Religious Education's Relevance in Nigeria's Tertiary Institutions

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine how important religious education is in Nigerian schools, especially in tertiary institutions in the Delta State of Nigeria. To reach this goal, eleven colleges and universities in Delta State were chosen for the research. Research questions and hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The data for the study was collected from primary sources using a structured questionnaire. Twenty-two questionnaires were administered to the selected institutions' twenty-two heads (and deputies). Means and Standard Deviations (M & SD) were used to answering the research questions, and the hypotheses were tested using the t-test statistical method. The findings of this study led to the conclusion that there are significant differences in tertiary institutions' heads' perceptions of the relevance of religious education in tertiary institutions in Delta State for the effective curbing of moral decadence in the state and the Nigerian society as a whole.

Keywords: Religious Education, Tertiary Institutions, Delta State, Nigeria.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui seberapa penting pendidikan agama di sekolah-sekolah Nigeria, khususnya di perguruan tinggi di Negara Bagian Delta Nigeria. Untuk mencapai tujuan ini, sebelas perguruan tinggi dan universitas di Delta State dipilih untuk penelitian tersebut. Pertanyaan penelitian dan hipotesis dirumuskan untuk memandu penelitian. Data untuk penelitian dikumpulkan dari sumber primer menggunakan kuesioner terstruktur. Dua puluh dua kuesioner diberikan kepada dua puluh dua kepala (dan wakil) lembaga yang dipilih. Means and Standard Deviations (M & SD) digunakan untuk menjawab pertanyaan penelitian, dan hipotesis diuji menggunakan metode statistik uji-t. Temuan penelitian ini mengarah pada kesimpulan bahwa ada perbedaan yang signifikan dalam persepsi kepala perguruan tinggi tentang relevansi pendidikan agama di perguruan tinggi di Delta State untuk mengekang dekadensi moral secara efektif di negara bagian dan masyarakat Nigeria secara keseluruhan..

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Agama, Perguruan Tinggi, Delta State, Nigeria.

BACKGROUND

Nigeria's moral standing has gone down, leading to kidnapping, robbery, corruption, and violence against children and adults. Religious education is an antidote to the dangers of the country's moral decadence (Ngussa & Makewa, 2018). A religious education curriculum can be implemented in Nigerian tertiary educational institutions to instil morality and humanness in students. This is why Onimhawo and Ottuh (2007) opine that even though there are still incidents of religious extremism, economic exploitation, bogus abilities, fake religious leaders, and sexual immorality, the relevance of religious teachings in human society cannot be ruled out. This research looked at the relevance of teaching religious education in Nigerian tertiary educational institutions, focusing on Delta State, Nigeria. Delta State is a Nigerian state located in the South-South geopolitical zone. It was founded in 1991 and is named after the Niger Delta, which covers a substantial portion of the state. The state capital, Asaba, is situated on the northeastern bank of the Niger River. It is inhabited by tribes such as the Isoko and Eruwa, the Ukwuani in the east, the Ika, Ozanogogo, and Olukumi in the northeast, the Anioma in the northwest, and the Ijaw,

Itsekiri, Urhobo, and Uvwie in the southwest. Agriculture, fishing, and help culture are all important minor sectors in the state, which has a lot of oil palm, yam, and cassava crops (Ijeomah, 2015). Like other Nigerians, The people in Delta State are very religious. This collaborates with Ottuh and Idjakpo's (2021c) assertion that every human being is religious. It argued that religious education should be taught as a general course in all tertiary educational institutions in Delta State, as it is essential for the state's and country's successful governance and ethical wellbeing. This study is vital to educational curriculum designers, authorities, administrators, researchers, textbook writers, and students, as it helps them understand religious education and adapt to society.

