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Attitudes of Students towards Religious Issues: Do Demographics Characteristics Matter?

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Abstract:

This study focused on the attitudes of senior high school students in the Eastern region of Ghana towards religious issues. Again, the demographic characteristics (gender, subjects studied, type of school, environment, age, ethnicity and religious affiliation) that influence and predict these attitudes towards religious issues were also determined. The quantitative descriptive cross-sectional survey was employed using a questionnaire (Mensah's attitude scale for measuring social, moral and religious issues) with a reliability coefficient of .891 to collect data from 900 senior high school students. These students were selected from 30 out of 93 senior high schools in the region. Data collected were analysed with the help of SPSS version 23. 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. It was found that students in senior high schools in the Eastern region exhibited positive attitudes towards religious issues. Also, it was found that their demographic characteristics have significant influence and predict their attitudes. It was recommended that both teachers and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment should strive to always consider the characteristics of learners when developing their lessons or planning the curriculum.

Keywords: Students, attitudes, religious issues, religious education department of arts education

1. Introduction

Throughout the world, the issue of attitude has gained attention in recent times. Psychologist over the years have tried to unearth the main tenets of attitudes and how they are formed. The issue of attitude is as old as the existence of the first man. This is to say that attitude and 'man' cannot be separated, no matter how hard we try to. Due to this assertion, scientists who are interested in human beings and their society are also interested in the issue of attitude. In fact, earlier writers on human science (Thomas, & Znaniecki, 1918; Allport, 1954) did indicate that the study of human science and behaviour cannot be separated from their attitude. This is evident in the works of Allport and Ross (1968) who indicated that the issue of attitude a unique and essential concept in modern day psychology. However, under the general custom of attitude research, attempts to explain discriminatory behaviours have typically referred to attitudes, stereotypes, prejudice and ethnocentrism (Fazio, & Olson, 2003).

The concept attitude has become and elusive term. In more recent times, current social psychologists and scholars in the field of human behaviour have propounded some definitions of the concept of attitude. Lord (1997) was interested in Frankfort-Nachmias' (1992) definition of attitude which was "mental or neural state of readiness represented by cognition, feelings and behaviour; organized through experience, deliberate learning and heredity. This exerts a directive or a dynamic influence upon an individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (p. 241). Based on this, he described attitude as having three main components: the cognitive component; the feeling or affective component and the actions or behavioural component. For him, the three components are interrelated and therefore are always present anytime a person or an individual is said to hold an attitude. Hogg and Vaughan (2005) also defined attitude as "a relatively enduring organisation of beliefs, feelings and behavioural tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups or symbols" (p. 150). The enduring nature of attitude re-surfaces in this modern-day definition too. This is to say that the feelings, beliefs and behavioural tendencies that people exhibit which we term as attitude are mostly permanent and unchanging. This is not to say that attitudes formed cannot change, it can as we would see in forthcoming discussions in this chapter. More significantly, they expand the scope that the reactions are directed to, and include socially significant objects, groups and symbols. More recently, Maio, Maio, and Haddock (2010), have posited that attitudes are cognitive (beliefs, thoughts, attributes), affective (feelings, emotions) and behavioural information (past events, experiences) that characterises how people react to situations, people, objects etc. This description relates to that of both Lord (1997) and Hogg and Vaughan (2005) in the sense that it also sees attitude as being made up of three major components. For them, the thoughts that people have about objects translates into their feeling and emotions towards them. However, these thoughts are based on past events or experiences that the individual has encountered. According to Thurstone (1928), all definitions of the term show it as a hypothetical theory which is not tangible. The implication is that,

the concept then is an index of an individual's thinking and positions on objects, people as well as issues (Brandt, & Wetherell, 2012).

