

# Students' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Christian Religious Education in Promoting Moral Values in Secondary Schools in Soy Sub-County, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya

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## Abstract

Christian Religious Education (CRE) plays a vital role in Kenyan secondary schools, with its core objective being the development of students' moral character. However, its effectiveness in addressing moral issues such as indiscipline, dishonesty, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancies remains a concern. In Uasin Gishu County, the continued decline in students' moral values has sparked questions about whether CRE is achieving its intended purpose. This study explores students' perceptions regarding CRE's effectiveness in promoting moral values among secondary school students in Soy Sub-County, Uasin Gishu County. Anchored in Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), the study adopts a pragmatism research philosophy and an exploratory research design. The target population was 681 Form Four students. Using Yamane's (1967) sample size formula, a sample of 252 respondents was determined. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were employed to ensure balanced representation. Data was collected using questionnaires and analyzed quantitatively with SPSS version 23 and qualitatively through thematic analysis. Findings showed that most students viewed CRE as effective in shaping moral behavior. Key values reinforced included honesty, responsibility and respect. Qualitative data indicated that students found CRE lessons relatable but criticized exam-focused teaching and weak linkage between moral instruction and real-life practice. Peer pressure and limited parental support also reduced its moral impact. The study concludes that CRE plays a significant role in shaping students' moral values but its influence is hindered by weak implementation and social distractions. It recommends that the Ministry of Education and school administrators strengthen value-based pedagogy, integrate more interactive and practical teaching methods,

and involve parents and faith-based organizations in reinforcing moral learning. These efforts would enhance the effectiveness of CRE in molding responsible and ethically grounded learners in Kenyan secondary schools.

**Keywords:** Christian Religious Education, moral values, students' perception, secondary schools, indiscipline, Uasin Gishu County

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## Introduction

The concept of morality originates from the Latin plural *moralis*, signifying the recognized rules of behavior within a community (Andy-Philip, 2017). The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines morality as a set of guidelines distinguishing between right and wrong behavior (Sharma, 2024). In social terms, morality refers to norms individuals must follow, with violations often attracting penalties (Skitka et al., 2021). Fundamentally, morality comprises principles that govern proper conduct such as fairness and moral values that help individuals differentiate right from wrong, good from bad (Khanam et al., 2017; Kaur, 2019; Hyde, 2024).

Moral values include concepts such as honesty, integrity, respect for others, humility, patience, fairness, responsibility, empathy and compassion (Wanjau, 2019). They serve as a moral direction, influencing decisions, actions

and interactions with others (DeTienne et al., 2021). Moral values are not only about personal integrity but also about contributing to the well-being and harmony of society (Horowski, 2020). They are often instilled through education, family upbringing, religious teachings and social interactions (Simiyu & Stephen, 2021).

Many researchers ascribe the worldwide erosion of moral values experienced over the last century to factors like modernization, secularization, media influence and cultural change (Nelson & Yang, 2023). Through such globalization, as cultures meet and mix with one another, comes the homogenization of values, wherein traditional moral standards are replaced by more global, and often Western, ideologies (Belamghari, 2020). Al-Mahfedi (2020) discusses how this cultural homogenization undermines the unique moral frameworks that different societies

have developed over centuries. The spread of consumer culture, in particular, has been linked to the decline in moral values, as economic success and material wealth are increasingly prioritized over ethical considerations and community well-being (Parihar et al., 2018). Further, (Chineyemba, 2023) notes that the weakening of the nuclear family, coupled with rising divorce rates and an increase in single-parent households, has diminished the effectiveness of the family in instilling ethical principles in children. As a result, many young people grow up without the strong moral guidance that was once provided by stable family environments.

Globally, there is a general decline of morals in schools and outside schools. In the developed countries, several cases of indiscipline among students have been reported. Birdsall (2018) notes that this indiscipline issues have led to weakening of moral education in schools, as students are increasingly exposed to conflicting messages about what is considered morally acceptable behavior. Sanderse (2013), also pointed out that in 21st century as many schools attempted to ignore the moral dimension of schooling, three things happened: Achievement scores began to decline, rampant examination malpractice, discipline and behavior problems increased and voices are being raised accusing the schools of teaching secular humanism.