The study used a survey design to find and choose important variables. Eleven tertiary educational institutions in Delta State were selected for the study, with twenty-two heads and deputies. They are Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Warri; Delta State University, Abraka; Edwin Clark University, Kiagbodo; Delta University, Agbor; Novena University, Ogume-Amai; Delta State Polytechnics, Oghara; Petroleum Training Institute, Effurun; State School of Nursing, Asaba; State School of Nursing, Agbor; Baptist School of Nursing, Eku; and Western Delta University, Oghara. The researcher created a fixed-response questionnaire for gathering the data. Experts in religious education verified the instrument by comparing each item to the hypotheses. All twenty-two questionnaires were completed and retrieved promptly. Means and Standard Deviations (M & SD) were used to answering the research questions, and the hypotheses were tested using the t-test statistical technique. The research question for the study is one: How do educational institution heads perceive the relevance of religious education? While the hypotheses are four and created to test the research question and resolve, the issue stated as a consequence of the literature reviewed and conceptual framework earlier discussed. The hypotheses are as follows:

1. **H$_1$:** There is no significant difference in the perceptions of the relevance of religious education between male and female heads of tertiary educational institutions in Delta State.
2. **H$_2$:** There is no significant difference in the perceptions of the relevance of religious education between tolerant and intolerant heads of tertiary educational institutions in Delta State.
3. **H$_3$:** There is no significant difference in the perceptions of the relevance of religious education between public and private heads of tertiary educational institutions in Delta State.
4. **H$_4$:** Tertiary educational institutions' heads' perceptions of the relevance of religious education significantly influence the management of the tertiary educational institutions in Delta State.

Literature Review

The literature review, which looked at national policies, the conceptual framework, the relevance, and the problems of religious education, gave the research background and helped it make sense.

Conceptual framework

In this research, the "Phase of Differentiated Schooling" (PDS) framework is used to show how the influence of religion on education has changed over time. Tsukigawa (2013) identifies Undifferentiated Schooling (u-DS), Differentiated Schooling (DS), and Post-differentiated Schooling as the three PDS subtypes (p-DS). In order to provide historical, contemporary, and theoretical context for understanding, evaluating, and resolving the religious-schooling problem, the PDS analyses the historical foundations, progression, and contemporary elements of the relationship between religion and education. It offers a historical, contemporary, and theoretical framework for debating the difficulty of religious education. The Mediaeval Ages saw the development of u-DS as a religion came to dominate knowledge, society, and

politics (Furseth & Repstad, 2006; Tsukigawa, 2013). Religious instruction was thought to bring morality, stability, and cohesion to society (Ottuh & Idjakpo, 2021a). However, by the end of the 19th century, political, cultural, and intellectual developments had eliminated religion's power and influence on schools.

Differentiated schooling (DS) is part of society's secularization and differentiation. It has given religion more credibility in the public sphere, leading to a desecularization of the world and a de-privatization of religion. This has changed the relationship between religion and education. Post-differentiated schooling (p-DS) is a third phase of education that embraces multiculturalism and recognizes current political ideologies. It also examines the impact of worldwide organizations that have promoted religious education as a means of intercultural dialogue and understanding (Relano, 2010). The link between religion and education has been reconceptualized because these forces and national governments have negotiated a new position for religion within their education policies.

Religion and religious education

Religion and education are linked in a natural and theological way, making it possible for them to make important contributions to spreading knowledge. Adren (2018) says that religion is a strong belief in a higher force or forces that control human destiny. In today's world, religion and education seem to be two separate paths, but they are poles apart when it comes to the present educational system (Ikechi-Ekpendu, Audu & Ekpendu, 2016). Religious teachings are an important component of education in all kinds of schools, whether simple or schools with a religious character, whether Muslim, Jewish, Christian, or Sikh. Schools' main job is to help people understand religion and how it plays a fundamentally important role in people's lives and helps them thrive. The history of education in Nigeria shows that Christianity and education have been linked for a long time, and Islam has a strong connection to the growth of education in Nigeria (Uchem, 2013). In Nigeria, religious groups have made it their mission to teach the next generation. Education is a never-ending process that results in the creation of something valuable. According to Ottuh and Jemegbe (2020), religion aids in transferring information, skills, attitudes, and values that allow a person to grow into a productive member of society. Education is one of the primary mechanisms by which society is altered, with the goal of character and mental growth.

It permeates all elements of life, spiritual, material, and intellectual, with a single goal in mind: to a better life. Education in Nigeria has had several positive effects on the country's development. It has been seen as a tool for social development and growth and a socialization process. According to Onimahawo and Ottuh (2010), religious education is defined as "education concerned with religion" (p.3). Religious education is "education concerned with religion" and refers to the training in theology, faith, and practises that religious organizations give their adherents (De Ruyter, 2006). It is taught in elementary, primary, and secondary schools to improve children's religious knowledge. Religious education may seem difficult to master at home, but it can help children understand the meaning and purpose of existence and the notions of right and wrong.

