**Original Research Article**

**Transmission of Religious Practices: An Overview of Catechetical Books for Selected Secondary Schools in the Catholic Diocese of Morogoro, Tanzania**

**Abstract**

*This study examined the content of Catechesis teaching materials used in secondary schools under the Catholic Church. It focused on teaching Christian religion in secondary schools. A research design employed in this study will be convergent mixed-methods. Through questionnaires and interviews, the data were collected from six heads of schools (HoS), 30 Catechesis teachers, and 50 students. The findings revealed that the teaching materials for the Christian religion, referred to as Bible knowledge, incorporate catechism teachings, which also include certain religious practices. Additionally, the study identified that some secondary schools continue to use the old syllabus from 2011, approved by the TEC, which still contains these religious practices. Consequently, this study recommended that the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Tanzanian Episcopal Conference (TEC), consolidate the content from the two syllabuses into a single syllabus that integrates catechesis and religious practices.*

**Keywords**: Catechesis, Religious Practices, Faith, Schools

1. **Introduction**

Education as a systematic instruction can be implemented through various areas. Religious education is a purposeful engagement with the transcendent aspects of life, promoting a conscious relationship with an ultimate ground of being (Thomas 1980). Commonly understood, religion represents humanity's quest for the transcendent, wherein individuals become aware of and express their relationship with this ultimate reality. This is reflected in from the ministry of the Word of God, as seen in Deuteronomy 6:4-7: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home, when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.” From its inception, the Church has cultivated its teachings based on the instruction given by God Himself. This forms the foundational character of the religious education in schools, specifically in its relationship with the transmission of faith to children and young people, which requires special consideration. The relationship between religious instruction and catechesis is one of distinction and complementarity (*From Congregation for the Clergy, General Directory for Catechesis 1971*).

Examining catechesis from a Catholic perspective, the term originates from the Greek verb “katēchein,” meaning “to resound,” “to echo,” or “to hand down (Thomas 1980). This etymology suggests an oral form of instruction. In the New Testament, catechesis refers to a basic oral teaching that extends beyond the kerygma, akin to providing milk to small children (see Hebrews 5:12-14; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3). The emphasis is on accurately conveying the message, as indicated in Acts 18:25. This understanding of catechesis as “oral re-echoing” persisted in the early Church, where it was a verbal encouragement to lead a moral life (Thomas 1980). Consequently, the Catholic Church has historically recognized the value of retaining the term catechesis with its consistent historical meaning. Thus, the transmission of faith remains the activity of retelling the story of the Christian faith that has been passed down through generations. It is positioned as a specific educational activity within the broader context of Christian religious education (Thomas 1980).

It is essential to differentiate clearly between religious instruction and catechesis (*Congregation for the Clergy, General Directory for Catechesis 1971*) because the transmission of faith should be done by specific people who believe and live this faith while religious instructions can be done by anyone who participate in religious practices. In the context of secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality, the content of religious education textbooks used tends to either transmit the content of faith or focus on religious practices. Religious education in schools provides students with knowledge about Christian identity and the practice of Christian life, which encompasses religious observances.

Catechesis, rooted in the Greek meaning of “echoing the teaching,” represents an interactive progress in which the Word of God reverberates among the proclaimer or the individual receiving the message, and the Holy Spirit. The great commission has been entrusted to both men and women who were called by God to proclaim the Good News. The formation and ministry of transmitting faith is traditionally referred to as catechesis. While religious instruction in schools is developed within diverse educational contexts, it maintains its fundamental purpose while allowing for different emphases. This work aims to determine whether the textbooks used for teaching catechesis in secondary schools focus on transmitting the faith or emphasise religious practices (*Congregation for the Clergy, General Directory for Catechesis 1971*). Catechesis is fundamentally about transmitting the Gospel as it has been received, understood, celebrated, lived, and communicated by the Christian community in various ways (*Congregation for the Clergy, General Directory for Catechesis, 1971*).

Furthermore, this study will seek to elucidate the content of religious textbooks used to teach catechesis in secondary schools. Although Christian religious education has limitations, it also offers significant advantages. Don (1982) notes that, “Christian religious education is a political activity with pilgrims in time that deliberately and intentionally engages with them in the activity of God in our present, the story of the Christian faith community, and the vision of God’s Kingdom, the seeds of which are already among us.”