In African, the decline in moral values in schools has been linked to societal changes, including the erosion of traditional cultural norms (Ali & Shishigu, 2020). Many African societies have historically placed a strong emphasis on communal values and respect for elders, with moral education being deeply intertwined with cultural practices and religious teachings (Columbus, 2014). However, as globalization and modernization continue to reshape African societies, there is a growing

disconnect between traditional values and the influences of contemporary culture (Nwobodo, 2022). In the past two decades, indiscipline among students in African schools has increased, (Chizaram & Chioma, 2017), conducted a study on learner indiscipline in selected secondary schools in the Zambezi Region, Namibia, identifying issues such as absenteeism, rudeness to teachers, inattentiveness, pre-marital sex, failure to complete schoolwork, noise-making, lateness and use of abusive language. The study attributed these problems to factors like lack of parental support, family background, substance and alcohol abuse, overcrowded classrooms, and peer pressure. Similarly, (Franken & Bertram-Troost, 2021) assessed indiscipline management at rural secondary schools in Limpopo Province, South Africa. The study found that smoking, bunking classes, cell phone usage, bullying and fighting contribute to indiscipline in schools. Several other studies have been undertaken in Nigeria (Ezeanolue & Nnorom, 2020 ;Peter, 2015); (Odebode, 2019);Tanzania (Semali & Vumilia, 2016), and many other African nations. These studies show that indiscipline among secondary school students often leads to disruptive classroom behaviors, which can cause harm and reduce teaching time, as teachers are forced to spend more time managing misbehavior rather than focusing on instruction.

In Kenya indiscipline cases such as student strikes, riots, unrest, and drug abuse are prevalent. Otieno Onyango and Simatwa (2016) reported that violent incidents of student unrest in secondary schools had led to significant property damage and loss of lives. Other cases include the 2001 Kyanguli Secondary School fire in Machakos, where 68 students died, and other incidents of dormitory fires and student violence. They also noted that following the Nyeri High

School dormitory fire and prefect killings, similar arson attacks occurred in other schools. The first school violence occurred at Maseno School in 1908 (Kirioba, 2012). Kenyan school violence is caused by greedy offenders seeking pleasure, authority, and resources in their socio-economic and political surroundings. School violence is caused by property destruction, fighting and emotional abuse, discrimination and social isolation, blackmail, threats, insults, ridicules and exclusions (Opere *et al.*, 2019). Further, several studies have been conducted in secondary schools in Kenya and majority of the studies have reported cases of indiscipline in schools (Maingi *et al.*, 2017). This is a clear indication of decline in moral values in our secondary schools which calls for attention in order for it to be tackled.

Education is key in the development of good character and the formation of high moral standards in schools (Khaidir & Suud, 2020). As Kralik (2023), puts it, schools are not merely centers for academic learning, on the contrary, they are important institutions of socialization through which young people learn how to behave according to that which is expected of them by society with respect to norms, values, and behaviors. Formal and informal education instills ethical principles and moral reasoning in students to guide their behavior and decision-making processes (Avci, 2017). The key area which education contributes to the character development of students is in curriculum design, particularly in subjects like religious education, social studies, and civic education (Barton & Ho, 2021; Sánchez-Agustí & Miguel-Revilla, 2019). According to Narvaez (2010), schools that deliberately integrate character education into their curriculum provide young people with a framework to understand

and practice values such as honesty, respect and responsibility.

The origins of Religious Education in Africa predate to the arrival of Christian missionaries, who labeled Africans as heathens and uncivilized (Nunn, 2010). Abolarin (2021), identified religion as the dominant factor in the traditional background that had the most significant impact on the lives of individuals and the community. Africa has seen religious teachings as the means through which moral norms were instilled (Abolarin, 2021). Marsakha and Hariri (2021) also observes that religious education had the duty of instilling in every generation the specific information, values, and attitudes that were necessary for the society to thrive. Additionally, he notes that religion provides humanity with ethical principles to guide their lives. Wortham et al. (2020) asserts that the presence of morality and discipline is essential for the well-being of both society and individuals, since no civilization can thrive without them. Values are the foundation for building connections between individuals and the world at large.

The introduction of moral education into the Kenyan school curriculum can be traced to the Education Act of 1968, which emphasized the need for values-based learning (Ominde et al., 2021). Although moral instruction was later incorporated into Christian Religious Education (CRE), schools have continued to struggle in fostering national morality among learners. Kiambi et al. (2019) note that, while the Ministry of Education and the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development have made deliberate efforts to implement the CRE curriculum under the 8-4-4 system, its intended influence on student behavior has not been fully achieved. According to their findings, the curriculum promotes moral development by enhancing students' understanding of faith and encouraging

personal growth; however, this has not translated into significant behavioral transformation.