Religious Education's Importance and Problem

Jackson (2014) says that teaching religion in public schools in Italy is divisive because it goes against the principles of secularity and religious freedom in the country's constitution. Formal religious education is legal in China, Romania, Poland, France, and Alsace-Moselle. In France, the government does not recognize religion or fund religious education. In Alsace-Moselle, the state generally supports public education in several faiths, such as Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish, by the German model (Moulin-Stozek & Metcalfe, 2018). Religious instruction in public schools is opposed for various reasons, such as that it

entails the state endorsing or establishing whatever religious views are being taught. Religious education is not publicly subsidized or made a component of mandatory schooling in some nations, such as the United States of America (USA) (CIA World Factbook, 2013).

In some cases, open religious education has arisen from Christian confessionalism to promote religious literacy without teaching a specific theological viewpoint. This kind of religious education has been criticized since there is no unbiased viewpoint from which to study religions, and any sort of compulsory schooling is likely to influence a student's religious identity construction. According to Onovughe and Mordi (2017), religious education might be a good approach to introducing youngsters to community service, societal norms, values, and ethics. Children learn about many faiths and their traditions, rituals, and beliefs through religious education.

It also develops children's tolerance and mutual respect. Religious education helps students become more aware of and accept the value of each person in a diverse community, leading to respectful interactions with others. (Baamphatlha, 2013). One of the well-recognized benefits of religious instruction is that it aids pupils in comprehending the role of diverse faiths in our society. Religious education is an important part of a school's curriculum and should permeate the school's welcoming atmosphere. It helps students assimilate religious stories and develop attitudes of inquiry and respect (Adren, 2018). It exposes students to many cultures and faiths via lessons on tales, people, places, and eras of historical significance, as well as artefacts and beliefs that are part of everyday life and society. Students learn about their rights and duties and the necessity of interfaith communication, and broaden their understanding of faiths, beliefs, and diversity (Ottuh & Jemegbe, 2020; Ottuh & Idjakpo, 2020). Religious education teaches people to cherish variety and encourages intercultural understanding and respect. It helps students grow spiritually, morally, socially, and culturally. Religion is a significant factor in one's life, contributing to a multicultural and anti-racist atmosphere. It has far-reaching good consequences, such as promoting equality, collaboration, peace, and happiness. This collaborates with Ottuh and Idjakpo's (2021a) position, who posit that religions and their ethics also help maintain society's moral fabric, which helps avoid crime and anti-social behaviour. Teachers may draw on their own and others' experiences to help students acquire a genuine regard for religion's spiritual side, which develops self-awareness, respect, open-mindedness, appreciation, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills.

Christianity, Islam, Traditional Religion, and religious education in Nigeria

According to Ottuh and Onimhawo (2020), the two most common faiths in Nigeria are Christianity and Islam. African traditional religion is gaining popularity among many Nigerians, particularly the young. According to Okpalike and Nwadialor (2015), in the 19th century, the British colonial authorities encouraged Africans to be productive while preaching the gospel of Christ. As early as the eighth century, Islamic faith and education were reported to have entered Northern Nigeria and Southern Nigeria, particularly Yoruba country, long before Uthman Dan Fodio's 1804 Islamic Jihad (Azuakor & Onebunne, 2016). In traditional Muslim education, children are taught to read and occasionally speak Arabic and remember the main *suras* of the Qur'an. There is a long history of Sufi mullahs wandering and teaching and a long history of religious universities. According to Catholic Answers (2016), the Ahmadiyya Mission and Ansar-ur-Deen are two of the most prominent in terms of teaching members and Nigerians. An Ahmadiyya Muslim mission is to live according to Shari'a and encourage, train, and include the whole jama'at in the missionary endeavour (Cook, 2018). Islam's contributions to education mostly began in the north, with schools dedicated to educating Muslim youngsters and missionary training institutions that

educated Nigerians. Christianity has played an important role in the country's educational growth, focusing on citizen education from elementary to university levels.