1. **Statement of the Problem**

In secondary schools, the subject of Christian Religion is taught with the same level of discipline as other subjects, adhering to defined curricula. Students have the right to learn about the religion to which they belong with truth and certainty. In the Catholic Church, this right specifically pertains to knowing Christ and the salvific message He proclaims, which must not be overlooked (*Congregation for the Clergy, General Directory for Catechesis 1971*) The confessional nature of religious instruction in schools, represented differently by the Church in various countries, serves as an essential guarantee for families and students who choose this form of education. In this study, we aim to evaluate the content of the religious books used to teach Christian Religion in secondary schools.

1. **Research question**

Is the Christian religion a subject of teaching Catechesis or Religious Practices?

1. **Theoretical Framework**

This study is based on Moral development theory by Kohlberg (1958) which assumes that moral development can be put in three levels: preconventional, conventional, and post-conventional level. The theory outlines the progression individuals experience as they pass into different stages of moral reasoning with maturity. It suggests that moral reasoning becomes more sophisticated as individuals age and develop cognitively. In the context of teaching religion subject in public and private secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality, Kohlberg's theory highlights the importance of structured moral education. Religious teachings not only deepen students' faith but also enhance their ethical awareness.

One of the advantages of moral development theory is its structured framework for understanding how moral reasoning is applied. This framework provides a clear perspective on assessing the effectiveness of teaching religious subjects in fostering moral development among secondary school students. The theory will assist the researcher in determining whether teaching religious subjects facilitates the transmission of faith and contributes to the moral development of students.

1. **Review of Empirical Studies**

Teaching religion subject is very common in many developed countries, as evidenced by various studies. For example, in the United Kingdom, Maryamal (2024) highlighted that “integrating ethnographic which means the daily activities and anthropological methods enhances the relevance of religious education in multicultural settings”. Similarly, Erduran et al. (2022) in England discovered that the instructors viewed the teaching of religion subject as a significant because they employ the variety of pedagogical strategies used in imparting religious values and transmit faith to their respective religions.

Turning to the East African context, studies have shown that teaching religious subjects in schools plays a crucial role in transmitting faith and developing moral behaviour and ethical conduct in students. For instance, Buore (2023) noticed the influence of Christian education on religious instruction and discipline in Catholic-sponsored schools in Kenya, revealing a strong correlation between religious instruction and discipline.

In Tanzania, Mwenisongole together with Ntawigaya (2021), examined the contribution of religious education to ethical development, finding it beneficial in the broader context of disciplinary education. On the other hand, Ignatio together with Hongoli (2022), discovered the factors contributing to poor performance in religious education with the Morogoro Municipality. Therefore, this study points to examine the content of religious education textbooks used in secondary schools to determine whether they include catechesis or focus solely on religious practices.

Overall, the previous studies have made significant contributions to understanding the relationship between religious subjects and discipline among secondary school students. It is essential to understand the outcomes of religious education in the academic context, as demonstrated by prior research. However, my study presents a different perspective by investigating the specific contents of these educational materials and whether they teach catechesis or are primarily centred on religious practices.

1. **Methodology**

This study will use a mixed methods approach that combines both qualitative and quantitative data collection. Data will be collected directly from respondents, followed by analysis and interpretation. The research design for this study is a convergent mixed-methods design, which integrates both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. According to Bennett and Watson (2019), the approach will be used has a high ability to provide a comprehensive understanding of complex educational phenomena by providing both numerical data and detailed information from personal experiences. The study will be conducted in secondary schools controlled by the Catholic Diocese of Morogoro, focusing on selected schools within Morogoro Municipality.

1. **Findings and Discussion**

This study aimed to assess the content of religious education materials used in secondary schools controlled by the Catholic Diocese of Morogoro in Morogoro Municipality. Specifically, it investigated whether the content is based on catechesis or religious practices. The research utilised self-administered questionnaires for teachers, school heads, and students. Table 1 proposes the responses from Heads of School.