Despite the ongoing teaching of CRE with the aim of cultivating moral values, recent studies indicate that Kenyan secondary schools still grapple with rising cases of indiscipline, including bullying, substance abuse, and academic dishonesty (Munyao, 2021). The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (2023) affirms that CRE content continues to emphasize ethical principles, yet Ministry of Education reveal a persistent gap between moral instruction and learners' actual conduct. This continuing disparity raises critical questions about the subject's effectiveness in addressing the evolving moral challenges faced by students today.

In Soy Sub-County, Uasin Gishu County, moral and behavioral challenges among students remain a serious concern. Cases of drug and substance abuse continue to undermine academic performance (Gikungu & Karanja, 2014), while teenage pregnancies disrupt the education of many girls (Andambi, 2024). These issues raise questions about the extent to which the Christian Religious Education (CRE) curriculum equips students to address real-life moral and social challenges. Despite CRE's focus on promoting ethical behavior, there is limited evidence on how students themselves perceive its effectiveness in shaping their moral values. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by examining students' perceptions of the effectiveness of CRE in promoting moral and ethical values in secondary schools in Soy Sub-County, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

## Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Social Learning Theory, formulated by Albert Bandura (1963) which posits that individuals

develop behaviors, attitudes, and values by observing and emulating others within their social environment (Bandura & Walters, 1977). The theory further asserts that individuals learn values and behaviors through observation and imitation of others, guided by cognitive and motivational processes such as attention, reinforcement, and retention (Firmansyah & Saepuloh, 2022). This framework explains how students internalize ethical principles by engaging with role models within educational and community settings. Moreover, moral values are reinforced when students witness honesty, kindness, and ethical behavior being acknowledged and celebrated within the school environment, whether through classroom activities or institutional programs. Teachers, as central agents in the learning process, also undergo observational learning: by adopting effective pedagogical approaches modeled by colleagues, they strengthen the transmission of moral values through CRE. Parents and school administrators significantly shape students' perceptions by embodying moral values and engaging with CRE principles for example, through discussions at home or support for CRE programs.

SLT also emphasizes reinforcement mechanisms. Positive reinforcement (e.g., recognition of students who display commendable moral character or excel in CRE) strengthens the perceived importance of the subject. Negative reinforcement (e.g., lack of support for CRE teachers, low prioritization by administrators, or parental disregard) can undermine perceptions of CRE's relevance.

## Methodology

The study was conducted in Soy Sub-County, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The County shares common borders with

Trans Nzoia County to the North, Elgeyo Marakwet County to the East, Baringo County to the South East, Kericho County to the South, Nandi County to the South West and Kakamega County to the North West. Covering an area of 3,345.2 Km<sup>2</sup>, it is positioned between 0.52 latitude (0°31' 0N) and longitude 35.28 (35°16'60 E). The County is divided into six constituencies namely Soy, Turbo, Moiben, Ainabkoi, Kapseret and Kesses. Soy Sub-County, Uasin Gishu County, was selected for this study due to its rising cases of student moral issues such as indiscipline, substance abuse and teenage pregnancies, making it relevant to the focus on CRE and moral development.

This study used the pragmatic research philosophy, which focuses on finding practical solutions to research problems rather than following one fixed way of thinking. Pragmatism is useful when studying many different groups of people because it allows the use of both numbers (quantitative data) and words (qualitative data) to understand issues more fully. The research employed exploratory research design that is used to investigate a research question when the researcher has limited knowledge or understanding of the topic or phenomenon under study (Hassan & Wan Khairuldin, 2020). The primary objective of exploratory research was to gain insights and gather preliminary information that could help the researcher better define the research problem and develop hypotheses or research questions for further investigation.

The target population of this study was 681 form four students. The sample size, for this study was based on Taro Yamane (1967) formula for calculating the sample size. The formula is as follows:

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$$

Where, n = the corrected sample size

N = Size of the population

e = Margin of error (MoE)

of 5 percentage points.

