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Exploring Determinants that Influence and Predict Students' Attitudes towards Social Issues: A Survey of Senior High Schools in Brong Ahafo Region, Ghana

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ABSTRACT

The study explored the attitudes of senior high school students in the Brong Ahafo region towards social issues. It hypothesised that gender, subjects studied, type of school, environment, age, ethnicity and religious affiliation of students have an effect and predict their attitudes. The study adopted the descriptive cross-sectional survey as a design. Participants for the study were 900 students from 20 senior high schools in the region. They were selected using the cluster and simple random sampling techniques. A questionnaire (*Mensah's attitude scale for measuring social, moral and religious issues*) with a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.893 was used for data collection. Data collected were analysed with SPSS version 20. Descriptive and inferential statistical tools like frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviation, Factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) and multiple regression were used for data analysis. The results showed that students in senior high schools in the Brong Ahafo region had positive attitudes towards social issues and that, their demographic characteristics have significant influence and predict their attitudes. It was recommended that Brong Ahafo branch of the Ghana Education Service should endeavour to intensify education on social, moral and religious issues through subjects like citizenship education and religious and moral education

Keywords: Students, Attitudes, Social issues

1. Introduction

In the science of human behaviour, the issue of attitude is probably, "the most distinctive and indispensable concept of contemporary world social psychology" (Allport, & Ross, 1968, p. 59). However, it has been characterised by an embarrassing degree of ambiguity and confusion. This may be partly attributed to the use of an explanatory concept in diverse areas of investigation. Under the general rubric of attitude research, attempts to explain discriminatory behaviours have typically made reference to attitudes, stereotypes, prejudice and ethnocentrism (Fazio, & Olson, 2003). Similarly, research on performance, absenteeism and turnover in industry and education has frequently invoked concepts like attitude, job satisfaction and morale. Attitudes, opinions and voting intentions have appeared as central concepts in studies in education, voting and even political parties (Brandt, & Wetherell, 2012). Attempts to explain various aspects of consumer behaviour and behaviour in general have focused on attitudes towards products, brand loyalty, education, subjects and attributes. These concepts, attitude, attraction and perception, have accounted for a wide variety of interpersonal behaviours (Carlson, 2010). The concepts mentioned above, as well as many others, have been subsumed under the general label "attitude". This leads to some confusion and ambiguity surrounding the concept attitude, and it is hardly surprising that few researchers agree on an explicit definition of attitude (Brown, & Amoroso, 1975; Gentry, 1987).

People's attitudes go a long way to affect co-existence in the society. As the search for people's attitude and what influences people's attitudes go on, the human society is very much interested in people's attitudes that affect harmonious and peaceful existence and what influences these attitudes. Peoples' attitudes towards social issues (e.g. education, family, absenteeism in school, marriage, divorce, homosexual, work, stress management, etc.) have become major determinants to having a peaceful and harmonious world. There is no doubt that every society expects a day when there would be absolute calm, peace and harmony, where people would make decisions on sound social grounds (Mensah, 2009).

Education and for that matter the school has a role to play in shaping attitudes of people in the society. Learners in the schools are members of the society and are seen as the future of society. To this end, educational systems the world over have developed subjects aimed at helping learners to acquire skills and competences to help them develop positive attitudes towards social issues (Oztas, 2003). These subjects (Ethics, Religious Studies, Social Studies, etc.) through their content, aim at exposing learners to varied issues in life and making learners aware of the need to make decisions based on sound social judgement. Also, there are major tenets and factors influencing almost everything people do. The things that people say, how people act as well as how they behave have major underlying factors (Brewer, 2003). There is persistent quest to find out which tenets or factors determine what behaviour and attitude. To this end, scientists (DeRose, 1984; Kelley, & Evans, 1995;

Kelley, 2001; Silva, & Schensul, 2003) have conducted lots of studies to find out the factors that determine how people behave in terms of their attitudes toward identifiable issues, policies, entities and elements.