One of the most important things that missionaries brought to Nigerian schools was Christian religious education. The most important things that were taught were how to read the Bible, how to do math, and how to communicate in English. To carry out the contents well, the idea of God's role in man's existence was taken into account. The National Council on Education (NCE) has permitted Christian Religious Studies, Islamic Studies, and National Values to be taught separately nationwide in elementary and secondary schools (Ikechi-Ekpendu, Audu & Ekpendu, 2016). Religion and education are inextricably linked in Nigeria, as they have existed for the benefit of each other. Scholars have noted numerous unanswered questions about religious education as a school subject, particularly regarding the role of the teacher, teaching methods and strategies, and subject matter sequencing (Lundie, 2010). In Nigeria, education indicators reflect gender disparities, spatial disparities between rural and urban areas, and geographical disparities between the country's southern and northern regions. Yaro (2018) asserts that it is common knowledge that one of the primary obstacles to teaching religious education in Nigerian schools is a lack of qualified religious education teachers or instructors. Parents urge their children to study courses that will help them get formal work in the future.

Results

On the research question: How do educational institution heads perceive the relevance of religious education? The table below presents the following findings.

Table 1: Institution heads' mean scores on the relevance of religious education

S/N	Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remark
1.	Deepen human faith in God and broadens their knowledge of diverse faiths	3.67	0.47	Accept
2.	Develop democratic citizenship	3.63	0.47	Accept
3.	Promotes leadership qualities and vocational efficiency	3.50	0.50	Accept
4.	Discourages religious intolerance, hate, murder, insurgency and terrorism	3.12	0.78	Accept
5.	Helps to maintain the moral fabric of society	3.33	0.47	Accept
6.	Promotes self-awareness, respect, open-mindedness, appreciation, communication, teamwork and problem-solving	2.94	0.84	Accept
7	Promotes spirituality, morality, emotional, social, and cultural quality of human interactions	3.50	0.50	Accept
8	Develops attentiveness and acceptance of the value of each person in a varied community	2.81	1.01	Accept
9	Develops independent of religious beliefs as well as believing in the challenges offered by such beliefs and values	3.50	0.50	Accept
10	Encourages students to improve and reflect on their evaluations and moral judgement abilities	3.18	0.72	Accept
11	It helps to examine the world	2.67	1.27	Accept
12	Helps to attempt solutions to human existential problems	2.81	1.01	Accept
13	Promotes responsible religious interactions	2.67	1.27	Accept
14	Encourages inter-religious dialogue	2.83	0.69	Accept
15	Inculcates human values such as kindness, love, forgiveness, sincerity, hospitality, etc.	2.63	0.78	Accept
16	Promotes human dignity	3.12	0.75	Accept
17	Promotes good governance	3.12	0.75	Accept
18	It helps to avoid crime and anti-social behaviour	2.63	0.78	Accept
19	Encourages division and inequality in society	2.13	0.92	Reject
20	Promotes hard work and a sense of responsibility in human beings	2.63	0.78	Accept

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 1 shows that institution heads do not have very different ideas about how important religious education is, except for Item X19, which says that it makes society more divided and unequal. This suggests that institution heads have differing views on the importance of religious education.

H_1: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of the relevance of religious education between male and female heads of tertiary educational institutions in Delta State.

Table 2: t-test of significant difference between male and female heads of institutions