Using the formula of sample size with an error of 5% and with a confidence coefficient of 95%, the calculation yielded a sample size of 252 as illustrated:

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$$

$$n = 681 / [1 + 681(0.05)^2]$$

$$n = 681 / (1 + 1.7025)$$

$$n = 681 / 2.7025$$

$$n = 252$$

A purposive sample of Form Four CRE students was selected, after which respondents were chosen via simple random sampling to ensure equal opportunity for participation and minimize bias.

Both primary and secondary data were used in this study. Primary data were collected through structured and unstructured questionnaires that contained both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions were measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," to quantify perceptions of CRE's effectiveness. Open-ended questions provided qualitative insights that captured participants' experiences and suggestions. Secondary data were obtained from government education reports, academic publications, and relevant institutional records to supplement and contextualize the primary findings.

A pilot study was carried out in Kapseret Sub-County using 82 participants, representing 10% of the total sample size. The pilot aimed to test the clarity, reliability, and practicality of the questionnaires. Feedback from the pilot was used to refine question wording, sequence, and length. To establish reliability, a pilot study data was analyzed with internal consistency measured through Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ). Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values signifying stronger reliability. A

value of  $\alpha \geq 0.70$  is widely accepted as the minimum threshold for social science research (Nunnally, 1978).

To establish validity, the instruments underwent expert review from two university supervisors who assessed their alignment with research objectives, conceptual relevance, and cultural appropriateness. Their comments guided adjustments that improved the questionnaires' accuracy and logical flow.

After collection, data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. Quantitative data from closed-ended questions were coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations to summarize the findings. Qualitative data from open-ended questions were analyzed thematically.

## Results and Discussion

### Response Rate

The response rate is important in any research, as achieving an adequate rate provides valid, dependable and reliable results (Taherdoost & Madanchian, 2025). Out of the 252

questionnaires administered to students, 185 were successfully completed and returned, giving a response rate of 73.4%. According to Vudzijena (2017) a response rate more than 70% is good enough to perform the analysis. The high response was attributed to well formulated questions and administering them physically.

### Reliability

The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.892, which exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.70. According to Izah et al. (2023), a threshold of 0.7 is generally acceptable, although values above 0.8 are considered very good. This therefore implies that the questionnaires were reliable for data collection.

### Demographic Characteristics of the Students

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 185 student respondents who participated in the study. The results of their responses in are presented in terms of both frequency (f) and percentage (%).

**Table 1:** Demographic characteristics of student respondents

| Demographic Variable | Category           | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------|--------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Gender               | Male               | 90            | 48.6           |
|                      | Female             | 95            | 51.4           |
| Age                  | 15–16 years        | 25            | 12.4           |
|                      | 17–18 years        | 90            | 48.6           |
|                      | 19 years and above | 70            | 37.8           |
| School Category      | Boys only          | 55            | 29.7           |
|                      | Girls only         | 60            | 32.4           |
|                      | Mixed              | 70            | 37.8           |
| School Location      | Rural              | 162           | 87.6           |
|                      | Urban              | 23            | 12.4           |
| School Type          | Public             | 142           | 76.8           |
|                      | Private            | 43            | 23.2           |
| Religion             | Christianity       | 177           | 95.7           |
|                      | Islam              | 8             | 4.3            |

Source: Research Data, 2025

Results presented in Table 1 indicated that (n=98, 53%) of the students were females and (n=90, 47%) were males. In terms of age, (n=23, 12.4%) were 15–16 years old, (n=90, 49.7%) were 17–18 years old and (n=70, 37.8%) were 18 years and above. This age distribution is similar to that found by Waithira (2014) in their study on Christian Religious Education and moral values among secondary school students in Mathioya District, Murang'a County, Kenya, where approximately half (58.4%) of the participants were between 16 and 17 years old. For school category, (n=55, 29.7%) attended boys-only schools, (n=60, 32.4%) were in girls-only schools, and (n=70, 37.8%) were in mixed schools. The data on school location shows that (n=162, 87.6%) of students attended schools in rural areas, while (n=23, 12.4%) were from urban schools. Concerning school type, (n=142, 76.6%) were enrolled in public schools, and (n=43, 23.4%) were in private schools. Lastly, for religion, (n=177, 95.7%) of the students identified as Christian, and (n=8, 4.3%) identified as Islam. Waithira (2014) also found that the respondents (89%) indicated that they belonged to the Christian faith, while 1.2% indicated that they belonged to the Muslim faith.

