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CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OWERRI EDUCATION ZONE 1 OF IMO STATE, NIGERIA

By

DURUJI, S.U.N. Ph.D¹, UGWULEBO, K.C. Ph.D²

¹DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES ALVAN IKOKU FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, OWERRI, NIGERIA

²DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES ALVAN IKOKU FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, OWERRI.



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Corresponding author

DURUJI, S.U.N. Ph.D

Abstract

The study examined Christian religious education and global competitiveness in public secondary schools in Owerri education zone 1 of Imo State, Nigeria.. The study adopted correlational survey research design. The population of the study comprised 2506 teachers in 74 public schools in Owerri Education Zone I of Imo State. A sample size of 270 was selected using the multistage sampling technique. Two hypotheses guided the study. The instrument for data collection was titled: Christian Religious Education and Global Competitiveness Questionnaire (CREGCQ) was administered, retrieved and analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC). The findings of the research showed a significant relationship between Christian Religions Education and Global Competitiveness. Based on the findings, the study recommended among others that CRE should be taught in all secondary schools and made compulsory. Teachers of CRE should also be retrained through workshops and conferences.

Keywords: Christian, religious, education, global, competitiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Education is universally acknowledged as a civilizing and life-transforming institution. Its proven capacity for rapid moral, cultural, socio-political, economic and technological transformation of human societies makes it a social desideratum. In corroborating the above, Ekwonye (2025), describes education as a universally acknowledged key driver of national development cum social transformation. It serves as the bedrock for economic growth, technological advancement,, and the promotion of democratic values and civic responsibility According to Onwuka and Onwuka (2019), education is the main thrust for national development, playing a leading role in industry, sciences, arts and humanities. Education plays a significant role in shaping the intellectual memory and moral development of students. It inculcates in students values that help them differentiate right and wrong and act responsibly in the society (Osunlana & Musa, 2026). The capacity to meaningfully engage in moral reasoning and ethical judgment is developed through education (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2022).

Oroma (2025), defines education as the instrument used for the development of human beings' cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. It is the process of creating sound mind in a sound body, by sharing vital information that makes one wise or aware of the numerous potentials he or she is endowed with and how to they can be used to better oneself and the society. Achilike (2011) sees education as a process of transmitting culture in terms of continuity and growth and for disseminating knowledge either to ensure control or to guarantee rational direction of the society hence every educational system seeks to achieve their goals.

Today, everybody seems to concur that education is an important instrument of change in modern societies, and the aggregate of all the processes by which an individual develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the society in which he lives. However, no nation can successfully achieve its educational goals without well-crafted educational policies, consistently and effectively implemented by visionary stakeholders in the education sector. A nation's quality of education is not unconnected with the quality of its educational

policies. Adebayo and Yusuf (2023), see educational policies in Nigeria as dynamic instruments used by the government to respond to socio-economic and political changes, aimed at improving human capital development through inclusive and life-long learning systems.

Christian Religious Education is pivotal to character and skills development. It is a type of education that tries to achieve the integral development of the individual. It moulds the character, inculcates discipline and morals in the individual. It brings peace and progress to the nation, promotes social harmony and cohesion, personal sacrifice, service mentality and integrity that makes for individual and national development. Onyebueke (2025), is of the opinion that educational system aimed at national development and global competitiveness must develop quality primary and secondary education sectors. This will help to inculcate skills and good values in the younger ones. Religious education is relevant to national and individual development, as it is designed to inculcate skills and good values in the students, for no nation or individual can develop without discipline and morals. Christian Religious Education is component of the holistic-oriented education, by means of which the student is led towards progressive habitualization for social duties towards the community to which he belongs and in which he has a share (Okeke, 2011).

Christian Religious Education is to lead the students towards the acquisition of human and Christian values which are indispensable for living an integral life (Okeke, 2021). The purpose of Christian Religious Education is to effect integral formation. This integral human formation includes holistic, development, social and personal harmony. Christian religion seeks to assist every person in developing his or her unique capabilities and talents so that each one having received a solid formation, may as a good citizen contribute to the welfare and further development of the community. Christian Religious Education in its development function seeks to help the human person to progressively attain real development and liberation. This type of development according to Okeke (2011) comes through the acquisition of knowledge gained through research and through continuous effort, dedication, and creativity. Human life is not only developmental, it is also social; Christian Religious Education therefore concerns itself also with the formation of the human person to attain social harmony in consonance with his nature as a social being.

Yaro (2018) outlines the aims of teaching CRS in Nigeria schools as:

- a) to raise a generation of people who can think for themselves.
- b) to raise people that can respect the views and findings of others.
- c) to raise people that can respect moral values stated in the national aims as good citizens.
- d) to raise people that respect dignity of labour,
- e) to prepare learners for useful living through inculcation of Christian attitudes and
- f) values.