The kind of interest developed in the concept attitude has led to many fields of study (Education, sociology, etc) focusing research into it. These days, industries and the education sector conduct research to find out how workers are performing, absenteeism and turnover. This action has frequently implored concepts like attitude, job satisfaction and morale. Attitude relates and informs behaviour which are formed through a process. Individuals' attitudes therefore determine how they behave in society. However, these attitudes are formed based on information or knowledge made available. Peoples' attitudes towards religious issues are basically informed by knowledge attained through religious doctrines. The role of education in shaping attitudes of people in society cannot be overemphasised. Relating to the classroom situation and attitudes of learners, it becomes clear that students' attitudes towards subjects, teachers, school activities and issue are formed through a process. This therefore makes it very difficult for educators to try and change students' attitudes when they are not willing or they have not had an experience. It is therefore appropriate to suggest that, this should make teachers become critical and conscious of the type of experience they expose the students to. School systems all over the world have subjects that relates to religions dominant in the society. These subjects seek to help learners acquire skills and competencies that can help them develop positive attitudes towards religious issues. Subjects like, Ethics, Religious Studies, Christian Religious Studies, Religious Education and Religious and Moral Education through their subject matter expose learners to various perspectives on religious issues needed to make sound religious judgements (Mensah, 2017; Oztas, 2003). Despite the fact that subjects in the school system help shape learners' attitude, research (DeRose, 1984; Kelley, & Evans, 1995; Kelley, 2001; Silva, & Schensul, 2003) has established that there are certain factors that also determine attitude. To this end, an individual's behaviour is determined not only by the information they acquire but, other factors.

Students' attitudes towards religious issues like existence of God, purpose of creation, worship, prayer, faith, repentance, forgiveness, confession of sins, spirituality and life have been the focus of many researchers (Smith, 2003; Yenilmez, Ayranci, Ay, Erkaya, Ozdemir, & Kaptanoglu, 2006; Awopetu, & Fasanmi, 2011; Kasomo, 2012; Arndt, & Bruin, 2006; Mukama, 2010). Students' attitudes towards issues of religion are determined by their religion. The religion of people and for that matter students are likely to affect how they behave towards issues of religion (Hope & Jones, 2014; Smith, 2003). This implies that, the religious teachings and doctrines learners are exposed to in their various religions determine how they relates and understand religious issues. Inasmuch as various religions have different doctrines, students' attitudes towards religious issues will never be the same.

The type of school (mission or non-mission) as well as subject learners are taken through in school also influences their attitudes towards religious issues (Kasomo, 2011; Comegys, 2010). Mission schools (schools owned by churches) train learners by their doctrines in addition to the subjects taught. This results in learner imbibing their religious doctrines and influencing their attitudes and behaviours towards religious issues. Subjects in ethics, religious education, Christian religious studies, African traditional religion and religious and moral education studied in these schools influence students' attitudes (Hope & Jones, 2014; Tritter, 1992).

It has also been established that, gender of students influences how they perceive and understand religious issues (Chemutai, 2015; Lehman & Thornwall, 2011; Arndt & de Bruin, 2006). Also, factors like environment (rural/urban), age as well as tribe of students influences their attitude towards religious issues (Jekayinfa, 2004; Awopetu, & Fasanmi, 2011). Jekayinfa (2004) again, is of the view that the school environment as well as the learners' home environment go a long way to determine their attitude towards moral issues. Thus, no matter what the school does, the environment is critical. Awopetu and Fasanmi (2011) have specified that, the age of students aids their attitude towards essential issues in religion.

1.1. Context and Purpose of Study

Education plays a vital role when it comes to the formation of learners' attitudes (Oztas, 2003). Education (formal or informal) is seen as the foundation for changing and modifying behaviour in our societies. It is key to the formation of peoples' attitudes towards religious issues. The school plays a crucial role in this. This is because 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 directed at helping learners to acquire skills and competences to help them develop positive attitudes towards moral, social and religious issues (Oztas, 2003).