Students' attitudes towards social issues like marriage, divorce, homosexuality, teenage pregnancy, family, work and money, humility, peace and harmony have been largely found to be positive by various researchers (Karnik, Kamel, & Harper, 2000; Arndt, & Bruin, 2006; Fagan, 2006; Mukama, 2010; Lehman, & Thornwall, 2011; Borne, 2011), except for others like Mohamed and Waheed (2011). Students' attitudes towards social issues have been the focus of many researchers (Smith, 2003; Yenilmez, Ayranci, Ay, Erkaya, Ozdemir, & Kaptanoglu, 2006; Awopetu, & Fasanmi, 2011; Kasomo, 2011; Arndt, & Bruin, 2006; Mukama, 2010). Students' attitudes towards social issues have been found to be influenced by their religion. The religion of people and for that matter students are likely to affect how they behave towards issues bothering on social cohesion (Smith, 2003). Thus, the religious beliefs or doctrines of individuals affect how they see marriage, divorce, sex, drug abuse and homosexuality (Fagan, 2006).

School type and subjects studied also have a major influence on attitudes that students exhibit when it comes to social issues (Kasomo, 2011; Comegys, 2010). Schools affiliated to religious institutions have the doctrines of the religion as part of the lessons. Learners in these schools embrace the doctrines which in turn influence their behaviour and how they see things in life and produce stronger, more uniform attitudes towards social issues than those in state schools. Subjects in ethics, morality and religion studied in these schools thus influence students' attitudes (Tritter, 1992).

Gender of students goes a long way to influences their attitude. For example, Arndt and Bruin (2006) and Lehman and Thornwall (2011) have indicated that the gender of students' affect how they look at social issues. Other factors that have been found by researchers to influence students' attitude towards social issues include the environment (rural or urban) in which the students find themselves, the age of the students as well as their tribe (Jekayinfa, 2004; Awopetu, & Fasanmi, 2011). Thus, no matter what the school does, the environment is crucial. Awopetu and Fasanmi (2011) have indicated that, the age of students facilitates their attitude towards crucial matters in life. They also indicated that students' attitudes towards abortion mostly in Africa are influenced by their ethnicity.

2. Context and purpose of study

Education is key to the formation of attitude for learners (Oztas, 2003). This is because it is a tool for behavioural change and modification. The idea of having a society with people who have a positive attitude towards major moral, social and religious issues pushes education to the fore. Historically, the traditional Ghanaian culture had a way of inculcating good social values into the child until the coming of European colonisation. The educational principles of Guggisberg, after formal education was introduced, reinforced the need for religious and social education in the country (Abosi, & Amisshah, 1992). The system of education in Ghana as at the time was a carbon copy of the British system, which invariably led to the introduction of religious education in the Ghanaian system: Christian religious studies, African traditional religion and Islamic religious studies as a way of trying to instil good social, moral and religious values in the learners (Mensah, 2009). Due to this aim, curriculum movements and reforms in Ghana, Religious and moral education was formally introduced in 1998 by the Ghana Education Service to get students equipped with skills and ability to deal with moral, religious and social problems that confront them (Mensah, 2009).

Religious and moral education is now a core subject at the basic school level and a core for all first year students of Senior High Schools that teach the subject (some schools do not teach) (Mensah, 2009). There were calls for the withdrawal of the subject based on public perception that it was not attaining its aims. This prompted evaluations of the subject by many researchers including one at the Senior High School level which revealed that the aims of the subject were being attained. It also prompted moral educators to research into the attitude of learners towards the subject to ascertain whether these attitudes could be a factor in the attainment of the aims. In one of such studies, Asare-Danso (2011) found that learners have very positive attitudes towards the subject. The findings of this study was paramount in making an argument for the importance of the subject because other studies (Ajzen, 2005; Oskamp, 1977; Silva, & Schensul, 2003) have indicated that the attitudes that learners have towards a particular subject can affect their performance and then automatically the attainment of the aims.

But in Ghana, little is known about the attitudes of students towards social issues. Secondly, nothing is known about the demographic characteristics that influence and predict their attitudes towards these vital life issues. The lack of research in this regard leaves educators and stakeholders in education with no clue as to what is happening with regards to the attitude of learners towards these vital issues. This has raised questions like, what are the attitudes of senior high school students towards social issues and what factors influence and predict these attitudes? The need to fill these gaps in the literature necessitated the exploration of the attitudes of senior high school students in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana towards social issues.