**Table 1: Heads of School Response on the Explanation of Content of Books for Teaching Catechesis in Secondary Schools (n=6)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **Statements** | **Responses in f (%)** | **Mean** |
| **SD** | **D** | **U** | **A** | **SA** |
| 1 | The head of the school actively supports the development and enhancement of the religious studies curriculum.  | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 1(16.7) | 5(83.3) | 4.83 |
| 2 | The Head of School provides adequate professional development opportunities for teachers of religious subjects. | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 5(83.3) | 1(16.7) | 4.17 |
| 3 | The Head of School allocates sufficient resources (e.g, books, other materials) for the teaching of religious subjects. | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 3(50.0) | 3(50.0) | 4.5 |
| 4 | The Head of School promotes an inclusive environment that respects and values diverse religious beliefs among students. | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 0(00) | 6(100) | 5 |
| 5 | The Head of School encourages extracurricular activities related to religious education, such as clubs or community service. | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 2(33.3) | 4(66.7) | 4.67 |
| 6. | The Head of School effectively communicates the importance of religious subjects in the overall educational framework of the school. | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 1(16.7) | 5(83.3) | 4.83 |

***Key:*** *SD= Strong Disagree, D= Disagree, U= Undecided, A= Agree, SA= Strong Agree, F****=*** *frequency, %= Percentage.*

**Sources**: Field Data (2025)

The data from Table 1 determines that 16.7% of respondents agreed while 83.3% direct strongly agreement of the statement that the head of school actively supports the development of the religious studies curriculum. This suggests that religious subjects receive strong support from heads of schools in secondary education. Consequently, students are taught religious subjects according to the guidelines set by the curriculum. This aligns with the study by Hughes et al. (2009), which emphasises about the importance of heads of schools as leaders who should possess a critical understanding of their situations and influence team members to achieve desired goals.

Additionally, the curriculum for teaching and learning religious subjects is overseen by heads of schools in the Morogoro municipality. This is corroborated by information from the Diocesan Secretariat of Education in Morogoro (DSEP), which indicated in a face-to-face interview that: "*I am aware that heads of schools support the learning process of religious subjects based on the guidelines advocated by the curriculum. This fosters a conducive environment for students to acquire relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards their studies*" (DSEP J). This statement emphasises that students benefit from the heads of schools creating an environment conducive to learning religious subjects. It follows that knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes regarding religious content are acquired by students due to the support of their heads of schools.

Furthermore, the data in Table 1, which indicates that 83.3% of participants agreed and 16.7% strongly agreed, proceeds a mean score of 4.17. This suggests that heads of schools are making significant efforts to provide adequate professional development opportunities for teachers of religious subjects. These finding highlights that, heads of schools are actively creating a positive learning environment by allowing teachers to attend various seminars on religious teachings to upgrade their knowledge. These results imply that heads of schools understand their responsibilities towards their teachers, enhancing the effectiveness of the teaching and learning processes. Additionally, heads of schools are accountable for establishing both school and classroom conditions that directly impact students' learning (Wahlstrom, Louis, Leithwood, & Anderson, 2010). This is supported by statements from HoS J, who described how teachers are more collaborative in teaching religious subjects and are positively influenced by how their head of school communicates with them, especially regarding teaching materials.

Moreover, Table 1 reveals that 50% of participants agreed and 50% strongly agreed that the head of school allocates sufficient resources (e.g., books, materials) for teaching religious subjects. An interview with a head of school on May 7, 2025, emphasized: "*I am doing my best to gather as many resources as possible, such as books, video clips, magazines, and other materials rich in religious instruction to support this subject because it plays a significant role in students' moral disciplines*." This underscores the heads of schools' understanding of the importance of religious education in shaping morality, which begins in the family and is reinforced in schools. This information aligns with findings by Mwenisongole and Ntawigaya (2021), who noted that religious education contributes significantly to ethical development within the context of disciplinary education.

In addition, the responses from participants in Table 1 indicate that 100% strongly agreed, with a mean score of 5.00, that the head of school promotes an inclusive environment that respects and values diverse religious beliefs among students. This indicates that heads of schools actively acknowledge their commitment to respecting the religious beliefs of both students and teachers. The behaviour of heads of schools has a substantial impact on the teaching and learning process and can positively influence students' perspectives on the subject. These findings are supported by Mulinge (2024), who recommended that classroom visitation by heads of school enhances student morale in the learning process.

