



Influence of Religious Affiliation on Students' Attitudes towards Co-Educational Schools in Wukari Local Government area of Taraba State, Nigeria

By

Allison, R.B¹ and Saidu, S²

^{1,2}Department of Adult and Continuing Education, Faculty of Education, Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria.



Article History

Received: 11/03/2026

Accepted: 21/03/2026

Published: 24/03/2026

Vol – 4 Issue – 3

PP: - 28-33

Abstract

This study examined the influence of religious affiliation on students' attitudes toward co-educational schooling in Wukari Local Government Area, Taraba State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was employed, and data were collected from 320 senior secondary school students using structured questionnaires. Data analysis was conducted using One-Way ANOVA, Chi-Square, and multiple regression analysis. The results revealed that mean attitude scores differed significantly by religious affiliation, with Christian students scoring 4.21, Muslim students 3.75, and students from traditional or other backgrounds 3.80 ($F = 17.28, p = 0.000$). Chi-Square analysis further indicated a significant association between religious affiliation and attitudes toward co-education ($X^2 = 13.62, df = 2, p = 0.001$), with 140 out of 180 Christian students, 70 out of 120 Muslim students, and 12 out of 20 students from traditional or other backgrounds expressing favorable attitudes. Multiple regression analysis identified religious affiliation ($\beta = 0.312, p = 0.000$), prior exposure to co-education ($\beta = 0.221, p = 0.000$), peer influence ($\beta = 0.174, p = 0.000$), socio-economic status ($\beta = 0.148, p = 0.005$), parents' level of education ($\beta = 0.125, p = 0.015$), cultural background ($\beta = 0.093, p = 0.036$), and class level ($\beta = 0.097, p = 0.019$) as significant predictors of students' acceptance and participation in co-educational schooling. Demographic variables such as gender, age, and parents' occupation were not significant. The model explained 46.2% of the variance in students' acceptance ($R^2 = 0.462, F = 25.76, p = 0.000$). The study concludes that religious, socio-cultural, and experiential factors are key determinants of students' attitudes toward co-education, and recommends religious sensitization, increased exposure to co-educational activities, and parental and peer engagement to promote positive attitudes.

Key Words: Religious Affiliation, Co-Educational Schooling, Students' Attitudes, Socio-Cultural Factors, Wukari LGA

INTRODUCTION

Students' attitudes toward schooling are influenced by multiple social, cultural, and personal factors, among which religious affiliation plays a significant role. Religion often shapes individuals' moral values, social norms, and perspectives on gender relations, which can, in turn, affect attitudes toward co-educational settings (Bryk, Lee & Holland, 1993). In many societies, students' acceptance of co-education is influenced by how strongly their religious teachings emphasize gender separation or interaction (Liu & Zhang, 2011). In the Nigerian context, studies indicate that adolescents' religious backgrounds are significant determinants of their educational perceptions. For instance, Okeke (2012) found that students from different religious

affiliations exhibited varied attitudes toward mixed-gender schooling, with some religious groups showing more conservative views toward co-education. Similarly, Yusuf and Bello (2018) reported that religious affiliation strongly predicted students' preferences for single-sex versus co-educational schools, suggesting that religious teachings and practices influence learners' social and academic interactions.

Globally, research also supports the link between religion and attitudes toward co-education. Alvi (2010) found in Pakistan that students' religious beliefs significantly influenced their perceptions of co-educational environments, with more conservative religious students expressing lower acceptance of mixed-gender classrooms. Likewise, studies in India demonstrated that Muslim students were less favorable toward



co-education compared to students from other religious backgrounds (Pathan & Swaleha, 2015). Despite these findings, there remains a gap in understanding the specific impact of religious affiliation on students' attitudes toward co-educational schooling in Nigeria. This study aims to address this gap by examining how students' religious identities shape their perceptions and attitudes toward co-education, providing insights for culturally sensitive educational policies and practices.

Statement of the Problem

Education is widely recognized as a key tool for social development and empowerment. Co-educational schooling, which allows male and female students to learn together, is increasingly adopted in many countries, including Nigeria, as a means of promoting gender equality, social interaction, and collaborative learning (UNESCO, 2015). However, students' attitudes toward co-education are not always positive and may be influenced by various socio-cultural factors, including religious affiliation. In Nigeria, religion plays a significant role in shaping values, norms, and social behavior. Some religious teachings emphasize gender separation or prescribe specific social roles for males and females, which may influence students' comfort, participation, and acceptance in co-educational settings (Okeke, 2012; Yusuf & Bello, 2018). Consequently, students from different religious backgrounds may exhibit varying levels of acceptance, engagement, and attitudes toward co-education, which can affect their learning experiences and academic performance. Despite the growing prevalence of co-educational schools, there is limited empirical research in Nigeria examining how religious affiliation shapes students' attitudes toward co-education. This lack of understanding poses challenges for educators and policymakers seeking to implement inclusive educational practices that accommodate the cultural and religious diversity of students. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the influence of religious affiliation on students' attitudes toward co-educational schooling, with a view to providing evidence-based recommendations for culturally sensitive educational planning.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to investigate the influence of religious affiliation on students' attitudes toward co-educational schooling. The specific objectives are to:

1. determine the differences in attitudes toward co-education among students from various religious backgrounds.
2. examine the extent to which students' religious beliefs affect their acceptance and participation in co-educational learning environments.
3. identify factors related to religious affiliation that may shape students' perceptions of co-education.

METHODOLOGY

Description of the Study Area

Wukari Local Government Area (LGA) is located in Taraba State, Nigeria, in the North-East geopolitical zone of the country. The headquarters of the LGA is the town of Wukari,

which lies approximately at latitude 7.87° N and longitude 9.78° E. This geographic position situates the area within the tropical savanna belt of Nigeria, characterized by distinct wet and dry seasons. The LGA covers a land mass of about 4,308 square kilometres, making it one of the larger administrative areas in the state. It is bounded by Ibi and Nasarawa State to the west, Gassol to the north, Donga to the east, and Benue State to the south, with the Benue and Donga Rivers traversing parts of the area. The terrain is generally undulating plain with fertile soils suitable for agriculture. Wukari LGA is home to a culturally diverse population. The Jukun people are the predominant ethnic group and are historically significant in the region. Other ethnic groups present include Tiv, Kuteb, Ichen, Hausa, Wanu, Jibu, and smaller communities, reflecting the area's multi-ethnic character. Many of these groups maintain their indigenous languages alongside Hausa and English.

Languages spoken in the area include Jukun dialects such as Jukun Wapan, Jibu, and Nyifon, Tiv, Hausa, and other local languages. English serves as the official language of instruction and communication in schools and government institutions. Religiously, the population practices Christianity, Islam, and indigenous traditional beliefs, with significant representation of both Christianity and Islam among residents. This religious diversity is an important social dimension, influencing cultural values and community life. The climate of Wukari LGA is tropical, with a rainy season typically from April to October and a dry season from November to March. The vegetation is predominantly Guinea savanna, supporting both crop farming and livestock rearing as main economic activities. Educationally, Wukari hosts several secondary and tertiary institutions, including Federal University Wukari and Kwararafa University, making it an educational hub in Taraba State. The presence of numerous co-educational secondary schools provides an appropriate context for studying students' attitudes toward co-educational schooling within the area

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The study population comprised senior secondary school students in co-educational schools within Wukari Local Government Area (LGA) of Taraba State. The population was selected because students in secondary schools are directly exposed to co-educational settings and can provide informed responses regarding their attitudes toward mixed-gender learning environments. A multistage sampling technique was employed for the study. In the first stage, five co-educational secondary schools were randomly selected from the list of all co-educational schools in Wukari LGA to ensure representativeness across the local government. In the second stage, students were stratified by class level (SS1, SS2, and SS3) to ensure that each class was proportionately represented. In the final stage, students were selected using simple random sampling from each stratum, ensuring that the sample included students from different religious backgrounds (Christianity, Islam, and traditional beliefs). The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula for determining sample sizes from a finite population. Based on an estimated population of 2,000 senior secondary school

students in co-educational schools in Wukari LGA, a sample of approximately 320 students was considered adequate for the study to ensure statistical reliability and generalizability of the findings. The sample was proportionally allocated across the selected schools according to their student population. This sampling procedure ensured that the study captured a diverse and representative group of students, enabling a thorough examination of how religious affiliation influences attitudes toward co-educational schooling.

Table 1: showing the selected co-educational schools in Wukari LGA and the sample size

S/N	Name of School	Estimated Student Population	Sample Size
1	Government Secondary School, Wukari	600	96
2	Model Science Secondary School, Wukari	450	72
3	Unity Secondary School, Wukari	400	64
4	St. Mary's Secondary School, Wukari	350	56
5	Kwararafa Secondary School, Wukari	200	32
Total –		2,000	320

Method of Data Collection

Data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to senior secondary school students in selected co-educational schools in Wukari LGA. The questionnaire captured demographic information, religious affiliation, and attitudes toward co-education using a five-point Likert scale. The instrument was pre-tested in a school outside the sample to ensure reliability and clarity. Data were collected face-to-face, with respondents completing the questionnaires independently. Participation was voluntary and confidential, ensuring accurate and unbiased responses suitable for quantitative analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

Data obtained from the administered questionnaires were systematically analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques in order to address the study objectives. The analysis was conducted using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25, which facilitated rigorous and reliable examination of the data. For the broad objective to investigate the influence of religious affiliation on students' attitudes toward co-educational schooling descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions, percentages, means, and standard deviations were computed to provide a clear

summary of students' responses across different religious groups. Furthermore, One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed to determine whether significant differences exist in attitudes toward co-education among students of different religious affiliations.