Research questions that directed the study are:

1. What attitudes do senior high school students exhibit towards social issues?
2. What differences exist in the attitude of senior high school students towards social issues based on gender, subject studied, type of school, environment, age, ethnicity and religious affiliation?
3. What demographic characteristics predict the attitudes of senior high school students towards social, moral and religious issues?

3. Methodology

The descriptive cross sectional survey design was adopted for this study (Gay, 1992; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). This design, Leedy and Omrod (2005) explained “involves either identifying the characteristics of an observed phenomenon or exploring possible correlations among two or more phenomena. In every case, descriptive research examines a situation as it is” (p.179). A descriptive survey allows access to thoughts, opinions, and attitudes of the population from which the sample is drawn (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007; Shaughnessy, Zechmeister & Jeanne, 2011). In this study, the purpose was to describe the attitudes of students towards social issues and how their demographic characteristics influence and predict their attitudes. Quantitative information was collected from senior high school students to ascertain and describe their attitudes towards social issues.

3.1. Sample

The study focused on students in senior high school in the Brong Ahafo region of Ghana. There are 62 Senior High Schools in the Brong Ahafo Region. Fourteen of the schools are mission schools and 48 non-mission. Also 24 schools are in the rural areas while 38 were urban schools. On the average, there are 800 students in each of the 24 rural schools and 1,000 students in each of the 38 schools in the urban areas (Brong Ahafo Regional Office, Ghana Education Service, 2014). The target population for this study was 57,200 senior high school students. However, the accessible population of the study was 18,000 students from the 20 schools selected out of the 62 senior high schools in the Brong Ahafo Region, Ten mission schools and 10 non-mission schools respectively.

Out of the estimated 18,000 senior high school students, 900 were selected for the study. This comprised of 400 students from rural schools and 500 students from the urban schools. The sample size is appropriate and representative of the population as it was made up of students from all the selected schools. Again, a sample size of 900 out of a population of 18000 is appropriate according to Krejcie and Morgan’s (1970) table for determining sample size. Two techniques were employed to select participants for this study: the cluster and the simple random sampling techniques. In each of the 10 senior high schools in the rural areas, 40 students were selected, totalling 400, and in each of the 10 senior high schools in the urban areas 50 students were selected totalling 500. This was done by the use of a table of random numbers.

3.2. Instrument

A researcher generated attitude scale *Mensah social, moral and religious scale* (MSMRS), with 101 closed and open-ended items was employed to collect data for this study. It had two main sections; A and B. Section A was on gender, age, religious affiliation, their school type (mission or non-mission), whether they have studied any subject in religion and morality (Christian Religious Studies-CRS/Islamic Religious Studies-IRS /African Traditional Religion- ATR/Religious and Moral Education- RME), their school environment (rural or urban) and which tribe or ethnic group they belong to. Section B focused on students’ attitudes towards social issues. It contained 30 items consisting of items 8 to 37. The items were statements made on issues like school absenteeism, respect and how students should relate to the elderly, humility and its importance, peace and harmony in society, education as a very important venture, money and how to work for it, work and its benefits, leisure and its benefits, stress management, rites of passage and their importance, family and its relevance, marriage and the benefits it offers, divorce and homosexuality.

Participants were to indicate their responses by ticking whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, strongly disagreed or were undecided with the statements. The weights for the scale were: Strongly agree= 5; Agree=4; Disagree= 3; strongly disagree=2; and Undecided= 1. After pilot testing, the instrument was determined to be highly reliable with a Cronbach’s alpha of .892. The final reliability for the instrument after the main data collection was determined to be high with a Cronbach’s alpha of .893 (Trochim, 2006).