Finally, another data point shows that 33.3% of participants agreed and 66.7% strongly agreed, with a mean score of 4.67, that the head of school encourages extracurricular activities related to religious education, such as clubs and community service. This finding is also supported by information collected from heads of schools, indicating that they effectively demonstrate their care for students by providing opportunities for various clubs and other extracurricular activities that support practical religious discourse. The findings from the quantitative data were further supported by statements made by the heads of school during interviews. In these discussions, one head of school acknowledged the contribution of religious subjects, specifically catechesis and religious practices, to the nurturing of empathy among students. This was evident in the words from head of school P who said:

*“Religious subjects, particularly Bible Knowledge, play a pivotal role in fostering empathy among our students. Therefore, whenever opportunities arise to support the development of this subject, we willingly accept them. The religious practices emphasise loving one another, caring for those in need, and relating to one another in a friendly manner these are among the positive behaviours displayed by our students. Additionally, an important aspect of the teachings in religious subjects is humility and the ability to forgive those who have wronged us. All of these elements are emphasised within this subject.”.*

Furthermore, data indicated that 16.7% and 83.3% of participants responded with a mean score of 4.83, agreeing or strongly agreeing that the Head of School effectively communicates the importance of religious subjects within the overall educational framework of the school. This information was reinforced by a personal communication with Head of School M, who stated:

*“Effective communication skills between teachers and heads of school are essential for enhancing the learning and teaching process. Teachers are responsible for knowing the key materials for their subjects, and in the case of religious subjects, the catechesis teacher shares what is needed to meet the requirements of the syllabus.” (HoS M).*

The study strongly suggests that catechism teachers in secondary schools need to establish good relationships with their Heads of School to ensure access to the necessary teaching materials for religious subjects. They should not rely solely on one source of material. A variety of teaching resources, particularly for Bible Knowledge, should be sourced from different places. To address this need, catechesis teachers are encouraged to communicate courageously with their Heads of School for support, thereby helping to achieve the goals of catechesis in secondary schools. The study was supported by Bullough (1978) who said that “media resources, including real objects, provide learners with an input of perceptual bits from which logical patterns can be constructed. The combination of various audio-visual media materials indeed makes it easier for learners to follow, understand, respond and retain the content of the lesson by adding concreteness to any kind of learning situation. Furthermore, Kemp (1980) said that: “audiovisual materials make education more individual through providing many alternative paths with a variety of resources so that learning can take place according to the learner’s study preference.

**Table 2: Teachers' Responses on implementing Catechesis in teaching religious subjects in Secondary schools** (n=30)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **Statements** | **Responses in f (%)** | **Mean** |
| **SD** | **D** | **U** | **A** | **SA** |
| 1 | Catechesis aims to deepen students’ understanding of their faith, and its goal is to empower students to become active members of the Church and live out their faith in service to others | 1(3.3) | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 12(40.0)  | 17(56.7) | 4.47  |
| 2 | Catechesis helps students develop a personal relationship with God. | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 10(33.3)  | 20(66.7)  | 4.67  |
| 3 | It involves systematic instruction on the beliefs, practices, and values of the Catholic Church, often guided by the Catechism | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 2(6.7) | 11(36.7)  | 17(56.7)  | 4.50  |
| 4 | Catechesis is not just about knowledge; it also emphasises the importance of living out one’s faith in daily life | 1(3.3)  | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 9(30.0)  | 20(66.7)  | 4.57  |
| 5 | Catechesis addresses the developmental needs of adolescents, providing them with tools to navigate moral and ethical questions | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 2(6.7)  | 14(46.7) | 14(46.7)  | 4.40  |
| 6. | Engagement in catechetical programs fosters a sense of community and belonging among students, encouraging mutual support in their spiritual journeys | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 8(26.7)  | 22(73.3)  | 4.73  |
| 7. | Sacraments, such as Confirmation, play a critical role in catechesis, serving as milestones in a young person’s faith journey | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 1(3.3)  | 8(26.7)  | 21(70.0) | 4.67  |
| 8. | Incorporating modern technology and social media can make catechesis more relevant and engaging for today’s youth | 1(3.3)  | 0(00)  | 2(6.7)  | 9(30.0)  | 18(60.0)  | 4.43  |
| 9. | Catechesis encourages critical thinking and discussion, allowing students to explore their beliefs and ask questions about their faith | 1(3.3)  | 1(3.3)  | 0(00)  | 11(36.7)  | 17(56.7)  | 4.40  |
| 10. | Catechesis serves as mentors and role models, guiding students in their spiritual development and helping them to articulate their beliefs. | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 7(23.3)  | 23(76.7)  | 4.77  |

***Key:*** *SD= Strong Disagree, D= Disagree, U= Undecided, A= Agree, SA= Strong Agree, F****=*** *frequency, %= Percentage.*

**Sources**: Field Data (2025)

**Catechesis aims to deepen students' understanding of their faith, empowering them to become active members of the Church and to live out their beliefs through service to others.** According to the findings presented in Table 2, the study revealed that 3.3% of participants strongly disagreed with the idea that the transmission of faith aims to deepen students' understanding and empower them for active Church membership and service. However, 40% agreed, and 56.7% strongly agreed with this assertion, resulting in a mean score of 4.47. This indicates that catechesis in secondary school religious education positively contributes to the moral development and overall discipline of students.