- g) to prepare learners for their salvation in heaven with God Almighty,
- h) to prepare learners for useful life peaceful co-existence in the society,
- i) to prepare learners to be able to adapt to the teachings of Jesus Christ to be able to love one another as Christ's disciple.
- j) to prepare learners to practice Christian discipline and moulding of moral characters.
- k) to shape the human behaviour and moral values.

For Elu and Ikwumelu (2019), teaching CRK is capable of instilling in the Nigerian youth the required and desired knowledge, values, behaviours, attitudes and skills that would ensure their effective adaptation in an ever-changing multi-faith and multi-ethnic society and more so in this era of global competitiveness. In attaining the goals of the secondary school, the Federal Government laws placed religious studies as one of the core subjects in Group A at the senior secondary level. This is probably because religion goes a long way to determining individual behaviour and aspiration, which in turn determines not only developmental strides of the society but also its internal harmony. Teaching of CRK at senior secondary level is aimed at achieving the objectives of the discipline at that level which include preparation for useful living within the society and preparation for higher education. The national curriculum of CRK for senior secondary school has among its objectives as: to develop in the youth Christian attitudes and values such as humility, respect, love, kindness, justice, and fair play, spirit of forgiveness, obedience, devotion to duty, orderly behaviour and selfless service to God and humanity. One of its content areas of pedagogy includes amongst others dignity of labour, self-employment, contentment.

Okeke (2021) posits that Christian Religious Education is a veritable tool for character and skills development. He maintains that man in the course of interacting with his physical and social environment, comes across certain challenges in his efforts to attain an orderly, more meaningful and purposeful life. Anyacho (1904) in Okeke (2021) emphasized that the general purpose of Christian Religious Education is to help learners inculcate moral uprightness, social justice, well-meaningful environment through the acquisition of relevant knowledge, practical skill etc. Skill development is therefore an important aspect of Christian Religious Education for students. Christian Religious Education inculcates in the students' skills which include intellectual and manipulative; example of the skills include: thinking or reasoning critically, solving problems, finding information (research skills), giving direction, making use of information and communication technology.

According to Lilian (2002), development of information and communication technology has turned the world into a global village. Christian Religious Knowledge therefore inculcates in the students patience, perseverance, humility and self-determination in the use of ICT. Okeke (2021) opines that on the part of the

students, they are encouraged and challenged to go to the internet, go to Google and download information for creativity.

Global competitiveness refers to the ability of nations to supply high quality goods and services at reasonable cost, resulting in satisfactory returns. It is also seen as a set of institutions, policies and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country; the productivity of a nation over a sustained period of time. According to World Economic Forum (2021), Nigeria is the 116th most competitive nation in the world out of 140 countries ranked in the 2019 edition of the Global Competitiveness Report published by the World Economic Forum. WEF defines global competitiveness as the ability of a country to achieve sustained high rates of growth in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita. The International Institute for Management and Development defines competitiveness as a field of economic knowledge which analyzes the facts and policies that shaped the ability of a nation to create and maintain an environment that sustains more value creation for its enterprises and more prosperity for its people. A competitive economy is a productive one.

Nwunuji, Rissim and Daniel (2025), drawing ideas from World Economic Forum (2020), remark that global competitiveness in education hinges on several critical factors, which include institutional quality, research output, innovation capacity and the ability to foster collaboration and partnership. Global competitive institutions often demonstrate excellence in teaching, research and community service. They leverage advanced technologies, attract diverse talents and maintain robust networks with industries, policy makers and international organizations.

Global competitiveness, the capability of every nation of the world to remain internationally competitive in the global knowledge-based economy is a requirement of the accelerated history phenomenon of the present millennium, (Obanya, 2004). Education and in particular the curriculum, is expected to be a prime contributor to a nation's capacity for global competitiveness. Obanya (2004) explained that education is not just a preparation for life but life itself. He explained that over the years, functional education has shifted from functional context to functional "skills" education. Nigeria is required by the international community to be a full member of the African Union of the global community of the 21st Century. Nigeria cannot escape working towards achieving the development goals set by the international community. Nigeria has a responsibility to ensure that the young ones of today are civil society of the future Nigeria. The major responsibility of the young ones of today is to ensure that Nigeria falls in line with the global forward march of the 21st Century. The Nigeria of the future should be an emergent nation with citizens that have the skills needed for the vigorous pursuit of its development goals. Such persons will be of different caliber from that which is obtained in the past and that which obtains of today. The immediate future will be characterized by pervading influence of Information Technology (IT), easy flow of information and ideas improved communication and interaction among people in different places. Greater inter-dependence among nations' creativity is the key to having competitive edge over others and very rapid changes in every aspect of life. For us to be able to

take full advantage of the opportunities that an emergent Nigeria would offer, it would be necessary to equip ourselves with relevant skills such as lifelong learning, a broad knowledge base, information technology, team-playing, creativity, communication and entrepreneurship. The foundation for acquiring these skills is based on the phenomenon of the knowledge economy.