### **Students Perceptions on the Role and Effectiveness of Teaching CRE and Moral Values Addressed**

Students were asked to rate their perception regarding the role and effectiveness of teaching CRE in promoting moral values. To achieve the objective, a set of statements in the form of five points Likert scale were posed to the students. The responses were coded such that 1-strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3- Undecided, 4-Agree and 5-Strongly Agree. Table 2 shows the proportion of students' respondents at various levels of agreement, the mean and standard

deviation. In reference to Table 2, majority of the students' respondents agreed that CRE lessons help me understand the difference between right and wrong (Mean=4.05, SD=0.91). Similarly, a majority agreed that CRE lessons help them understand the importance of honesty, responsibility, and integrity (Mean=4.11, SD=0.87). Students also largely concurred that the teaching in CRE influences their daily behavior and ethical decisions (Mean=3.93, SD=1.02). Furthermore, a significant majority of students perceived that CRE helps them develop moral values such as respect, love, compassion, honesty, kindness, and humility (Mean=4.13, SD=0.84). They also mostly agreed that CRE lessons discuss real issues like bullying, cheating, and respecting rules (Mean=3.90, SD=1.03). There was also majority agreement that their school encourages students to apply moral values taught in school (Mean=3.79, SD=1.03). Regarding the status of CRE, a majority of students agreed that CRE should be made compulsory in schools (Mean=3.87, SD=1.04). They also predominantly felt that the values learned in CRE are relevant and applicable to real life and should be emphasized more in the curriculum (Mean=4.00, SD=0.94). Finally, a majority of students affirmed that CRE teaches them the importance of being responsible for their actions, studies, and school property (Mean=4.02, SD=0.91). They also largely agreed that CRE teaches them to be tolerant and understanding of people with different beliefs or backgrounds (Mean=4.00, SD=0.93), and that topics in CRE are relevant and helpful for dealing with challenges faced by youth today (Mean=3.99, SD=0.96). These results are similar to those of Githaiga et al. (2018). They found that CRE improves moral reasoning skills in students in Nakuru County. This helps them identify ethical principles and moral distinctions.

**Table 2:** Students' perceptions on the role and effectiveness of teaching CRE in promoting moral values

| Statement   | SD           | D            | N             | A              | SA            | Mean | SD   |
|---|--------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|------|------|
| 1. CRE lessons help me understand the difference between right and wrong  | 5<br>(2.7%)  | 10<br>(5.4%) | 15<br>(8.1%)  | 95<br>(51.4%)  | 60<br>(32.4%) | 4.05 | 0.91 |
| 2. CRE lessons help me understand the importance of honesty, responsibility, and integrity                            | 4<br>(2.2%)  | 9<br>(4.8%)  | 12<br>(6.5%)  | 98<br>(53.0%)  | 62<br>(33.5%) | 4.11 | 0.87 |
| 3. The teaching in CRE influences my daily behavior and ethical decisions   | 6<br>(3.2%)  | 15<br>(8.1%) | 20<br>(10.8%) | 90<br>(48.6%)  | 54<br>(29.2%) | 3.93 | 1.02 |
| 4. CRE helps me develop moral values such as respect, love, compassion, honesty, kindness, and humility               | 3<br>(1.6%)  | 6<br>(3.2%)  | 16<br>(8.6%)  | 100<br>(54.1%) | 60<br>(32.4%) | 4.13 | 0.84 |
| 5. CRE lessons discuss real issues like bullying, cheating, and respecting rules                                      | 10<br>(5.4%) | 12<br>(6.5%) | 18<br>(9.7%)  | 90<br>(48.6%)  | 55<br>(29.7%) | 3.90 | 1.03 |
| 6. My school encourages students to apply moral values taught in school   | 9<br>(4.9%)  | 14<br>(7.6%) | 25<br>(13.5%) | 95<br>(51.4%)  | 42<br>(22.6%) | 3.79 | 1.03 |
| 7. CRE should be made compulsory in schools   | 8<br>(4.3%)  | 11<br>(5.9%) | 30<br>(16.2%) | 85<br>(45.9%)  | 51<br>(27.6%) | 3.87 | 1.04 |
| 8. The values learned in CRE are relevant and applicable to real life and should be emphasized more in the curriculum | 5<br>(2.7%)  | 10<br>(5.4%) | 20<br>(10.8%) | 97<br>(52.4%)  | 53<br>(28.6%) | 4.00 | 0.94 |
| 9. CRE teaches me the importance of being responsible for my actions, studies, and school property                    | 6<br>(3.2%)  | 9<br>(4.9%)  | 15<br>(8.1%)  | 100<br>(54.1%) | 55<br>(29.7%) | 4.02 | 0.91 |
| 10. CRE teaches me to be tolerant and understanding of people with different beliefs or backgrounds                   | 7<br>(3.8%)  | 8<br>(4.3%)  | 20<br>(10.8%) | 95<br>(51.4%)  | 55<br>(29.7%) | 4.00 | 0.93 |
| 11. Topics in CRE are relevant and helpful for dealing with challenges faced by youth today                           | 6<br>(3.2%)  | 10<br>(5.4%) | 22<br>(11.9%) | 90<br>(48.6%)  | 57<br>(30.8%) | 3.99 | 0.96 |