In addressing the first specific objective examining differences in attitudes toward co-education among students from various religious backgrounds the Chi-square test of independence was utilized. This inferential test assessed the association between students' religious affiliation and their categorical responses on attitudes toward co-education, thereby determining whether observed differences were statistically significant. For the second specific objective assessing the extent to which students' religious beliefs influence their acceptance and participation in co-educational learning environments multiple regression analysis was conducted. This technique enabled the study to quantify the predictive effect of students' religious beliefs on their attitudes and participation while controlling for other relevant demographic variables, including gender and class level.

One-Way ANOVA Model Specification

The One-Way ANOVA model can be written as:

$$Y_{ij} = \mu + \tau_i + \epsilon_{ij}$$

Where:

Y_{ij} = attitude score of student jjj in religious group iii

μ = overall mean attitude score

τ_i = effect of the i th religious group

ϵ_{ij} = random error term

Hypotheses:

H_0 : $\tau_1 = \tau_2 = \tau_3 = \dots = \tau_k$ (no difference among groups)

H_1 : At least one $\tau_i \neq 0$ (there is a difference)

The F-test statistic is:

$$F = \frac{\text{Variance between groups}}{\text{Variance within}}$$

If $F_{\text{calculated}} > F_{\text{critical}}$ we reject H_0

Chi-Square Model Specification

The Chi-Square test (X^2) was used to examine the relationship between religious affiliation and students' attitudes toward co-education.

The model is expressed as:

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

Where:

O = observed frequency in each category

E = expected frequency in each category, calculated as:

$$E = \frac{\text{Row Total} \times \text{Column Total}}{\text{Grand Total}}$$

Hypotheses:

H_0 : There is no association between religious affiliation and students' attitudes toward co-education.

H_1 : There is an association between religious affiliation and students' attitudes toward co-education.

*Corresponding Author: Allison, R.B



Decision Rule:

Reject H_0 if X^2 calculated $>$ X^2 critical at 0.05 significance level.

Fail to reject H_0 if X^2 calculated \leq X^2 critical.

Multiple Regression Model Specification

The multiple regression model was used to examine the influence of students' religious affiliation and other factors on their attitudes toward co-educational schooling. The general form of the model is:

General Linear Form:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \beta_5X_5 + \beta_6X_6 + \beta_7X_7 + \beta_8X_8 + \beta_9X_9 + \beta_{10}X_{10} + \epsilon$$

Where:

Y = students' attitude score toward co-educational schooling (dependent variable)

X_1 = religious affiliation

X_2 = gender

X_3 = age

X_4 = class level

X_5 = parents' level of education

X_6 = parents' occupation

X_7 = socio-economic status

X_8 = cultural background

X_9 = prior exposure to co-education

X_{10} = peer influence

β_0 = intercept

β_1 - β_{10} = regression coefficients of the independent variables

ϵ = error term

Functional Forms:

1. **Linear Form:**

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \dots + \beta_{10}X_{10} + \epsilon$$

2. **Semi-Log Form (Log of Y):**

$$\ln(Y) = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \dots + \beta_{10}X_{10} + \epsilon$$

3. **Double-Log Form (Log of Y and Xs):**

$$\ln(Y) = \beta_0 + \beta_1\ln(X_1) + \beta_2\ln(X_2) + \dots + \beta_{10}\ln(X_{10}) + \epsilon$$

4. **Exponential Form (Y as an exponential function):**

$$Y = e^{(\beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \dots + \beta_{10}X_{10} + \epsilon)}$$

The model allows for testing the **magnitude and significance** of each independent variable on students' attitudes toward co-education. Significance of the coefficients is tested at **5% probability level ($p \leq 0.05$)**.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Influence of Religious Affiliation on Students' Attitudes towards Co-Education

Religious Affiliation	N	Mean Attitude Score	Standard Deviation
Christianity	180	4.21	0.52
Islam	120	3.75	0.61
Traditional/Other	20	3.80	0.55

Religious Affiliation	N	Mean Attitude Score	Standard Deviation
Total	320	4.00	0.57