Variable	Sex	N	Mean	SD	Df	t- cal.	t- critical	Remark
X1	Male	16	3.67	0.47	20	-0.11	1.72	Not significant
	Female	6	3.38	0.65				
X2	Male	16	3.63	0.47	20	-1.29	1.72	Not significant
	Female	6	3.37	0.59				
X3	Male	16	3.50	0.50	20	-0.34	1.72	Not significant
	Female	6	3.38	0.69				
X4	Male	16	3.12	0.78	20	-1.94	1.72	Significant
	Female	6	3.33	0.47				
X5	Male	16	3.33	0.47	20	-0.44	1.72	Not significant
	Female	6	3.12	0.78				
X6	Male	16	2.94	0.84	20	-1.03	1.72	Not significant
	Female	6	3.5	0.5				
X7	Male	16	3.50	0.50	20	2.35	1.72	Significant
	Female	6	2.50	1.06				
X8	Male	16	2.81	1.01	20	-2.03	1.72	Significant
	Female	6	3.50	1.01				
X9	Male	16	3.50	0.50	20	-1.10	1.72	Not significant
	Female	6	3.12	0.78				
X10	Male	16	3.18	0.72	20	-0.56	1.72	Not significant
	Female	6	3.50	0.50				
X11	Male	16	2.67	1.27	20	-0.52	1.72	Not significant
	Female	6	3.12	0.78				
X12	Male	16	2.81	1.01	20	0.36	1.72	Not significant
	Female	6	2.50	0.76				
X13	Male	16	2.67	1.27	20	-0.47	1.72	Not significant
	Female	6	2.25	1.03				
X14	Male	16	2.83	0.69	20	0.27	1.72	Not significant
	Female	6	2.43	1.05				
X15	Male	16	2.63	0.78	20	-0.56	1.72	Not significant
	Female	6	2.25	1.03				
X16	Male	16	3.12	0.75	20	-2.27	1.72	Significant
	Female	6	3.17	0.89				
X17	Male	16	3.12	0.75	20	-0.91	1.72	Not significant
	Female	6	3.33	0.74				
X18	Male	16	2.63	0.78	20	0.29	1.72	Not significant
	Female	6	3.00	0.81				
X19	Male	16	2.13	0.92	20	-0.52	1.72	Not significant
	Female	6	2.00	1.15				
X20	Male	16	2.63	0.78	20	0	1.72	Not significant
	Female	6	2.83	0.69				

Level of significance= 0.05

Table 2 shows a t-test of the significant difference between male and female heads of tertiary educational institutions on the relevance of religious education. H0 is accepted, but items X7, X8, X9, and X16 show a significant difference in perceptions of the relevance of religious education.

H_2: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of the relevance of religious education between tolerant and intolerant heads of tertiary educational institutions in Delta State.

Table 3: t-test of significant difference between tolerant and intolerant heads of institutions

Variable	Tolerance	N	Mean	SD	Df	t- cal.	t- critical	Remark
X1	Tolerant	15	3.47	1.47	20	-2.11	1.72	Significant
	Intolerant	7	3.38	0.56				
X2	Tolerant	15	3.73	1.58	20	-1.29	1.72	Not
	Intolerant	7	3.47	0.50				significant
X3	Tolerant	15	3.60	1.52	20	-0.34	1.72	Not
	Intolerant	7	3.28	0.50				significant
X4	Tolerant	15	3.22	1.89	20	-1.94	1.72	Significant
	Intolerant	7	3.43	0.58				
X5	Tolerant	15	3.38	1.58	20	-2.04	1.72	Significant
	Intolerant	7	3.19	0.61				
X6	Tolerant	15	2.84	1.95	20	-1.03	1.72	Not
	Intolerant	7	3.7	0.7				significant
X7	Tolerant	15	3.50	1.66	20	-	1.72	Not
	Intolerant	7	2.50	0.07		0.35		Significant
X8	Tolerant	15	2.87	1.52	20	-2.03	1.72	Significant
	Intolerant	7	3.56	0.62				
X9	Tolerant	15	3.58	1.82	20	-1.10	1.72	Not
	Intolerant	7	3.19	0.86				significant
X10	Tolerant	15	3.23	1.93	20	-0.56	1.72	Not
	Intolerant	7	3.59	0.42				significant
X11	Tolerant	15	2.69	1.67	20	-0.52	1.72	Not
	Intolerant	7	3.22	0.59				significant
X12	Tolerant	15	2.89	1.98	20	2.36	1.72	Significant
	Intolerant	7	2.56	0.68				
X13	Tolerant	15	2.87	1.68	20	-0.47	1.72	Not
	Intolerant	7	2.32	0.04				significant
X14	Tolerant	15	2.76	1.79	20	0.27	1.72	Not
	Intolerant	7	2.54	0.03				significant
X15	Tolerant	15	2.86	1.89	20	-0.56	1.72	Not
	Intolerant	7	2.33	0.02				significant
X16	Tolerant	15	3.23	1.77	20	-2.27	1.72	Significant
	Intolerant	7	3.23	0.80				
X17	Tolerant	15	3.33	1.89	20	-0.91	1.72	Not
	Intolerant	7	3.36	0.77				significant
X18	Tolerant	15	2.73	1.80	20	0.29	1.72	Not
	Intolerant	7	3.10	0.68				significant
X19	Tolerant	15	2.13	1.97	20	-0.52	1.72	Not
	Intolerant	7	2.10	0.06				significant
X20	Tolerant	15	2.73	1.89	20	20	-	Not
	Intolerant	7	2.93	0.41			1.72	significant