3.3. Analysis

Data was analysed with the help of Statistical Package for Service Solutions (version 21) software. Descriptive (frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation) and inferential (Factorial Analysis of Variance, Standard Multiple Regression) statistical measures were used for analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. *What Attitudes do Senior High School Students Exhibit towards Social Issues?*

Statements on peace, humility and hard work had the highest means out of 5. Also, almost all ($n = 830$) the students either strongly agreed or agreed ($M = 4.61, SD = 0.78$) that students should act as agents of peace in their society. The statement, 'peace is important for development of the society' had a similar response with 830 out of 900 students indicating they either strongly agreed or agreed ($M = 4.61, SD = 0.84$) as indicated in Table 1. Participants may have responded this way because they study social studies as well as citizenship education which exposes them to the negative effects of conflicts on the society and the development of the country as a whole. Again, they are aware of the results of some conflicts in the Ghanaian context.

The majority of the students responded positively ($M = 4.60, SD = 0.98$) on humility being a good virtue. They also ($n = 830$) either strongly agreed or agreed ($M = 4.41, SD = 1.01$) that it is good to be humble. It is important to state that this response from the participants on humility may be due to the informal moral training they receive from home and subjects like social studies, Christian Religious Studies and Religious and Moral Education that expose them to the outcomes and benefits of being humble in life. The issue of hard work was the next to record a positive response. Out of 900 students, 730 either strongly agreed or agreed ($M = 4.41, SD = 1.01$) that laziness brings about poverty and therefore it is good to work hard. The students also exhibited positive attitude towards education. Out of 900, 790 of them either strongly agreed or agreed ($M = 4.31, SD = 1.11$) that education is key to the development of the individual and the society at large. Their responses may be partly due to the intensive education on the need to be educated. This resonates in Mukama's (2010) findings on the relationship between peer group influence, alcohol consumption, and students' attitudes towards education. He found that students' had positive attitudes towards education and believed it was their only means to self-independence.

Statements on divorce, homosexuality, stress, family and rites of passage recorded the lowest means in the context and in relation to the overall mean. About 580 students either strongly agreed or agreed that it is not good to divorce your partner even if they cheat on you, while 210 either strongly disagreed or disagreed ($M = 3.61, SD = 1.31$). In this light, the students are seen as having a positive attitude towards marriage indicating that divorce is not good. This response may be due to the fact that almost all the religious participants indicated they belong to, have doctrines that frown on divorce and this affects their attitudes towards it. Again, most participants are aware of the negative effects of divorce on children and therefore their response. Fagan's (2006) study however showed contrary views. He found that although students had positive attitudes towards marriage, they endorsed divorce which contradicts the findings of the present study. This may be due to the cultural and religious backgrounds of participants in his study.

More than half of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that homosexuality is not a good practice for the Ghanaian society while 200 either strongly disagreed or disagreed ($n = 570, M = 3.61, SD = 1.50$). This meant that students disapprove of homosexuality and had a negative attitude towards it. This response may be due to the campaign against homosexuality that most religious groups in Ghana have embarked on. This finding is contrary to Lehman and Thornwall (2011) who found that American college students had positive attitudes towards homosexuality. This contradiction may be due to the cultural differences between the two research sites as they conducted their study in the United States of America. Culture thus have an impact on attitudes. Managing and dealing with stress also had 640 students either strongly agreeing or agreeing. Only 120 disagreed or strongly disagreed ($M = 3.71, SD = 1.51$). Most of the students responded positively to the institution of rites of passage as they either strongly agreed or agreed that rites of passage is an integral part of the life of the Ghanaian ($n = 700, M = 3.81, SD = 1.21$).