The study aligns with Buore (2023) found a strong correlation between religious instruction and student discipline. This viewpoint is further supported by the Head of School at X Secondary School, who emphasized that: “The contribution of the religion subject in school has significantly influenced students' discipline, as they practice these teachings through their actions with one another” (personal communication, May 6, 2025).

**Catechesis plays a crucial role in helping students develop a personal relationship with God.** According to the data presented in Table 2, 33.3% and 66.7% of participants agreed and strongly agreed, respectively, that the transmission of faith in the religion curriculum taught in secondary schools’ aids students in forming this relationship. The mean score was 4.67. This suggests that education is not all about skills and jobs but it is part of a quest for truth. This can relate with the thought of Storkey (1993) who states that, "what competes with the open search for knowledge is not the perspective of committed belief, but the closed mind of boredom." Therefore, it is the responsibility of the catechesis teacher to effectively communicate the reality of faith transmission in schools, guiding students to deepen their relationship with God through a better understanding of their faith.

**The text focuses on systematic instruction regarding the beliefs, practices, and values of the Catholic Church, often guided by the Catechism.** According to the data in Table 2, participants' responses revealed that 6.7% were undecided while the 36.7% respondents agreed, and 56.7% strongly agreed with the statement that catechesis involves systematic instruction on the beliefs, practices, and values of the Catholic Church. The mean score was 4.50. These responses indicate an understanding of the importance of religious education in secondary schools and highlight the need for well-trained teachers to effectively convey the true teachings of faith, practices, and values of the Catholic Church. In personal communication on May 6, 2025, a religious teacher from Secondary School X emphasised the necessity of thorough preparation for catechesis 10 teachers who are responsible for transmitting faith to students at the secondary level. This study conveys a message to those involved in developing the syllabus and textbooks for teaching this subject in secondary schools.

**Catechesis is not solely about acquiring knowledge; it emphasises the importance of living out one’s faith in daily life.** As we continue to implement the findings from the Study on the Content of teaching religion subjects in secondary schools, we see that these courses address catechesis and religious practices. The data indicates that 3.3% of respondents strongly disagreed, while 30% agreed, and 66.7% strongly agreed that catechesis is not just about gaining knowledge; it also highlights the significance of embodying one’s faith in everyday life. This suggests that the daily behaviour of an individual reflects whether their faith is vibrant or dormant. Catechesis contributes to building the Kingdom of God, where justice, peace, and love form the central teachings of Jesus. This perspective is supported by Lierop (2020), who argues that Education relied in Christian Religious not only fosters the development of Christian character but also imparts knowledge. Furthermore, it has been suggested that since individuals are influenced by moral and spiritual trends, education becomes ineffective without spiritual growth.

**Catechesis addresses the developmental needs of adolescents by providing them with tools to navigate moral and ethical questions.** The findings indicate that 6.7% of participants were undecided in their responses, while 46.7% agreed, and another 46.7% strongly agreed with the statement that catechesis effectively meets these developmental needs. This is supported by the content found in the approved syllabus for Bible Knowledge (2023) which emphasises teachings on Creation and God’s commandments from the book of Genesis. These teachings encourage students to take responsibility and care for life. The data highlights the importance of catechesis in helping students navigate moral and ethical dilemmas. Additionally, a study by Mwenisongole and Ntawigaya (2021) supports the idea that religious education significantly contributes to ethical development within the broader context of disciplinary education.

**Participation in catechetical programs fosters a sense of community and belonging among students, encouraging mutual support on their spiritual journeys.** According to the study results, 26.7% of the respondents agreed, and 73.3% strongly agreed, indicating that engagement in these programs indeed promotes a sense of community. This is reflected in the content of the old syllabus for the religion subject in secondary schools, approved by the Tanzanian Episcopal Conference (TEC) in 2011. The syllabus emphasises that students are expected to recognise and apply the foundations of revelation and the Catholic faith in their daily lives. Furthermore, they are encouraged to reflect on and appreciate the origins of various prayers in the Catholic Church, developing a habit and attitude of loving to pray these prayers.