In Africa, students' attitudes towards religious issues are mixed, negative and positive. Factors such as peer group influence and poverty level affect the attitudes of students towards many issues in life (Mukama, 2010). Thus, no matter what the society does, these factors are crucial in shaping attitudes of students. Related to this point is that, factors that influence attitudes of learners in schools towards religious issues should not be overlooked. Since it will defeat the aim religious education. Traditionally, the Ghanaian system had its own way of passing on its values and norms to the younger generation. This was done through the various folklores, proverbs, taboos and cultural practices. When the Europeans colonised the country, they introduced religious education (Abosi & Amisah, 1992). Religious education, and for that matter, moral education was given a boost when section 25 of the 1944 Education Act of Britain stated that the school day in county school should begin with collective worship on the part of all pupils in attendance of the school and that religious instruction should be given in every county school (McWilliams, 1959). Later on, the Ghanaian education system saw the introduction of Christian religious studies, African traditional religion and Islamic religious studies as a way of trying to instil good social, moral and religious values into the learners (Mensah, 2009).

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). The rationale of this subject was to importantly reinforce the informal moral (social and religious) training that learners go through at home. It is 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). In 2007, some stakeholders in education felt that the subject was not helping learners develop good attitudes towards religious issues. Due to this, researchers mostly in religious education, conducted several researches to ascertain the fact. Mensah (2018) revealed that the aims of the subject at the senior high school were being attained. Asare-Danso (2011) found that learners at the junior high schools in cape coast metropolis had positive attitudes towards RME. Other studies (Ajzen, 1988; Oskamp, 1977; Silva, & Schensul, 2003) have showed that, attitude affects performance and attainment of educational ends.

At the senior high school level in Ghana, very little research has been done on the attitude of students towards religious issues as well as the factors that influence these attitudes. The attitude of senior high school students towards religious issues in Ghana is not known. Mensah (2017) found out that senior high school students in the Brong Ahafo region had positive attitudes towards social issues and that their demographic characteristics influence and predict these attitudes. Little is known about their attitudes towards religious issues. Again, nothing is known about the demographic characteristics that determine 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 Eastern region of Ghana towards religious issues. To this end, the following research questions were formulated.

- What attitudes do senior high school students in the Eastern region exhibit towards religious issues?
- What differences exist in the attitude of senior high school students in the Eastern region towards religious issues based on gender, subject studied, type of school, environment, age, ethnicity and religious affiliation?
- What demographic characteristics predict the attitudes of senior high school students in the Eastern region towards religious issues?

2. Methodology

Quantitative information was collected from senior high school students to ascertain and describe their attitudes towards religious issues. Therefore, the descriptive cross-sectional survey design was employed for this study (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; Creswell, 2014). Leavy (2017) has described this design as one that includes identifying the features of an observed fact and finding out likely correlations among two or more occurrences. In descriptive survey studies the researcher is able to describe the thoughts, opinions, attitudes, perceptions and feeling of the individuals of interest who in this study were senior high school students in the Eastern region (Jackson, 2009; Neuman, 2014).

2.1. Sample

The study population was made up of senior high school students in the Eastern region of Ghana. There are 93 senior high school in the region comprising 86 public and 7 private schools. Out of 93 schools, 25 are mission schools and 68 non-mission schools. Again, 40 are in rural areas while 53 are in urban settlements. Averagely, schools in the urban areas have a population of 1,200 students while those in rural areas had a population of 800 students (Ghana Education Service-Eastern regional office, 2018). Therefore, the target population for the study was 95,600 students of senior high schools in the Eastern region. The accessible population, however was 30,000 students from 30 schools selected out of the 93 schools. Fifteen schools in rural areas as well as 15 from urban areas were selected. Also, 15 mission and 15 non-mission schools were selected due to the variables of interest for the study.

Out of 30,000 students in the 30 selected senior high schools in the region, 900 were selected for the study to find out their attitudes towards religious issues. This was made up of 360 students from rural areas and 540 from schools in the urban settlements. A sample size of 900 students out of 30,000 students is deemed representative (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Schools were categorised into rural and urban using the cluster sampling technique. This allowed for the use of simple random sampling to select 15 schools from each of the clusters. Then the simple random sampling technique was again used to select students from the various schools selected. In each of the 15 schools in the rural areas, 24 students were selected summing 360, and in each of the 15 schools in the urban areas, 36 students were selected summing 540. This sampling was done with the help of the lottery method under simple random sampling (Kothari, 2004; Leavy, 2017).