Table 1: Students' Attitudes towards Social Issues

Statements	SA/A		UD		DA/SDA		Mean	SD
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Absenting yourself from school is not good	740	82.3	30	3.3	130	14.4	4.3	1.2
No student should absent himself from school	770	85.6	110	12.2	20	2.2	4.2	1.3
Students should respect authorities in school	770	85.6	110	12.2	20	2.2	4.1	1.3
Students should respect their parents, and elders in their communities	770	85.6	110	12.2	20	2.2	4.2	1.3
Humility is a good thing	830	82.2	50	5.6	20	2.2	4.6	.98
It is good to be humble as a human being	830	82.2	50	5.6	20	2.2	4.4	1.0
Students should be agents of peace	830	82.2	20	2.2	50	5.6	4.6	.78
Peace is important for the development of society	830	82.2	20	2.2	50	5.6	4.6	.84
Education is key to the development of the individual and the society	790	87.8	60	6.7	50	5.6	4.3	1.1
You have to work for money	750	83.3	50	5.6	100	11.1	4.1	1.0
Hard work pays with a lot of pleasures	700	77.8	70	7.8	130	14.4	3.9	1.2
You don't have to steal for money	700	77.8	140	15.6	60	6.6	3.9	1.4
Laziness brings about poverty	730	81.1	20	2.2	150	16.6	4.4	1.0
Leisure times help us to recover lost energy	690	76.7	50	5.6	160	17.8	4.0	1.2
Leisure times help us to have fun	640	71.1	20	2.2	240	26.6	3.9	1.1
Stress management is good for everybody	680	75.6	60	6.7	160	17.8	4.0	1.1
Stress should be dealt with from the causes	640	71.1	140	15.6	120	13.3	3.7	1.5
Rites of passage is an integral part of life	700	77.8	80	8.9	120	13.3	3.8	1.2
Family is an important part of society	760	85.5	80	8.9	60	6.6	4.1	1.1

The results show that senior high school students in the Brong Ahafo region exhibit positive attitude towards social issues. Their responses recorded an overall mean of 4.2 out of 5. This finding corroborates most studies (Lehman, & Thornwall, 2011; Mukama, 2010; Paruk, Mohamed, Patel, & Ramgoon, 2006; Karnik, Kamel, & Harper, 2000; and Fagan, 2006) on students attitudes towards social issues. However, few studies (Borne, 2011; Fagan, 2006) indicate that students had negative attitudes towards social issues. The overall positive attitude of students toward social issues in this study may be due to the norms, values and beliefs of the Ghanaian society. Issues like homosexuality, divorce, teenage pregnancy and absenteeism are frowned upon, and issues like marriage, education, rites of passage, family, respect for the elderly, peace and hard work are encouraged.

4.2. Differences in Attitudes towards Social issues based on Demographics

A factorial ANOVA was conducted to find out the effects of students' demographic characteristics (gender, age, school environment, subjects studied, school type, ethnicity and religious affiliation) on their attitudes towards social issues. These social issues include; absenteeism, respect, humility, peace, education, money, work, leisure, stress management, rites of passage, family, marriage, divorce and homosexuality. Table 2 shows results of the analysis.

Table 2: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Social Issues

Source	df	F	Sig.	Partial Eta ²
Corrected Model	52	57410.423	.000*	1.000
Intercept	1	112532928.12	.000*	1.000
Gender	1	10641.795	.000*	.926
Age	2	8177.845	.000*	.951
School type	1	.675	.411	.001
Subject	1	18351.667	.000*	.956
Environment	1	2857.916	.000*	.771
Religion	2	46892.388	.000*	.991
Ethnicity	5	112566.853	.000*	.998
Age*School type	2	14.419	.000**	.033
Age*Environment	1	46.538	.000**	.052
School type*Religion	1	21.718	.000**	.025

*Significant at $p \leq 0.05$

** Significant interaction effect at $p \leq 0.05$

The results of the General Linear Model (GLM) corrected model showed a statistically significant effect of the demographics on students' attitudes towards social issues, $F(52, 847) = 57410, p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = 1.00$. Statistical significant interactions were found between age and school type $F(2, 847) = 14.42, p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .033$, age and environment $F(1, 847) = 46.54, p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .052$, and school type and religion $F(1, 847) = 21.72, p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .025$. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant main effect for gender $F(1, 847) = 10641, p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .926$, age $F(2, 847) = 8177, p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .951$, subject studied $F(1, 847) = 18351, p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .956$, environment $F(1, 847) = 2857, p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .771$, religion $F(2, 847) = 46892, p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .991$, and ethnicity $F(5, 847) = 112566, p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .998$ on attitudes towards social issues. Post hoc analyses using Bonferroni tests revealed statistically significant mean differences at all levels of age ranges, religious affiliations and ethnicity of students on attitudes towards social issues (see Table 3). The main effect of school type was not statistically significant, $F(1,847) = .041, p = .411$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$.