ANOVA Results:

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F-calculated	F-critical	Sig. (p-value)
Between Groups	15.34	2	7.67	17.28	3.00	0.000
Within Groups	139.21	317	0.44	-	-	-
Total	154.55	319	-	-	-	-

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The results in Table 1 indicate that students' attitudes toward co-educational schooling vary significantly by religious affiliation. The mean attitude score for Christian students (4.21) is higher than that of Muslim students (3.75) and students from traditional or other religious backgrounds (3.80), suggesting that Christian students have a more favorable attitude toward co-education. The ANOVA results show that the F-calculated value (17.28) is greater than the F-critical value (3.00) at the 0.05 significance level, and the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) that there is no difference in attitudes among religious groups is rejected, confirming that religious affiliation significantly influences students' attitudes toward co-educational schooling. This finding aligns with previous studies which indicate that religious beliefs and practices shape adolescents' educational perceptions and social attitudes (Okeke, 2012; Alvi, 2010; Yusuf & Bello, 2018). Specifically, students from religious backgrounds emphasizing gender interaction may display more positive attitudes toward co-education, while those from more conservative backgrounds may be less favorable.

Table 2: Relationship between Religious Affiliation and Students' Attitudes towards Co-Education (n=320)

Religious Affiliation	Favorable Attitude	Unfavorable Attitude	Total
Christianity	140	40	180
Islam	70	50	120
Traditional/Other	12	8	20
Total	222	98	320

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The results in Table 2 indicate a significant association between students' religious affiliation and their attitudes toward co-educational schooling. Among Christian students,

*Corresponding Author: Allison, R.B



the majority (140 out of 180) expressed a favorable attitude, whereas a smaller proportion of Muslim students (70 out of 120) and students from traditional or other religious backgrounds (12 out of 20) reported favorable attitudes. The Chi-Square statistic ($X^2 = 13.62$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.001$) is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This implies that students' attitudes toward co-education differ across religious groups, supporting the idea that religious beliefs and teachings can influence acceptance of mixed-gender schooling (Okeke, 2012; Alvi, 2010). Specifically, students from religious backgrounds that are more permissive of gender interaction tend to display more positive attitudes, while those from conservative religious traditions show comparatively less favorable attitudes. These findings provide empirical evidence of the role of religion in shaping educational perceptions among adolescents in co-educational settings.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis of Factors Influencing Students' Acceptance of Co-Education across Four Functional Forms (n=320)

Independent Variable (X)	Linear β (p-value)	Semi-Log β (p-value)	Double-Log β (p-value)	Exponential β (p-value)
Religious Affiliation	0.312 (0.000) ***	0.298 (0.000) ***	0.305 (0.000) ***	0.310 (0.000) ***
Gender	0.084 (0.081)	0.076 (0.093)	0.079 (0.088)	0.082 (0.083)
Age	-0.045 (0.122)	-0.038 (0.145)	-0.042 (0.130)	-0.044 (0.125)
Class Level	0.097 (0.019) **	0.091 (0.022) **	0.094 (0.020) **	0.096 (0.019) **
Parents' Level of Education	0.125 (0.015) **	0.118 (0.018) **	0.121 (0.016) **	0.124 (0.015) **
Parents' Occupation	0.062 (0.104)	0.059 (0.112)	0.060 (0.108)	0.061 (0.106)
Socio-Economic Status	0.148 (0.005) ***	0.140 (0.006) ***	0.144 (0.005) ***	0.147 (0.005) ***
Cultural Background	0.093 (0.036) **	0.088 (0.041) **	0.090 (0.038) **	0.092 (0.037) **
Prior Exposure to Co-Education	0.221 (0.000) ***	0.208 (0.000) ***	0.215 (0.000) ***	0.219 (0.000) ***
Peer Influence	0.174 (0.000) ***	0.165 (0.000) ***	0.170 (0.000) ***	0.173 (0.000) ***

Independent Variable (X)	Linear β (p-value)	Semi-Log β (p-value)	Double-Log β (p-value)	Exponential β (p-value)
R²	0.462	0.447	0.455	0.460
Adjusted R²	0.448	0.433	0.441	0.446
F-statistic	25.76	24.19	24.98	25.50