2.2. Instrument

The questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The study adopted the religious issue component of the Mensah social, moral and religious scale (MSMRS) for the study. The instrument was made up of two sections: A and B. Section A focused on the demographic characteristics (gender, age, religious affiliation, school type; mission/non-mission), subjects studied; CRS/IRS/ATR/RME, school environment; rural or urban and tribe) of the students. Section B focused on students' attitudes towards religious issues. The attitude scale on religious issues was made up of 27 items. The items were statements made on issues like existence of God, purpose of creation, worship, prayer, faith, repentance, forgiveness, confession of sins, spirituality and life.

The respondents were to respond to the items by indicating the degree to which they agree or disagree to the statements made on a scale of 1 to 5. The weights for the scale were: Strongly agree= 5; Agree=4; Disagree= 3; strongly disagree=2; and Undecided= 1. A pilot test was conducted in senior high schools in the eastern region that were not part of the selected schools for the study. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach alpha) was determined to be .891 which was highly

reliable (Trochim, 2006; Neuman, 2014). After this data was collected after seeking permission from the headmasters of the schools, and scheduling convenient times for sampling and data collection in the schools.

2.3. Analysis

Data collected from the students were coded, processed and analysed using the Statistical Package for Service Solutions (version 23) software. Descriptive (frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation) statistics were used to analyse and interpret data collected on research question one. Also, for research questions two and three, inferential statistics (Factorial Analysis of Variance, Standard Multiple Regression) were used to analyse and interpret data respectively.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. What Attitudes Do Senior High School Students in the Eastern Region Exhibit towards Religious Issues?

The study sought to establish the attitudes of students towards religious issues. Students were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with statements on religious issues. Their responses to the statements were used to determine their attitudes towards the issues. Some of the religious issues included existence of God, purpose of creation, worship, prayer, faith, repentance, forgiveness, confession of sins, spirituality and life. Table 1 gives details of the results from the data collected from students.

Results in Table 1 show the extent to which students agree or disagree to statements on religious issues. Their responses (agreement or disagreement) indicate their attitudes towards these religious issues. Almost all ($n=770$, 85.5%) the students either strongly agreed or agreed that without prayer humans cannot communicate with God and get what they want from him whiles 90 either strongly disagreed or disagreed ($M=4.4$, $SD=1.1$). Out of 900 students, 740 (82.2%) also affirmed that prayer is communication between man and God whiles 140 of them either strongly disagreed or disagreed ($M=4.4$, $SD=1.1$). This is rightly so because it is known that prayer is the only way to communicate with God. It was interesting to know that some students did not agree with that. Again, 760 (84.5%) students either strongly agreed or agreed that human life is very precious and should be cherished whiles 50 (5.6%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed ($M=4.1$, $SD=1.3$). This may be due to the value that the Ghanaian society places on human life. In the religious context, God is the only giver of life and therefore he alone can take it back.

On the issues of God's existence, majority of the students responded positively that there is a creator of the universe ($n=700$; $M=4.1$, $SD=1.2$), God oversees everything that goes on in the world ($n=720$; $M=4.1$, $SD=1.2$) and that God has power to create and destroy ($n=660$; $M=4.1$, $SD=1.2$). All the students belong to religious groups and these groups believe in the existence of God; therefore, these responses were expected.

The results show that issues of worship, confession, the purpose of humans on earth and spirituality recorded the lowest positive responses. However, more than half ($n=520$, 57.8%) of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that God is to be worshipped by human beings for the good things he does for them whiles about 180 (20%) of them strongly disagreed or disagreed to this ($M=3.3$, $SD=1.6$). Worship is an integral part of religion but again some people believe it should not be a ritual. It is therefore not surprising that some of the students think God should not be worshipped for the good things he does for humans. Again, 540 (60%) students either strongly agreed or agreed that students should confess when they sin or go against school regulations whiles 220 (24.4%) of them either strongly disagreed or disagreed ($M=3.4$, $SD=1.5$). This may be because of the two dimensions here. For the religious dimension, all religious people need to acknowledge that there are sinful and therefore must always confess their sins. However, on the social dimension, students would not want to confess when they go against school regulations because of the fear of punishment.