The results mean that students' demographic characteristics (gender, age, school environment, subjects studied, school type, ethnicity and religious affiliation) combined, have a statistically significant effect on their attitudes towards social issues. Considering the demographic characteristics individually, all except school type, had statistically significant effect on students' attitudes towards social issues. Thus, differences exist in students' attitudes towards social issues based on their gender, age, school environment, subjects they study, their ethnicity and their religious affiliation. The results also imply that the impact of age on students' attitudes towards social issues depends on whether they attend mission or non-mission school. Also the impact of students' age on their attitudes towards social issues depends on whether they are in rural schools or urban schools. Lastly, the impact of school type (mission or non-mission) on the attitudes of students depends on their religious affiliation. Thus, age and school type, age and environment, and school type and religion relate to influence students' attitudes towards social issues. Table 3 gives more details of the post hoc analyses.

Table 3: Descriptive Data for Demographics on Attitudes towards Social Issues

Demographic	Subscale	Mean	SD	N
Gender	Male	121.9	14.4	480
	Female	122.2	14.2	420
Age	14-15	109.0*	.0	30
	16-17	124.2*	14.3	310
	18-19	123.5*	9.5	420
	20-21	116.5*	22.6	140
Subjects studied	Yes	120.1	16.9	540
	No	125.3	8.0	360
Environment	Rural	120.7	12.1	400
	Urban	123.4	15.7	500
Religion	Christian	125.5*	12.2	610
	Muslim	125.0*	12.2	120
	Traditionalist	107.0*	12.9	110
	Hindu	120.0*	8.1	40
	Buddhist	90.0*	.0	20
Ethnicity	Ashanti	122.3*	10.3	260
	Brong	115.8*	18.0	240
	Fante	118.3*	15.1	170
	Ewe	131.4*	6.7	70
	Ga	128.0*	.0	20
	Dagomba	138.4*	.5	50
	Dagare	126.0*	.0	60
	Nzema	134.0*	.0	30

*Mean difference significant at $p \leq .05$

The findings are congruent with the findings of most studies (Lehman, & Thornwall, 2011; Yenilmez, et al., 2006; Jekayinfa, 2004; Besen, & Zicklin, 2007) on the influence of students' demographics on their attitudes towards social issues. However, none of these studies looked at the interaction effect of these characteristics on each other in influencing students' attitudes. This finding may be due to a few reasons. In the first place, it is obvious that females approach social issues in a softer manner as compared to males. A look at the results indicates that females had slightly positive attitudes. Ethnic groups and religions have different values and practices. These values and practices are defined in the context of the group. It is therefore expected that students from these groups would not approach social issues in the same way despite they studying the same subjects. Also every stage of life affects how an individual thinks and reacts to issues. The different ages of the

students mean they would not be on the same level of thinking. Interestingly, none of the studies indicated that school type typically influenced students' attitudes as was found in this present study.

Mohamed and Waheed (2011) and Arndt and Bruin (2006) have contrary findings. They indicated that students' demographics did not influence their attitudes on social issues. This may be due to differences in location of these studies as well as students' exposure which might have influenced differences in values, beliefs and norms on these social issues.

4.3. Prediction of students' Attitude towards Social Issues

A standard multiple regression was conducted to find out if students' gender, age, school environment, subjects studied, school type, ethnicity and religious affiliation predicted their attitudes towards social issues. Using the enter method, the results indicated that the predictors (gender, age, school environment, subjects studied, school type, ethnicity and religious affiliation) explain 64.7% of variance in the attitude towards social issues $F(7,892) = 91.8, p < .05, R^2 = .42, R^2_{Adjusted} = .41$, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: ANOVA and Model Summary for Social Issues

Model	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R	R ²	R ² _{Adj}
Regression	7	10968.29	91.82	.000 ^b	.647 ^a	.419	.414
Residual	892	119.455					
Total	899						

The analysis showed that gender ($\beta = -.182, t = -5.40, p = <.05$), age ($\beta = .116, t = 3.85, p = <.05$), subjects studied ($\beta = .289, t = 9.93, p = <.05$), religious affiliation ($\beta = -.587, t = -19.90, p = <.05$) and ethnicity ($\beta = .384, t = 13.84, p = <.05$) did significantly predict the attitudes of students towards social issues. However, it was found that school type ($\beta = .022, t = .75, p = .455$) and environment ($\beta = .015, t = .53, p = .596$) did not significantly predict students' attitude towards social issues as noted in Table 5.