Composite Mean (SD): 4.00 (0.93), 95% CI: 3.92–4.08

Source: Research Data, 2025

Furthermore, Makokha et al. (2020) discovered that church-sponsored

schools, which usually focus on CRE and chaplaincy activities, positively impacted

students' moral behavior by actively teaching values. This evidence strongly supports the idea that the CRE curriculum actively promotes the development of these values in Kenyan schools. Othoo and Aseu (2022) also argued this in their study in Busia County. Beyond individual moral growth, our findings resonate with Barasa (2016). He also noted that CRE promotes critical thinking and empathetic

understanding in Trans-Nzoia and fosters tolerance among different faiths and cultures.

### Moral issues most effectively addressed by CRE Teaching

The students were further asked to indicate which moral issues are most effectively addressed by CRE teaching. Results are presented in Table 3 below.

**Table 3:** Moral Issues Most Effectively Addressed by CRE

| Moral Issue                           | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Honesty and integrity                 | 152           | 82.2%          |
| Respect for authority and elders      | 138           | 74.6%          |
| Avoidance of drug and substance abuse | 120           | 64.9%          |
| Abstinence from immoral behavior      | 111           | 60.0%          |
| Compassion and helping others         | 128           | 69.2%          |
| Responsibility and self-discipline    | 145           | 78.4%          |

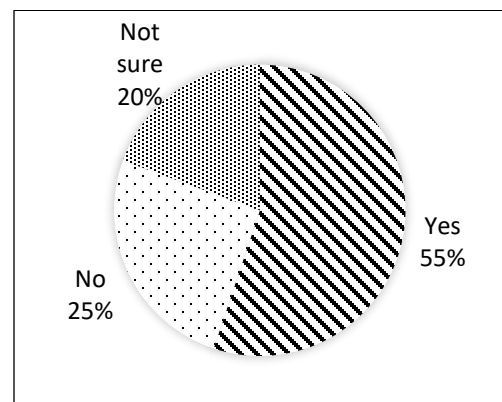
Source: Research Data, 2025

According to the findings presented in Table 3, honesty and integrity (n=152, 82.2%), responsibility and self-discipline (n=145, 74.6%) were the most cited moral lessons from CRE. The other moral issues mentioned by the respondents include respect for authority and elders (n=138, 74.6%), compassion and helping others (n=128, 69.2%) and avoidance of drug and substance abuse (n=120, 64.9%). The least cited was abstinence from immoral behavior (n=111, 60.0%). Othoo and Aseu (2022) argue that CRE has a big impact on students. It teaches them to be honest and have integrity. These qualities help build character and create ethical citizens. The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) syllabus also focuses on these virtues. Its goals include helping students develop moral judgment and self-discipline (Republic of Kenya, 2002).

### Perceptions on the Effectiveness of Teaching Methods Used by CRE Teachers

To assess the role of CRE in moral development, students' respondents were asked whether they believed that

CRE teachers employ effective methods to teach moral values. The responses are presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Students Perceptions on the Effectiveness of Teaching Methods Used by CRE Teachers

Source: Research Data, 2025

According to the findings presented in Figure 1, the majority of the students (n = 102, 55.1%) believe that CRE teachers use effective methods to teach moral values. However, 25.4% (n = 47) of the respondents did not share this view, while 19.5% (n = 36) were uncertain. This positive perception highlights the crucial

role CRE plays in shaping the character of Kenyan secondary school students. Othoo and Aseu (2022) noted that CRE plays a key role to shape how students think about ethics and helps them build values like honesty, respect, and compassion. Makokha Wambua, and Mbogo (2020) claim CRE teachers in schools sponsored by churches, use methods like real-life examples, stories, and Bible quotes to link moral ideas to everyday life. These teaching methods when used well, boost real moral growth. Waithaka (2017) points out that more cases of bad behavior in

high schools show gaps in teaching morals hinting that we need more hands-on and student-focused ways to teach to fix these problems.