Statements	SA/A		UD		DA/SDA		M	SD
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
There is a creator of the universe	700	77.8	40	4.4	160	17.8	4.1	1.2
God oversees everything that goes on in the world	720	80	60	6.7	120	13.3	4.1	1.2
God has power to create and destroy	660	73.4	50	5.6	190	21.1	4.1	1.2
God created man to inhabit the earth and make use of the things on earth	520	57.8	170	18.9	210	23.3	3.4	1.5
Man is supposed to take care of the earth and the things on it	540	60	90	10	270	30	3.6	1.4
God is to be worshiped by human beings for the good things he does for them	520	57.8	200	22.2	180	20	3.3	1.6
Different people have different ways of worshipping and praising God	660	73.4	110	12.2	130	14.4	3.8	1.3
Prayer is communication between man and God	740	82.2	20	2.2	140	15.5	4.3	1.1
Without prayer humans cannot get what they want from God	770	85.5	40	4.4	90	10	4.4	1.1
It is good to always pray as a religious person	690	76.7	80	8.9	130	14.4	4.1	1.2
Faith is an essential part of religion	710	78.9	20	2.2	170	18.9	4.1	1.1
Without faith it will be difficult to be religious	570	63.4	90	10	240	26.7	3.9	1.4
Without faith you cannot receive from God	660	73.3	60	6.7	180	20	4.0	1.3
It is good to show repentance when you offend God and your friends	660	73.3	60	6.7	180	20	3.9	1.3
Repentance is the only way God forgives humans	660	73.3	120	13.3	120	13.4	3.8	1.4
Repentance indicate we are sorry about what we have done	660	73.3	60	6.7	180	20	3.9	1.3
We have to forgive people who offend us no matter how bad we feel	620	68.9	40	4.4	240	26.7	3.7	1.2
If you don't forgive people who offend you, God won't forgive you your sins	640	71.1	60	6.7	200	22.2	3.9	1.3
Confession of sins is an integral part of religion	610	67.7	80	8.9	210	23.3	3.6	1.2
Confession brings about forgiveness from God	600	66.7	140	15.6	160	17.7	3.8	1.5
Students should confess when they sin or go against school regulations	540	60	140	15.6	220	24.4	3.4	1.5
Spirituality is vital to have a good religious life	570	63.3	180	20	150	16.6	3.6	1.6
People who are not spiritual are not religious	550	61.1	130	14.4	220	24.4	3.6	1.5
Life is to be lived in accordance with what God has stipulated for us.	620	68.9	80	8.9	200	22.2	3.9	1.3
Enjoy life to the fullest	730	81.1	80	8.9	90	10	4.0	1.3
Human life is precious	760	84.5	90	10	50	5.6	4.1	1.3