Knowledge economy is a direct twin-product of the acceleration of history, and the digital revolution in addition to being the prime mover of globalization, (Obanya, 2007). The defining characteristic of the knowledge economy according to Obanya (2007) is that knowledge has replaced raw materials, national resources, machines and manual labour as the most valuable factors of production. In other words, knowledge economy relies basically in the use of ideas instead of physical activities. It also refers to the application of technology to the transformation of raw materials or the exploitation of cheap labour. Knowledge economy is propelled by globalization, the digital revolution and it holds on every day living as well as the fast movement of goods and services, persons and ideas. Nwagbara (2013) maintains that education is an instrument per excellence for producing knowledge worker. It is a precursor of knowledge and the most important instrument for change. Knowledge economy thus demands development of human capital. A key concept of the knowledge economy is that knowledge and education are often referred to as "human capital". Thus, knowledge and education are compatible bodyfellows and must go hand in gloves. When human capital is developed, the result is a dynamic economic, an adequate standard of living and there is a general increase in positive attitude toward the future.

Christian Religious Education and Global Competitiveness

Global competitiveness in religious education entails a standard-driven religious education system, which empowers students or learners with diverse religious knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and competences that will enable them compete academically and intellectually with other students or learners in the global arena. The importance of Christian Religious Education in skill development cannot be overemphasized. The word "skill" is to be understood in two senses. First, it is an ability to do something expertly and well. Second, it is an experience gained through training and learning.

CRE is a discipline that deals with man's moral and integrity within the society. CRE enables an individual to inculcate moral uprightness, social justices, well meaningful environment through the acquisition of relevant knowledge and practical skills. CRE aids the individual in thinking and reasoning critically, solving problems, giving directions and finding information.

Globalization has given rise to knowledge explosion in the society through Information Communication Technology (ICT). ICT has become a global phenomenon of great importance and concern in all spheres of human endeavour. ICT is the sole of creation of human kind that has thrown off-balance the conventional

perceptions of time and space and that has broken down geographical barriers for the transmission of knowledge, ideas and information. With the teaching of CRB, the students will develop the patience, discipline and moral uprightness in participating in the global economy. Christian Religious Education will help in character formation and skills development of individuals for a meaningful society. CRE in its developmental function seeks to help the human person to progressively attain real development and liberation, which will always be self-development and self-liberation. And in this process of development, it is the truth which will make him free and help him to grow. Truth comes through the acquisition of knowledge gained through research and through continuous effort, dedication and creativity. Christian Religious Education is pivotal to character and skills development. It tries to achieve the integral development of the individual. It moulds the character, inculcates discipline and morals in the individual. It brings peace and progress to the nation, promotes social harmony, and cohesion, personal sacrifice, service mentality and integrity that make for individual and national development. Religious education is relevant to national and individual development for no nation or individual can develop without discipline and moral.

Knowledge has become the most important factor for economic development in the 21st Century. Through its capacity to augment productivity, it increasingly constitutes the foundation of a country. The goals of Christian Religious Education have been implemented in all levels of education for many years now without success in terms of inculcating the values and skills of good citizenship and this explains the reasons for increase in crime in our society. The researcher therefore wants to ascertain the relationship between Christian Religious Education and Global Competitiveness.

Statement of Problem

FRN (2004) placed Christian Religious Education as one of the core subjects in group A at the Senior Secondary and because of its indispensable position in human socio-cultural, economic, spiritual and moral development. It also goes a long way in determining individual behaviour and aspiration which in turn determines not only developmental strides of the society but also its internal harmony. Today, our society is filtered with all kinds of nefarious activities as a result of moral decadence. Kidnapping, cybercrime, robbery of all kinds, child-trafficking, sexual immorality, cultism, thuggery, examination malpractices among others are on the increase day by day in our society. When one considers these social problems, one would wonder the effect of religious education on our students. This leaves the question if Christian Religious Education has only positive effect on character formation of individuals especially in this era of globalization. Since Christian religious Knowledge places emphasis in character

formation and skill development of individuals, will it affect positively on the preparation of the individual for global competitiveness. Thus, the research intends to ascertain the relationship between Christian Religious Education and global competitiveness.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between teaching Christian Religious Education and Global Competitiveness in Secondary Schools in Imo State. Specifically, the study is to:

1. find out the relationship between teaching Christian Religious Education and global competitiveness in secondary schools in Imo state.
2. determine the differences that exist between the goals of Christian Religious Education in Imo State and global competitiveness.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses will be tested to guide the proposed study:

- i. There is no significant relationship between the teaching of Christian Religious Education and global competitiveness in secondary schools in Imo State.
- ii. There is no significant relationship between the goals of Christian Religious Education in secondary schools in Imo State and global competitiveness.