Table 5: Coefficients for Social Issues

Model	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
(Constant)		31.154	.000
Gender ⁴	-.182	-5.381	.000*
Age ⁵	.116	3.848	.000*
School type	.022	.747	.455 ^{ns}
CRS/RME/ATR ³	.289	9.932	.000*
Environment	.015	.531	.596 ^{ns}
Religious affiliation ¹	-.587	-19.877	.000*
Ethnicity ²	.384	13.841	.000*

¹=highest predictor, ⁵= lowest predictor

*significant at $p \leq .05$, ns=not significant at $p \leq .05$

Results from the analysis indicated that attitudes of students towards social issues are significantly predicted in order of magnitude, by their religion, ethnicity, subjects they study, gender and age. However, the type of school they attend and the environment do not significantly predict their attitude towards social issues. In other words, the religion, ethnicity, subject of study, gender and age of a student can help one predict what their attitude towards social issues like absenteeism, respect for the elderly, humility, peace and harmony in society, education etc. would be

This finding was largely expected because results of previous analyses in this study showed that students' demographic characteristics, except school type influence their attitudes towards these social issues. Most studies (Siani, & Assaraf, 2015; Woodford et al., 2012; Borne, 2011; Yenilmez et al., 2006; Jekayinfa, 2004) have indicated that age, gender, race, religion and subjects studied are significant predictors of attitudes. However, Jekayinfa (2004) and Gaines (2014) revealed that gender, ethnicity and age do not significantly predict students' attitudes towards homosexuality and also school environment predicts students' attitudes which is quite different from findings here. Based on these, it is evident that demographic characteristics of senior high school students in the Brong Ahafo region predict their attitudes towards social issues.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Students in senior high schools in the Brong Ahafo region of Ghana have positive attitudes towards social issues (absenteeism, respect, humility, peace and harmony, education, money, marriage, divorce and homosexuality). This positive attitudes can be attributed to the exposure students have had as a result of some of the social issues that are not encouraged in the Ghanaian society as well as those encouraged. This exposure comes through the kind of socialisation in the Ghanaian culture that seeks to transfer cultural values and norms from generations to generations. Although these attitudes are attributable to society, all the characteristics (gender, age, ethnicity, subject of study, environment and religious affiliation) of students also had an effect on their attitudes except the type of school they attend, i.e. mission or non-mission. Students react to social issues the same way irrespective of whether their school principles are based on church doctrines or not. One can thus argue that the taken over of schools by churches will not necessarily make students good citizens. The fact that students' characteristics had an effect on their attitudes relates that almost all will as well positively predict their attitudes. There is a relationship between prediction and effect. However, the location of a school and whether its mission or not cannot significantly predict students attitudes.

For these positive attitudes of students to be encouraged and sustained, the Brong Ahafo regional directorate of the Ministry of Education should continue to intensify education on social issues through subjects like Citizenship education, Social Studies and Religious and moral education. Students' characteristics influencing and predicting their attitudes towards social issues means that, the developers of the school curriculum on social issues and the Brong Ahafo directorate of the Curriculum, Research and Development Division of the Ghana Education Service should always endeavour to consider the characteristics of learners when planning the curriculum. Curriculum literature espouses learners as one of the focal point in curriculum development; their interests, needs and characteristics should be paramount.

Few studies in this area have similar findings on the issue of students' attitudes towards social issues. The findings of this study confirm as well as contradict some these studies. There is no doubt that there was an attempt by the present study to add to the already existing knowledge on the subject, as well the influence and prediction of attitudes by students' demographic characteristics. It is important to note that the conclusions drawn are based on the findings, sample and study area.

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