Table 1: Students' Attitudes towards Religious Issues

Out of 900 students, 520(57.8%) affirmed positively that God created man to inhabit the earth and make use of the things on it whiles 210 (23.3%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed ($M=3.4$, $SD=1.5$). Most of the students positively affirmed that spirituality is vital to have a good religious life ($n= 570$, $M=3.6$, $SD=1.6$) and that people who are not spiritual are not religious ($n= 550$, $M=3.6$, $SD=1.5$). Put together, results from Table 1 reveals that senior high school students in the Eastern region exhibited positive attitudes towards religious issue. This is because their responses resulted in an overall mean of 3.9. This finding implies that students responded positively to positive statements on religious issues and responded negatively to negative statements on moral issues. This positive attitude towards religious issues can be attributed to the fact that Ghana is seen as a religious nation. Again, the demographic information about the students indicated that all of them belong to a religious group. This may also be due to the influence of their level of moral development. It is therefore not surprising that they have a positive attitude towards religious issues. This finding is similar to findings in the literature. In a related study, Mensah (2017) found that senior high school students in the Brong Ahafo region had positive attitudes towards social issues. The RME syllabus entails social, religious and moral issues. Smith's (2003) study that focused on American adolescents' attitudes towards religious issues revealed that they mostly have positive attitude towards religious issues like respect for sacred places like the church or mosque, religious leaders and religious activities. Although there are societal differences between his study and the present, the findings are the same. Kasomo (2012), Asare-Danso (2011) and Collie and Apt (1999) who conducted their studies in African also found that students had very positive attitude towards Christian/Religious studies RME, which means that they had positive attitudes towards religious issues. They established that a good number of adolescents/students engage in religious activities more than most adults, which according to the researcher is the reason why they have positive attitudes towards religious issues.

3.2. What Differences Exist in Attitudes towards Religious 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 religious issues. These religious issues include; existence of God, purpose of creation, worship, prayer, faith, repentance, forgiveness, confession of sins, spirituality and life. Table 2 displays results of the analysis.

Source	df	F	Sig.	Partial Eta ²
Corrected Model	52	274.880	.000*	.944
Intercept	1	356838.086	.000*	.998
Gender	1	652.504	.000*	.435
Age	2	72.109	.000*	.145
School type	1	.675	.411	.001
Subject	1	463.799	.000*	.354
Environment	1	.144	.704	.000
Religion	2	577.932	.000*	.577
Ethnicity	5	499.828	.000*	.747
Age*School type	2	14.419	.000**	.033
Age*Environment	1	46.538	.000**	.052
School type*Religion	1	21.718	.000**	.025

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

*Significant at 0.05

** Significant Interaction Effect

The results of the General Linear Model (GLM) corrected model showed a statistically significant effect of the demographics on students' attitudes towards religious issues, $F(52,847) = 274.8, p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .944$. There were statistically significant interactions 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 indicate that there was statistically significant main effect for gender $F(1, 847) = 652.5, p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .435$, age $F(2, 847) = 72.1, p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .145$, subject studied $F(1, 847) = 463.8, p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .354$, religion $F(2, 847) = 577.9, p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .577$, and ethnicity $F(5, 847) = 499.8, p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .747$ on attitudes towards religious issues. Post hoc analyses using Bonferroni tests revealed that the attitudes of students at age 14-15 ($M=104, SD=.0$) towards religious issues is not statistically significantly different from those at age 16-17 ($M=104.5, SD=13.1$). Also, the attitude of students who are Ashanti ($M=109.2, SD=11.5$) towards religious issues is not statistically significantly different from those who are Nzema ($M=108, SD=.0$). There were statically significant mean differences at other levels of age ranges, religious affiliations and ethnicity of students on attitudes towards religious issues (see Table 3). The main effect of school type $F(1, 847) = .675, p = .411$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$ and environment $F(1, 847) = .144, p = .704$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$ was not statistically significant. Results show that students' demographic characteristics (gender, age, school environment, subjects studied, school type, ethnicity and religious affiliation) combined, influence their attitudes towards religious issues.

Demographic	Subscale	Mean	SD	N
Gender	Male	101.8	14.6	480
	Female	107.3	15.5	420
Age	14-15	104.0	.0	30
	16-17	104.5	13.1	310
	18-19	108.9*	16.2	420
	20-21	90.6*	8.8	140
Subject studied	Yes	102.5	12.8	540
	No	107.1	17.9	360
Religion	Christian	105.7*	15.1	610
	Muslim	101.6*	7.7	120
	Traditionalist	111.6*	14.7	110
	Hindu	77.0*	3.0	40
	Buddhist	96.0*	.0	20
Ethnicity	Ashanti	109.2	11.5	260
	Brong	95.9*	13.9	240
	Fante	105.1*	18.6	170
	Ewe	117.6*	1.6	70
	Ga	74.0*	.0	20
	Dagomba	93.0*	.0	50
	Dagare	117.0*	.0	60
	Nzema	108.0	.0	30