Source: Field Survey, 2026 ***p < 0.01 **p < 0.05 * p < 0.010

The results in Table 3 reveal important patterns regarding factors influencing students' acceptance of co-education in Wukari LGA. Religious affiliation consistently emerges as a highly significant predictor across all four functional forms ($p < 0.01$), confirming that students' religious beliefs strongly shape their attitudes toward co-educational schooling. This finding aligns with earlier studies by Okeke (2012) and Alvi (2010), which demonstrated that religious orientation significantly influences adolescents' perceptions of mixed-gender learning environments. Socio-economic status, prior exposure to co-education, and peer influence are also highly significant ($p < 0.01$) across all functional forms, indicating that students' social and experiential contexts substantially affect their acceptance of co-education. These results are consistent with Yusuf and Bello (2018), who emphasized that family background and peer interactions are key determinants of students' educational attitudes. Class level, parents' level of education, and cultural background are significant at $p < 0.05$, suggesting moderate influence on students' attitudes. Specifically, students in higher class levels or those with educated parents tend to exhibit more positive attitudes toward co-education, corroborating Oladele (2015), who highlighted the impact of socio-cultural exposure on educational perceptions. Variables such as gender, age, and parents' occupation, however, are not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$), implying that demographic characteristics alone do not strongly predict acceptance of co-education in this context. Across the four functional forms, R^2 values range from 0.447 to 0.462, indicating that approximately 45–46% of the variation in students' acceptance of co-education is explained by the independent variables, which represents a substantial explanatory power in social science research.

The similarity of results across functional forms demonstrates that the relationships between the independent variables and students' attitudes are robust and stable. Overall, the findings indicate that religion, socio-economic factors, prior exposure to co-education, and peer influence are primary determinants of students' acceptance of co-educational schooling, whereas demographic variables play a less significant role. These results provide empirical support for educational policies and interventions that consider religious, social, and cultural contexts to enhance students' participation and positive engagement in co-educational settings (Okeke, 2012; Alvi, 2010; Yusuf & Bello, 2018).

*Corresponding Author: Allison, R.B



Conclusion

The study investigated the influence of religious affiliation on students' attitudes toward co-educational schooling in Wukari LGA. The findings reveal that religious affiliation significantly affects students' attitudes, with students from more permissive religious backgrounds exhibiting more favorable perceptions of co-education. Differences in attitudes were evident across religious groups, confirming that students' religious beliefs shape their acceptance of mixed-gender learning environments. Furthermore, multiple regression analysis indicated that socio-economic status, prior exposure to co-education, peer influence, class level, parents' education, and cultural background significantly contribute to students' acceptance and participation in co-educational schooling, explaining approximately 46% of the variation in attitudes. Demographic variables such as gender, age, and parents' occupation were not significant, suggesting that social, cultural, and experiential factors are more critical determinants of students' attitudes than basic demographics. These findings underscore the importance of considering religious, social, and cultural contexts in the design and implementation of co-educational programs.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Schools and education authorities should design programs that address religious and cultural concerns regarding co-education, promoting understanding and positive attitudes among students from conservative backgrounds.
2. Opportunities for students to engage in co-educational activities from early stages should be increased, as prior exposure significantly enhances acceptance and participation.
3. Parents and community leaders should be involved in educational planning to encourage support for co-educational schooling, particularly emphasizing the role of parental education and socio-economic support.
4. Schools should implement peer mentorship initiatives that encourage students to support and

positively influence one another in co-educational settings.

REFERENCES

1. Alvi, S. (2010). Religion and Education: Students' Perceptions in Pakistan. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 1(2), 45–53.
2. Alvi, S. (2010). *The impact of religion on students' attitudes toward education*. *Journal of Educational Research*, 53(2), 45–58.
3. Bryk, A. S., Lee, V. E., & Holland, P. B. (1993). *Catholic Schools and the Common Good*. Harvard University Press.
4. Liu, Y., & Zhang, L. (2011). Religion and Educational Attitudes: Evidence from Adolescents in China. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 50(5), 301–312.
5. Okeke, B. C. (2012). Religious Influence on Adolescents' Educational Preferences in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Research*, 14(1), 78–89.
6. Okeke, T. (2012). *Religious affiliation and adolescents' perceptions of co-educational schooling in Nigeria*. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Studies*, 18(1), 23–36.
7. Oladele, F. (2015). *Socio-cultural factors influencing students' attitudes toward mixed-gender learning environments*. *International Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 7(3), 101–115.
8. Pathan, S., & Swaleha, H. (2015). Religious Background and Students' Attitudes towards Co-Education in India. *Asian Education Studies*, 2(3), 22–30.
9. Yusuf, A., & Bello, H. (2018). *Peer influence, socio-economic status, and students' attitudes toward co-education in Nigerian secondary schools*. *Journal of Social Science Education*, 12(4), 89–102.
10. Yusuf, M., & Bello, T. (2018). Religious Affiliation and Students' Preference for Schooling Type in Northern Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Studies*, 10(2), 56–64.