Methodology

The researcher adopted correlated survey research design. The population of the study comprised 25% teachers in 24 public schools in Owerri Educational Zone 1 of Imo State. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select a total of 270 participants from 15 public secondary schools used for the study. The instrument was a self-developed questionnaire titled: Christian Religious Education and Global Competitiveness Questionnaire (CREGCQ). The instruments were administered, retrieved and analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient (PPMCC). The Cronbach's Alpha Test of reliability for the instrument, of this study yielded a 0.8 score. A content and face validity test was done through expert opinion. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient statistical tool was used to test the research hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Test of Hypotheses Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between the teaching of Christian religious Education and Global Competitiveness in Secondary Schools in Imo State.

Table 1: Relationship between teaching Christian Religious Education and global competitiveness.

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	r _{tab}	r-c	Decision	Remarks
Teaching Christian Religious Education	260	3.28	1.34					
				258	0.146	0.682	Reject	Significant



Global	260	3.10	1.29
Competitiveness			

Correlation is significant at 0.05 level, SD = Standard Deviation, df = Degree of Freedom and $\bar{X}$ = mean

Table I shows that the calculated value r is 0.682 and the tabulated value r is 0.146 at 103 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated value r (0.682) is greater than tabulated value r (0.146), the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between teaching Christian Religious

Knowledge and global competitiveness in secondary schools in Owerri Zone 1 of Imo State, Nigeria is hereby rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This implies that teaching Christian Religious Education relates to global competitiveness in secondary schools in Owerri Zone 1 of Imo State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between the goals of Christian Religious Education in rural and urban secondary schools in Owerri Zone 1 of Imo State and global competitiveness.

Table 2: Relationship between the goals of Christian Religious Education in secondary schools and global competitiveness.

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	r-tab	r-cal	Decision	Remark
Goals of Christian Religious Education	260	3.31	1.36					
Global Competitiveness	260	3.10	1.29	258	0.146	0.616	Reject	Significant

Correlation is significant at 0.05 level, SD = Standard Deviation, df = Degree of Freedom and $\bar{X}$ = mean.

Table 2 shows that the calculated value r is 0.616 and the tabulated value r (0.146), the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between the goals of Christian Religious Education in secondary schools in Owerri Zone I of Imo State and global competitiveness is hereby rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This implies that the goals of Christian Religious Education relates to global competitiveness.

Discussion of Findings

The result from this study has revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between teaching Christian Religious Education and global competitiveness. This is in line with Okere (2011), Nelson (2015). They assert that Christian Religious Education is relevant to national and individual development, for no nation or individual can develop without discipline and morals. Christian Religious Education inculcates in the students' skills which include: thinking or information (research skills), giving direction and making use of information and communication technology. Christian Religious Education inculcates in the students patience, perseverance, humility, and self-determination in the use of ICT which has turned the world into a global village.

Results from Table 2 has also revealed that there is a significant relationship between the goals of Christian Religious Education and global competitiveness. The finding corroborates with Eluu and Ikumelu (2019) that the importance of Christian Religious Education is captured in the goals of both primary and secondary education in Nigeria which is to mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child and at the secondary education to prepare the individual for useful living within the

society. Yaro (2020) avers that the goals of Christian Religious Education will instill in the child attitudes and values, behaviour, skills that will ensure their effective adaptation in an ever increasing multi-facet and multi-ethnic society in this era of global competitiveness. ICT has turned the world into a global village which has led to global competitiveness; since one of the goals of Christian Religious Education is to instill in the students dignity of labour and acquisition of skills, the students through the teaching of Christian Religious Education will imbibe the morals, skills and values to competitive globally.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it was concluded that a significant relationship existed between the teaching of Christian Religious Education and global competitiveness. Also, the study concludes that there exist significant relationship between the goals of Christian Religious Education and global competitiveness.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following are hereby recommended:

1. Christian Religious Education should be taught in secondary schools in Imo State.
2. The goals of Christian Religious Education should be emphasized, more so, Christian Religious Education teachers should be re-trained by organizing workshops, seminars and symposium as to understand the relevance of Christian Religious Education in national development.

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