Level of significance= 0.05

Table 3 shows no significant difference in perceptions of the relevance of religious education between tolerant and intolerant heads of tertiary educational institutions, except for items X1, X4, X5, X8, X12, and X16. This indicates that there is no significant difference in perceptions of the relevance of religious education between tolerant and intolerant heads.

Table 4: t-test of significant difference between public and private heads of institutions

Variable	Status	N	Mean	SD	Df.	t- cal.	t- critical	Remark
X1	Public	18	3.77	1.67	20	-0.11	1.72	Not significant
	Private	4	3.28	0.45			0.43	
X2	Public	18	3.73	1.67	20	-2.29	1.72	Significant
	Private	4	3.27	0.39				
X3	Public	18	3.60	1.60	20	-0.34	1.72	Not significant
	Private	4	3.18	0.39				
X4	Public	18	3.42	1.98	20	-1.94	1.72	Significant
	Private	4	3.23	0.17				
X5	Public	18	3.63	1.57	20	-0.44	1.72	Not significant
	Private	4	3.02	0.28				
X6	Public	18	3.64	1.94	20	-1.03	1.72	Not significant
	Private	4	3.05	0.2				
X7	Public	18	3.60	1.60	20	-2.35	1.72	Significant
	Private	4	2.10	1.03				
X8	Public	18	3.81	5.01	20	-2.05	1.72	Significant
	Private	4	2.50	1.01				
X9	Public	18	3.70	1.50	20	-1.10	1.72	Not significant
	Private	4	2.12	0.78				
X10	Public	18	3.68	1.72	20	-0.56	1.72	Not significant
	Private	4	2.50	0.50				
X11	Public	18	3.67	1.27	20	-0.52	1.72	Not significant
	Private	4	2.12	0.78				
X12	Public	18	3.81	1.01	20	-2.36	1.72	Significant
	Private	4	1.50	0.76				
X13	Public	18	3.67	1.27	20	-0.47	1.72	Not significant
	Private	4	1.25	0.03				
X14	Public	18	3.83	1.69	20	0.27	1.72	Not significant
	Private	4	1.43	0.05				
X15	Public	18	3.63	1.78	20	-0.56	1.72	Not significant
	Private	4	1.25	0.03				
X16	Public	18	3.42	1.75	20	-0.27	1.72	Not Significant
	Private	4	2.17	0.89				
X17	Public	18	3.52	1.75	20	-0.91	1.72	Not significant
	Private	4	2.33	0.74				
X18	Public	18	3.63	1.78	20	0.29	1.72	Not significant
	Private	4	2.00	0.81				
X19	Public	18	3.13	1.92	20	-0.52	1.72	Not significant
	Private	4	2.00	0.15				
X20	Public	18	3.63	1.78	20	2.01	1.72	Significant
	Private	4	1.83	0.61				

Level of significance= 0.05

Table 4 shows no significant difference in perceptions of the relevance of religious education between public and private tertiary educational institution heads. Except for X2, X4, X7, X8, and X9, there is no significant difference in perceptions of the relevance of religious education.

Discussion

The research looked at the relevance of religious education in Nigerian tertiary educational institutions (both public and private), with a special focus on tertiary educational institutions in the Delta State of Nigeria. The relevant indicators of religious education range from individual morality and well-being to societal morality and well-being (Ottuh & Jemegbe, 2020). Applying these indicators, the mean scores and standard deviations for institution heads' evaluations of religious education's significance are shown in Table 1. Except for item X19 (encourages division and inequality in society), which shows a