Additionally, first-year students are expected to build their capacity to participate as Christians in various aspects of community life, valuing and living out the Catholic faith while demonstrating growth in virtues. Supporting data from Gichanga & Kerre (2004) indicates that: “religious practices serve as an effective regulator of children's behaviour and a means of conveying the moral demands of society”. Therefore, Christian religious education is a powerful tool for instilling discipline among students.

**Sacraments, such as Confirmation, play a critical role in catechesis and serve as milestones in a young person’s faith journey.** The findings indicate that 3.3% of participants were undecided in their responses, while 26.7% agreed and 70% of the respondents strongly agreed that sacraments like Confirmation are essential in catechesis. This aligns with the old syllabus of the religion subject in secondary schools, as approved by the Tanzanian Episcopal Conference (TEC) in 2011. The syllabus incorporates content from books like the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), which emphasises the importance of the Sacraments.

**Incorporating modern technology and social media can make catechesis more relevant and engaging for today’s youth.** The data presented in Table 2 show the participants' responses: 3.3% strongly disagreed that modern technology and social media enhance catechesis' relevance and engagement for youth, while 6.7% were undecided. Meanwhile, 30% agreed, and 60% strongly agreed, resulting in a mean score of 4.43. This indicates that a majority of participants believe that technology and social media significantly contribute to catechesis for today’s youth. The study endorsed by Ordu (2021) supports this perspective, emphasizing the value of using pictures, video clips, objects, and internet resources to help students visualise and understand the context of what is being taught. This approach reinforces learning: What we hear, we forget; what we see, we remember; and what we do, we understand.

**Catechesis assists critical thinking and discussion, allowing students to explore their beliefs and ask questions about their faith.** According to the data, 3.3% of participants disagreed and another 3.3% strongly disagreed with the idea that catechesis fosters critical thinking and discussion. In contrast, 36.7% agreed and 56.7% strongly agreed, resulting in a mean score of 4.40. This indicates that many participants feel positively about catechesis as a means of encouraging critical thinking and allowing students to delve into their beliefs. These responses align with the content outlined in the new syllabus for Bible Knowledge (2023), which has been approved by the United Republic of Tanzania's Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology for Ordinary Secondary Education for Form I-IV. Therefore, it can be concluded that catechesis is significantly beneficial for these high school students, enriching their faith and deepening their understanding of it.

**Catechesis functions as a mentor and role model, guiding students in their spiritual development and helping them articulate their beliefs.** The data indicated that 23.3% of participants agreed and 76.7% strongly agreed, resulting in a mean score of 4.77, that catechesis plays a significant role in guiding students’ spiritual growth and in the articulation of their beliefs. This suggests that the teaching of catechesis is a key model for facilitating students' spiritual development and the expression of their beliefs. The study also enhances our understanding of the 2011 syllabus approved by the Department of Catechesis from the Tanzanian Episcopal Conference (TEC), which insists on teaching the spiritual religious practices to secondary school students to strengthen the development of their belief. This was further supported by a personal communication on May 7, 2025, with a Catechesis Teacher from Secondary School X (CSS, X), who stated, “Catechesis in secondary schools has truly helped shape students in their spiritual development, reviving their faith. For some, their beliefs were dormant, but through catechesis, their faith has become stronger than ever.”

*The teaching of faith transmission, particularly through religious practices, has helped students strengthen their faith and encouraged them to live out their beliefs in their daily lives. In school environments, students interact peacefully and support one another, sharing with those in need regardless of their differences (CSS, X).*

In conclusion, the insights gathered from catechesis teachers in secondary schools highlight their awareness of the significance of catechetical teaching. These findings align with Moral Development Theory by Kohlberg (1958), which emphasises that individuals progress through various stages of moral reasoning as they mature. The theory underscores the importance of structured moral education, which, according to the findings, helps students deepen their faith and develop ethical awareness. Furthermore, it was established that catechesis in secondary schools is vital for strengthening and developing students’ faith. Through the religious curriculum, catechesis serves as the foundational teaching for deepening Catholic faith. The data responses indicated in Table 3 reflect participants’ understanding of the content within the religion subject and its objectives.