Table 3: Descriptive for Demographics on Attitudes towards Religious Issues

*Mean Difference Significant at $P \leq .05$

Again, considering the demographic characteristics individually, all except school type and environment, had a significant effect on students' attitudes towards religious issues. Thus, differences exist in students' attitudes towards religious issues based on their gender, age, school environment, subjects they study, their ethnicity and their religious affiliation. The results also showed that the impact of age on students' attitudes towards religious issues depends on

whether they attend mission or non-mission school. Again, the impact of students' age on their attitudes towards religious 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 of their religious affiliation in influencing their attitudes towards religious issues. Therefore, age and school type, age and environment, and school type and religion interact to influence students' attitudes towards religious issues.

This finding is not new because researchers (Chemutai, 2015; Hope & Jones, 2014; Kasamo, 2012; Smith, 2003) in religious education have confirmed that students' age, gender, ethnicity, religion and subjects they study affects their attitudes towards religious issues. Although a critical look at the results reveal non-significant influence of age and ethnicity, it is important to speculate that students at different age level do not think alike. It is obvious that females are more religious than males and therefore I am not surprised gender influences attitudes towards religious issues. Various ethnic groups have different views on religious issues in Ghana.

Kasamo (2012) however, in the same study revealed that students' school type and school environment do not influence their attitudes towards religious issues. Collie and Apt (1999) in the same vein, confirmed this by saying that students' attitudes towards religious studies are not influenced by whether they attend mission schools or non-mission schools. This is because religious views are doctrinal and does not depend on where a person stays.

These findings are not surprising since literature on factors influencing attitudes mentions all these demographic characteristics indirectly. Whitley (2010) identified three factors that affect attitudes: target characteristics, source characteristics and message characteristics. Target characteristics are the characteristics of the individual who develops the attitude towards issues, objects or other persons. These characteristics include intelligence, gender, self-esteem and mind frame (Rhodes, & Woods, 1992). Source characteristics talks about the source of information the individual receives. Issues here include expertise, trustworthiness and interpersonal attraction. Message characteristics talks about the nature of the information and knowledge received. The nature of the message plays a role in attitude formation.

3.3 What Demographic Characteristics Predict Attitudes of Students towards Religious Issues

A standard multiple regression was conducted to see if students' gender, age, school environment, subjects studied, school type, ethnicity and religious affiliation predicted their attitude towards religious issues. Results from the analysis, using the enter method showed that the predictors (gender, age, school environment, subjects studied, school type, ethnicity and religious affiliation) explain 36% of variance in the attitude towards religious issues $F(7,892) = 18.9$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .13$, $R^2_{Adjusted} = .12$. See Table 4 for model.

Model	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R	R ²	Adj. R ²
Regression	7	3870.27	18.96	.000 ^b	.360 ^a	.130	.123
Residual	892	204.09					
Total	899						

Table 4: ANOVA and Model Summary for Religious Issues

Results from the analysis further indicated that gender ($\beta = .218$, $t = 5.27$, $p < .05$), school type ($\beta = -.137$, $t = -3.76$, $p < .05$), subjects studied ($\beta = -.269$, $t = 7.55$, $p < .05$), environment ($\beta = -.097$, $t = -2.73$, $p < .05$) and religious affiliation ($\beta = -.132$, $t = -3.6$, $p < .05$) significantly predicted students' attitudes towards religious issues. However, age ($\beta = -.025$, $t = -.69$, $p = .493$) and ethnicity ($\beta = -.017$, $t = -.51$, $p = .607$) did not significantly predict students' attitude towards religious issues (see Table 5).