considerable variation. This implies that heads of institutions have diverse perspectives on the value of religious instruction. It also implies that academics feel that school religious instruction is critical for children's development into responsible and spiritual adults (De Ruyter, 2003). The t-test of the significant difference in religious education relevance between male and female heads of tertiary educational institutions is shown in Table 2. The computed H_1 shows that the H_0, which states no significant difference in male and female heads of institutions' opinions of the importance of religious education, is accepted. Thus it is not significant, except for items X7, X8, X9, and X16, which state that there is a significant difference in male and female heads of institutions' perceptions of the relevance of religious education. This also means that, without gender bias, religious education is believed to be a core factor in helping kids learn about community involvement, social standards, values, and ethics, and it also promotes tolerance and mutual respect among youngsters in a diverse society (Adren, 2018). This also confirms Nwosu's (2004) assertion that the Igbo traditional milieu, whose religion was mostly Traditional African Religion, imposed regulations in a non-coercive manner, similar to the contemporary state. A society where people are not tamed but are rude and mean to each other puts peace, justice, and growth in an irreversible state of danger (Ottuh & Idjakpo, 2021b).

Table 3 demonstrates a t-test demonstrating significant differences in religious education relevance between tolerant and intolerant heads of tertiary educational institutions in Delta State. The table shows the results of the H_2 calculation. It shows that H_0 that there is no significant difference in religious education evaluations between tolerant and intolerant heads of tertiary educational institutions is accepted, except items X1, X4, X5, X8, X12, and X16, which indicate a significant difference in perceptions of religious education between tolerant and intolerant heads of tertiary educational institutions. This indicates no significant difference in perceptions of religious education between tolerant and intolerant heads of tertiary educational institutions. This also implies that religiously tolerant heads of schools and teachers may use their own experiences and leadership positions to assist students in developing a true appreciation for religion's spiritual aspects (Ekeopara & Ogbonnaya, 2014). The t-test of the significant difference in religious education importance between public and private heads of higher educational institutions is shown in Table 4. The table shows the results of the H_3 computation, which shows H_0 that there is no significant difference in the attitudes of heads of public and private tertiary educational institutions on the relevance of religious education is therefore accepted. However, there is no significant difference in perceptions of the relevance of religious education between public and private tertiary educational institution heads, except X2, X4, X7, X8, and X9. Until 1999, Christian missions and churches were actively involved in establishing elementary and secondary schools, including high or grammar schools, teacher training, and vocational and theological institutions. It is common knowledge that these schools' intellectual and moral quality of education was outstanding (Eluu, 2016). The graduates of the schools were disciplined, hard-working, and clever.

Nigeria's educational institutions have grown into a spectrum of movements, ranging from public to private concerns. No matter the classification, religious education is an essential part of education in all types of schools, whether public or private (Onovughe & Mordi, 2017). As a result, schools are primarily obligated to foster religious awareness and its crucial role in shaping human attitudes and contributing to human flourishing. Nigeria's educational history displays a strong commitment to instilling secular and religious values in its citizens, hence the placement of religious education in Group A at the senior secondary level in Nigeria's national education curriculum (Ikechi-Ekpendu, Audu & Ekpendu, 2016). Nigerian basic education currently includes stand-alone courses in Christian Religious Studies, Islamic Studies, and National Values, a status quo that can be improved on. The principle of the "Phases of

Differentiated Schooling" (PDS) (Tsukigawa, 2013) confirms this government action; that is, it acknowledges contemporary political ideas that have given religion more space and opportunities within educational policy. It looks into how international organizations that promote religious education can help people from different cultures talk to each other and understand each other better.

CONCLUSION

This research says that religious education in Nigerian colleges and universities can help reduce the high levels of religious intolerance, hatred, murder, insurgency, terrorism, and other forms of violence wreaking havoc on Nigerian society. The study area is one of Nigeria's most important oil-producing states, focusing on crude oil and natural gas production, including agriculture. But public schools in the state don't like religious education because they have to support or establish whatever religious ideas are being taught. But religious academics think that teaching religion in tertiary schools is very important for helping children become responsible and spiritual. The findings of this study led to the conclusion that there are significant differences in the heads of tertiary educational institutions' perceptions of the relevance of religious education in tertiary educational institutions in Delta State for the effective curbing of moral decadence in the state and Nigerian society as a whole. Therefore, religious education should be included in the curricula of every academic discipline of tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria.

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