

In this study, the students perceived that the subject, RME is taught at the colleges of education to promote tolerance and good moral values, which confirms the studies of Davidson and Stokes (2001); Mumuni (2006) where the perception of the students was that the teaching of RME help students to develop good morals and tolerate each other in society; to enhance the achievement of the objectives of RME; and to promote religious pluralism. This is because the students perceived that the teaching and learning of RME at the Senior High Schools is not to indoctrinate students to one's religious persuasion but to promote co-existence among students of different religious divide. This also confirms the assertion of Awuah and Afriyie (2010) that religious education as an academic discipline should not be used to

indoctrinate students. The study has further shown that the students perceived that any emerging issues on religious and moral education should be added to the RME curriculum; that provision should be made for adequate teaching and learning materials; and that it is possible to give equal time and treatment opportunities to the three major religions in Ghana. Furthermore, the study has shown that the students involved in the study perceived that there are some factors that influence students' perception towards RME. The factors include teachers' lack of proper approach to teaching RME and this confirms the findings of Mumuni (2006) where the teaching of RME at the secondary schools suffers inadequate professional RME teachers; inadequate teaching and learning materials and this confirms the findings of Abroampah (2007) where students' difficulties in RME at the Senior High Schools in Volta Region of Ghana is attributed to inadequate teaching and learning materials; and lack of RME teachers and this also confirms the revelation made by Mumuni (2006) that the secondary schools in Upper East Region of Ghana lack RME teachers. The rest of the factors that influence students' perception are bad association of the students, which influence students negatively; and parental encouragement, which influence the students positively. Accordingly, the study has shown that there are some challenges faced by students in learning RME in the Senior High Schools. The challenges include lack of up-to-date textbooks for learning RME and this confirms the findings of Abroampah (2007); Mumuni (2006) on challenges face by students in learning RME; massive failure of students in RME examinations; and insufficient time allocation for teaching and learning of RME, which also confirms the findings of Mumuni (2006) on inadequate time for teaching RME.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study: First, as the students perceived that any emerging religious and moral issues should be added to the RME curriculum, the Ghana Education Service (Secondary Division) should consider any emerging and moral issues during the review of the current RME curriculum for the Senior High Schools. Second, the Heads of Department of Liberal Studies in the school should organize in-services taking and workshops on proper methods of teaching RME as the students identified that one of the factors that influence the students' perception towards RME was teachers' lack of proper approach to teaching RME. Third, headmasters and mistresses in the Senior High Schools should consult experts in RME in the universities and colleges in the country to come out with recommended books for RME in the Senior High Schools since students perceived that one of the challenges students face in learning RME was lack of up-to-date textbooks.

Declaration and Statement

Conflict of interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Data availability statement: Data used for the study will be provided upon request from the corresponding author.

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Informed consent statement: Not applicable.

Ethical Approval: Not applicable.

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