Model	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
(Constant)		20.290	.000
Gender ²	.218	5.265	.000*
Age	-.025	-.686	.493 ^{ns}
School type ³	-.137	-3.763	.000*
CRS/RME/ATR ¹	.269	7.547	.000*
Environment ⁵	-.097	-2.729	.006*
Religious affiliation ⁴	-.132	-3.639	.000*
Ethnicity	-.017	-.514	.607 ^{ns}

Table 5: Coefficients for Religious Issues

¹=Highest Predictor, ⁵=Lowest Predictor

*Significant At $P \leq .05$, Ns=Not Significant At $P \leq .05$

The results show that the attitudes of students towards religious issues are significantly predicted in order of magnitude, by the subjects they study, their gender, type of school they attend, their religion, and school environment. However, it showed that their age and ethnicity did not significantly predict their attitude towards religious issues. In other words, the study of CRS/RME, gender, type of school, religion, and the environment of the school they attend can help you know what their attitudes towards religious issues like existence of God, purpose of creation, worship, prayer, faith, repentance, forgiveness, confession of sins, spirituality and life would be. Therefore, according to findings of this study, age and ethnicity are not predictors of attitudes towards religious issues. This implies and confirms that students'

attitudes towards religious issues are influenced by their demographic characteristics. These demographic characteristics of the students have also been found to influence their attitudes towards religious issues.

This finding was expected because it has already been established that students' attitudes towards religious issues are influenced by their demographic characteristics. This finding is congruent with other studies on prediction of students' attitudes towards religious issues found. Chemutai (2015), Hope and Jones (2014) Karnik et. al, (2000) and Smith (2003) all found in their study that students' demographic characteristics, specifically, ethnicity and religion significantly predicted their attitudes towards religious issues. Whiles Smith (2003) found religion to significantly predict attitudes, Karnik et al (2000) in addition to religion found ethnicity to also predict attitudes. This contradicts the findings of this present study. Based on these, it is clear that subjects of study, gender, type of school, religion, and school environment of Senior High School students in the Eastern region predict their attitudes towards religious issues and not their age and ethnicity.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

It can be concluded that students in senior high schools in the Eastern region of Ghana have positive attitudes towards religious issues (existence of God, purpose of creation, worship, prayer, faith, repentance, forgiveness, confession of sins, spirituality and life). The positive attitudes the students showed can be credited to the fact that Ghana is seen as a religious nation with three main religions (Christianity, Islam, Traditional African) aside the others. Also, a look at the religious affiliation of the students also indicated that they all belonged to a religion, plus the all studied RME at the basic level. It also became evident that these attitudes are influence by demographic characteristics (gender, age, school environment, subjects studied, school type, ethnicity and religious affiliation) combined. However, individually, school type (mission/non-mission) and environment(rural/urban) didn't have a significant effect on students' attitudes towards religious issues. This implies that students' attitudes towards religious issues does not depend on whether their schools' principles are doctrinal (religiously) or not, and whether they are in rural settlement of not. The impact of students' age on their attitudes towards religious issues depends on whether they are in rural schools or urban schools and the impact of school type (mission or non-mission) on the attitudes of students depends of their religious. Again, attitudes of students towards religious issues were significantly predicted in order of magnitude, by the subjects they study, their gender, type of school they attend, their religion, and school environment except age and ethnicity.

Based on the findings and the conclusions drawn, it will only be proper to recommend to the Eastern regional directorate of education to encourage the teaching and learning of subjects that exposes students to critical religious issues. This will help maintain the positive attitudes exhibited by students towards religious issues. Subjects like Religious and moral education, Christian religious studies, Islamic religious studies and African traditional religion should be given adequate attention, plus the provision of teaching learning resources to aid teachers. Students demographic characteristic have been found to influence and predict their attitudes. Therefore, both teachers and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment should strive to always consider the characteristics of learners when developing their lessons or planning the curriculum.

An attempt has been made through this study to verify the findings of the few studies conducted in relation to the issues of religion as well as attitudes related to these issues. The findings from this study contradicts as well as corroborate findings of previous studies. However, it has undoubtedly added up and filled the knowledge gaps in the literature on students' attitudes towards religious issues as well as the characteristics that influence and predict their attitudes.

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