### Challenges Affecting the Effectiveness of CRE in Promoting Moral Values

Students' respondents were asked to identify challenges affecting the effectiveness of CRE in promoting moral values. The question allowed for multiple responses to capture a wide range of perceptions. The findings are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Challenges that make CRE less effective

| Challenge   | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---------------|----------------|
| Students do not take CRE seriously                | 130           | 70.3%          |
| Limited practical application of CRE lessons      | 108           | 58.4%          |
| Teachers focus more on exams than moral education | 95            | 51.4%          |
| Lack of parental support                          | 92            | 49.7%          |
| Influence of social media and peer pressure       | 123           | 66.5%          |

Source: Research Data, 2025

It is evident in Table 4 that the majority of students believe they do not take CRE seriously (n = 130, 70.3%), which emerged as the most frequently cited challenge. This was followed by the influence of social media and peer pressure (n = 123, 66.5%) and the limited practical application of CRE lessons (n = 108, 58.4%). Other challenges include teachers focusing more on exams than moral education (n = 95, 51.4%) and lack of parental support (n = 92, 49.7%). This is in line with findings by Simiyu (2022) who noted that in many Kenyan schools, CRE is treated as a secondary subject, chosen for its ease rather than moral value. The national exam-oriented education system worsens this trend by prioritizing academic grades over character formation, making teachers focus on preparing students for KCSE exams. Waithaka (2017) observed that many CRE teachers concentrate heavily on drilling students using past papers and exam techniques rather than engaging them in

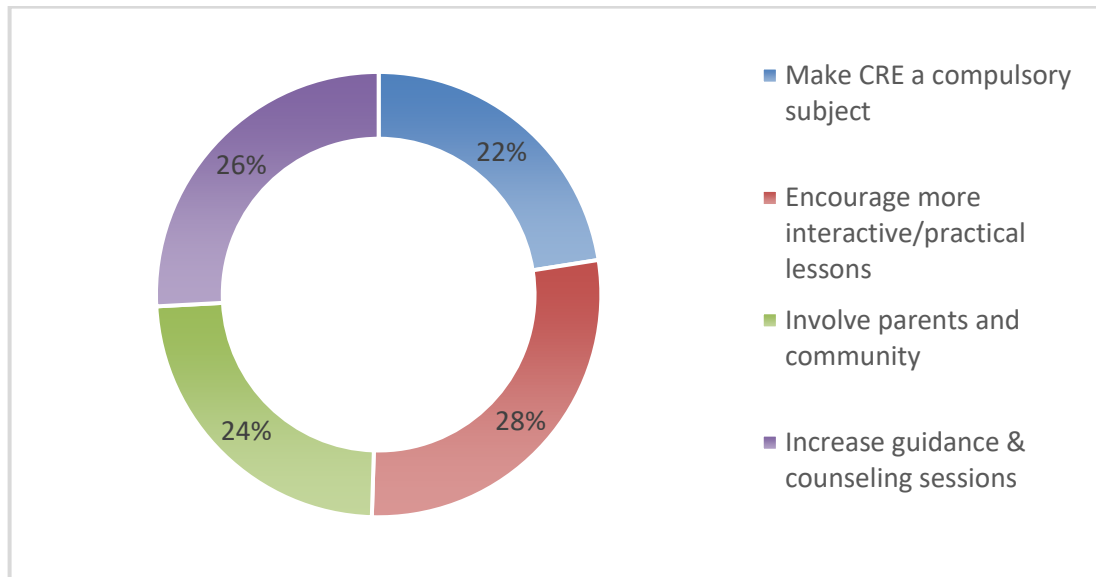
value-based or experiential moral education, leading to loss of interest and relevance. Nzina (2023) in his study found that many parents in public day secondary schools in Makueni County were largely disengaged from their children's academic and moral development which undermined the impact of school-based moral education

### Suggested Improvements to Enhance the Effectiveness of CRE in Promoting Moral Values

Respondents were asked to suggest improvements that could make the subject more impactful. The responses are summarized in Figure 2. The findings indicate that the most frequently suggested improvement was the need to encourage more interactive and practical lessons (n = 52, 28%), to increase guidance and counseling sessions (n = 41, 22%) and to involve parents and the community (n = 44, 24%), as well as making CRE a compulsory subject (n = 48,

26%). These findings are similar to those echoed by Awan (2014), who states that in order to achieve a level of balanced participation during a lesson, it is necessary to actively draw all students into the discussion. A good way to

promote discussion is to provide opportunities for various kinds of group discussions, such as pairs, conversation circles, panels, fishbowls and cooperative learning.