**Table 3: Students’ Responses on how beneficial it is to learn religious subjects in Secondary schools** (n=50)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **Statements** | **Responses in f (%)** | **Mean** |
| **SD** | **D** | **U** | **A** | **SA** |
| 1 | I find the topics covered in my religious studies class interesting and engaging. | 3(6.0)  | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 21(42.0)  | 26(52.0)  | 4.34  |
| 2 | The teachings from my religious studies class are relevant to my everyday life and personal beliefs. | 2(4.0)  | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 17(34.0)  | 31(62.0)  | 4.54  |
| 3 | My teachers create a supportive and open environment for discussing religious topics. | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 5(10)  |  17(34.0) | 28(56.0)  | 4.46  |
| 4 | My religious studies class encourages me to think critically about religious beliefs and practices.  | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 1(2.0) | 19(38.0)  | 30(60.0)  | 4.58  |
| 5 | Studying religious subjects has positively impacted my values and ethical decision-making.  | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 0(00)  | 3(6.0) | 47(94.0)  | 4.94  |

***Key:*** *SD= Strong Disagree, D= Disagree, U= Undecided, A= Agree, SA= Strong Agree, F****=*** *frequency, %= Percentage.*

**Sources**: Field Data (2025)

**The topics covered in religious studies classes are engaging and interesting.** According to data from Table 3, 6% of the participants strongly disagreed that the topics discussed in religious studies seem engaging and interesting. This indicates that some participants find the subjects in religious studies to be boring and unappealing. In contrast, 42% agreed, and 52% strongly agreed, with a mean score of 4.34, that the topics covered in class are engaging and interesting. This suggests that while some participants appreciate the teachings found in religious studies, others do not.

Additionally, an interview with a Form Three Student from Secondary School X (SSS, X) supports this study. The student remarked,

*“The religion subject is very interesting since it provides answers about my Catholic faith and strengthens my beliefs. It also offers a chance to take a break through its pedagogical approach compared to other subjects. In this subject, we learn prayers that were previously unknown or unfamiliar to us, which helps us communicate with our Creator." (SSS, X)*

Overall, the participants in the study affirmed that the content found in textbooks for learning religious studies in secondary schools imparts catechetical teachings, making the subject both enjoyable and interesting. This is beneficial for their faith. The data also aligns with the goals set by religious educators involved in curriculum formulation for this subject, as outlined in the approved syllabus for Bible Knowledge (2023) by the United Republic of Tanzania, under the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, for Ordinary Secondary Education for Forms I-IV (tie.go.tz). Together with this (Gichanga et al, 2003), the study supported that the topics in Christian religious studies help learners to integrate other subjects of the school curriculum into a more mature view of themselves, their relationship to the environment, their fellow human beings and God. Furthermore, the subject provides a powerful motivation for right behaviour by blending spiritual, moral and social values which help in character development.

**The teachings from religious studies classes are relevant to everyday life and personal beliefs.** According to the data in Table 3, 4% of participants strongly disagreed that the teachings from the religion subject are relevant to daily life and personal beliefs. In contrast, 34% agreed, and 62% strongly agreed, resulting in a mean score of 4.54, indicating that the majority affirm the relevance of these teachings.

The study supports content found in the 2011 syllabus for teaching religion in secondary schools, which primarily emphasises religious practices in its implementation. Additionally, a personal communication on May 7, 2025, from a Form Two student at X Secondary School reinforced the positive impact of the religion subject on daily life. The student stated, “*The catechesis teachings are a guide for our lives since they show us the right path to follow to become good people and help sow the seeds of living one's faith through actions.”*

Overall, the study indicates that the old syllabus placed significant emphasis on the subject of religion, effectively contributing to the transmission of faith in everyday life. Additionally, the study.

**Teachers create a supportive and open environment for discussing religious topics.** As we continue to analyse the data presented in Table 3, it is clear that 6% of respondents agreed, while 94% of the respondents strongly agreed, with a mean score of 4.46, regarding the teachers’ ability to create a supportive and open environment for discussing religious topics. This suggests that students in these secondary schools managed by the Catholic Diocese of Morogoro, highly appreciate the efforts of the catechesis teachers, who nurture the students' thirst for knowledge about their faith through cooperation.Additionally, this study is supported by a personal communication from May 5, 2025, with a Form Four student from X Secondary School, who positively remarked, “*The teachers of the religion subject are so lovely. During the learning sessions, they make us feel loved and guide us gently, which encourages many of us to love the subject and actively engage with the teacher*.” Overall, these findings indicate that the participants understood the study well and acknowledged that the catechesis teachers are highly supportive, allowing students to openly discuss religious topics during class.