**Figure 2:** Suggested Improvements to Enhance the Effectiveness of CRE in Promoting Moral Values

Source: Research Data, 2025

### Moral Values Learned from CRE

Students were asked to respond to which moral values they have learned from studying CRE. Their qualitative responses were thematically analyzed and categorized as follows:

#### Honesty and Integrity

One student mentioned that "CRE has helped me understand the importance of truthfulness and being honest in both academic and personal life. CRE lessons have also instilled in me a strong sense of integrity, encouraging me to do what is right even when no one is watching" (Student Respondent 04). Ushatikova et al. (2018) also observe that religious education has the duty of instilling in every generation the specific information, values, and attitudes that are necessary for the society to thrive.

### Respect and Obedience

"CRE has really helped me learn how to respect people not just teachers, but also my parents, classmates, and even school leaders. Before, I didn't think much about things like school rules, but now I understand why they matter. It's like the lessons have made me more aware of how I should behave and treat others with kindness and respect." (Student Respondent 17).

### Responsibility and Discipline

"Since we started learning CRE, I've become more serious about my responsibilities. I try to finish my assignments on time, and I don't wait to be reminded. Even things like getting to class early have become a habit. The lessons have taught me to be more disciplined and to manage my time better, both in school and at home." (Student Respondent 32).

This reflection illustrates how learners are translating the values taught in CRE into practical habits that improve their academic engagement and personal conduct.

### Compassion and Forgiveness

*"Through CRE, I've learned how important it is to be kind and to understand what other people might be going through. I try to forgive more and not hold grudges like I used to. It's really helped reduce arguments between me and my friends. I think our class gets along better now because more of us try to be understanding and respectful."* (Student Respondent 09). This response demonstrates how values taught in CRE such as empathy and forgiveness are helping foster a more peaceful and supportive school environment.

### Faith and Spiritual Growth

*"CRE has really helped me grow in my faith. I now understand more about God and what it means to live a good life. It's not just about going to church—it's about making the right choices, even when no one is watching. I feel like I have a clearer purpose and I think more about how my actions affect others and what God would want me to do."* (Student Respondent 15). This reflection captures the deeper spiritual and moral influence of CRE, showing how it shapes students' identity, decision-making, and sense of direction in life.

### CRE's Influence on Behavior at Home and School

Students widely acknowledged that CRE had a positive impact on their behavior. They reported improvements such as being more respectful to teachers and parents, being more disciplined, avoiding peer pressure, and showing empathy to others. A recurring sentiment was that CRE lessons made them more

aware of right and wrong, influencing their decision-making both at school and at home.

### Sufficiency of CRE Alone to Promote Moral Values

Though students acknowledged the effectiveness of CRE, many expressed the view that CRE alone is not sufficient to promote moral values. They emphasized the need for complementary support from parents, religious institutions, and the broader school environment. Peer influence, media exposure, and societal values were also mentioned as factors that could either support or undermine the moral teachings of CRE.

### Conclusion

Based on student perceptions, CRE is widely seen as effective in fostering core moral values such as honesty, integrity, respect, and compassion, providing a strong foundation for ethical decision-making. However, its transformative impact is significantly limited by challenges including the subject's perceived lack of seriousness, an exam-focused approach, and countervailing influences from social media and peer pressure, which weaken the link between moral instruction and real-world behavior.

### Recommendations

To enhance CRE's impact, the study recommends a multi-stakeholder approach. The Ministry of Education should enrich the curriculum with experiential learning like case studies and service projects. Schools must institutionalize guidance counseling and moral discussions, while CRE teachers require training in interactive, student-centered methods. Furthermore, actively engaging parents and faith-based organizations to reinforce moral lessons at home and in the community is essential. These collective actions would transform

CRE from a theoretical subject into a practical, lived experience that consistently shapes students' ethical behavior.

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