**Religion class encourages students to think critically about religious beliefs and practices.** According to the data shown in Table 3, 2% of participants indicated they were unsure of their responses and therefore remained undecided. In contrast, 38% agreed and 60% strongly agreed, resulting in a mean score of 4.58, indicating that the religion class promotes critical thinking about religious beliefs and practices. This perspective aligns with the topics outlined in the 2011 syllabus from the TEC, which emphasizes that students should recognize and apply the foundations of revelation in their daily lives, value the Sacraments of the Church, engage in various prayers of the Catholic Church, appreciate and reflect on redemption history, and embrace the concept of sainthood. Furthermore, one student from Secondary School X (SSS, X) expressed this sentiment during a personal communication, stating:

*During religion class, the subject encourages us to think critically and prompts us to ask questions about religious matters and our practices. The importance of prayer and virtuous living in our everyday lives helps us become better people and good citizens." (SSS, X)*

**Studying religious subjects has positively impacted values and ethical decision-making.** The data presented in Table 3 indicates that 6% of participants agreed and 94% strongly agreed, resulting in a mean score of 4.94, that studying religious subjects has a positive effect on one's values and ethical decision-making. This suggests a strong consensus on the role of religious education in secondary schools, highlighting its ability to enhance students' values and support ethical decision-making in their lives and society.

Additionally, the study revealed that participants recognise the contributions of religious practices to their decision-making processes, which is influenced by their ethical training in religious subjects. This perspective was echoed by a participant from Secondary School X, who stated:

*“I am proud of what I learn from the Bible Knowledge subject in my life. I have become different in collaborating with my friends at school and even during my vacations at home. This subject has changed my way of living; the advice I offer to my friends is now more positive and morally grounded, promoting respect for the dignity of every individual, as each of us deserves respect in one way or another”* (SSS, X).

The study revealed that catechesis and religious practices are taught in secondary schools using two different syllabi. The Bible Knowledge syllabus is based solely on catechesis, while the syllabus developed by the Catechesis Department of the TEC in 2011 focuses on teaching religious practices. Nevertheless, the primary aim of the Bible Knowledge subject is to provide catechesis at the secondary school level while incorporating religious practices as an integral part of the catechesis instruction. Furthermore, the study identified a need for a unified syllabus combining catechesis and religious practices content. This would help achieve the goals of catechesis for young people in secondary schools, particularly those managed by the Catholic Diocese of Morogoro. Heads of schools, catechesis teachers, and students acknowledged the significance of catechesis and religious practices in strengthening their faith and contributing to the development of moral discipline within schools and the broader community.

1. **Summary of Findings**

The findings of this study indicate that catechesis in secondary schools managed by the Catholic Diocese of Morogoro is effectively taught through the Bible Knowledge syllabus. However, it was noted that religious practices are not included in this syllabus; instead, they are covered in a separate syllabus from the Department of Catechesis of the Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC). Furthermore, the study found that there is a need for the Department of Catechesis to integrate the religious practices into the Bible Knowledge syllabus. By doing so, the teaching materials for Bible Knowledge would also encompass religious practices, thereby enhancing the overall instruction in catechesis. It is essential to address catechesis in conjunction with religious practices since they are closely related. Additionally, the study revealed that some catechism teachers recognise the importance of including religious practices in their teaching. They suggested creating a unified syllabus incorporating both catechesis and religious practices, as these teachings are interrelated and essential for secondary school students.

1. **Conclusion and Recommendation of the Study**

The study revealed that the content found in the religion textbooks used in Catholic secondary schools follows two different syllabi. Therefore, it is recommended that catechesis and religious practices be integrated into a single, cohesive syllabus for implementation in secondary schools. Additionally, the teaching of catechesis requires well-prepared and dedicated teachers. It is suggested that catechesis teachers deepen their understanding of the pillars of Catholic faith so they can confidently and knowledgeably address questions related to Catholicism. Furthermore, it is recommended that catechesis teachers possess at least a degree in catechetics to respond to inquiries about the Catholic faith effectively. Qualifications are essential for teaching, and religion classes in secondary schools are as important as other subjects. Consequently, catechesis teachers must hold a Diploma in Education with a focus on religious studies or a higher qualification, rather than relying on individuals with only a standard seven educations to teach Bible Knowledge in secondary schools.

**10. DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)**

I/We (Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of this manuscript.

**CONSENT**

As per international standards or university standards, Participants’ written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

**Competing interests**

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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