

CAN RELIGION TRANSFORM HUMAN BEHAVIOUR? A REVIEW OF IMPACTS OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES ON MORAL DEVELOPMENT IN KENYA

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Over the last decades, a question of whether religion affect moral development, has been in the minds of many people. Despite the fact that one can discern right and wrong, good and but even without becoming religious, the role of religious studies in moral development should not be over emphasized. Some characters of the current youth need modification especially when they are still going to school. The world outside school is nowadays characterized by corruption, terrorism, wickedness, drunkenness among other vices. If left untamed and un-oriented to religious beliefs, then school products might be disaster to the societies. The study used document analysis to determine the role of religion in human life; assess the relationship between religious studies and development of human morals and evaluate the extent religious awareness affect the morality. The study relied heavily on the already published literature that we reviewed for the relevant information that was needed.

Globally, education is considered key in character building. Schools and other learning institutions shape individual character, way of thinking and behaviour. The subjects offered in schools may also orient live to particular direction as individuals may acquire skills in various fields they are exposed to. It is almost everyone's expectation that school going children and students are well behaved based on the good characters being taught in schools.

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The importance of religious education cannot be over emphasized. It becomes an issue of concern when students' moral deteriorate and start engaging in things that negatively affect the whole community. An example of such cases is the murder of a two-year-old child by two ten-year-old boys in February 1993 as was stated by Jennings (2003). The global concern about the young people's morals was also revealed by a report on a Conservative Party meeting (Times 6 March 1993) which referred to a 'national debate in the wake of the James Bulger murder. As stipulated by Jennings (2003), the article stated that Conservative backbenchers and school inspectors criticized religious education syllabuses as being too vague and not reflecting the mainly Christian tradition of the country. This was emphasized by John Patten referred advocated for inclusion of religious education to play a major role in teaching children the difference between right and wrong. Further, he posited that he would be conferring with leaders of the Christian churches and other faiths to decide how best to use religious education to improve the moral values of the nation's children.

Perception on religious studies has been that it only develops students spiritually but not affecting the general character of individuals. In an article in the Daily Telegraph (11 March 1993) David Pascall, then chairman of the National Curriculum Council, agreed with Patten's views of taking religious studies serious in schools. Pas-

call asserted that religious education was often marginalized in schools and the main purpose of religious education was to do with addressing the spiritual and moral needs of young people. He advocated for the improvement of the quality of the subject in order to contribute to the spiritual development of pupils and a harmonious and tolerant society.

Morality is defined as the philosophical study of human codes of behavior that are acceptable in a specific group of people at a specific time and territory (Ndung'u, 2014). Ndung'u posited that morality plays a vital role in shaping the personality features of an individual. Some of the determinants of individual's social status include: good values, strong beliefs, altruism and pro-social behavior. Development and nourishment of relationship is also dependent on dint of moral values. According to Ndung'u (2014), the values like justice, fairness, honesty, truth and courtesy are acceptable and favorable for all human beings irrespective of their cast and creed.

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) (1988) posited that moral maturity is more than just knowing what is right. It provides that there are many people in the world who discern right but still opt to set moral considerations aside when they find it expedient. Similarly, it stipulated that one should be able to possess the will and deeply care about morality in order for him/her to be considered moral. He/she should be competent and in possession of habits needed to translate moral judgment and feeling into effective moral action. According to Bull (1996) a person perceived to be moral should be one who portrays rationality, independence, responsibility, maturity and altruism.

Bronfenbrenner (1994) established that moral development of student is influenced by social factors includes micro-systems, macro-systems, meso-systems and exo-systems. Besides the social factors, Plato in Burnyeat (2009) posited that culture is also one of the variables that gives rise to moral character of an individual. He argued that majority of people are incapable of resisting the voice of culture that surrounds them. Consequently, their perceptions, values and beliefs mirror those of the surrounding culture. This was affirmed by Summer (1993) who contended that moral values are purely the inventions of society and not individual people and that human beings

are products of their cultural surrounding. Eckensberger and Burgard (1983) viewed culture as being central and unique to humans and an integral part of psychological processes and structures. Fraser (2008) asserted that culture defines the meaning of what and how individuals think, feel and behave.

In Kenya, there has been need for a well modeled society and coherent individuals. Various commissions of education such as Ominde Commission (Kenya Education Commission) of 1964 have been established with main goal of improving education and moral values of all individuals. Offering relevant education that meets the needs of the society has been the aim of education in Kenya. The commissions established advocated for and recommended the teaching of ethics in schools either as part of religious studies or as a separate subject which would provide young Kenyans with ethical education and training (Ndung'u, 2014). The influence of religion on attitudes towards moral development has drawn attention of many actors in the world. The World Bank for example has a Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics; the World Faiths Development Dialogue on the other hand works on best moral behavior development. According to Nussbaum (2006), several international faith-based organizations have undertaken work on anti-social behavior. This includes Christian Aid, Tear fund and Islamic Relief. The intertwinement of belief, religion and morality was established by Mwikamba (2003) who argued that morality and belief depend on religion and are part and parcel of one another. Morals and religious beliefs have their ultimate basis and authority in God; in turn it influences their conduct which concurrently influences society at large.

Globally, many people have raised questions on the effect of religion on moral development of an individual. These kind of questions come when people witness unique behaviours which are not expected from members of the society including religious leaders and the youth. Violence, corruption, cheating, abortion and other activities associated with terrorism are among some of the issues that raise concern. Education has been at the center of human development. For man to be considered a useful resource he has to undergo some learning process that ensures that he becomes modeled and

character modified. Society also depends on the school finished products. When a society sends a child to school, hope is developed on the finished product he/she will eventually become after school. Some individuals have turned to curses and not blessings to the society. Being a curse or blessing to the society after school sometimes depends on the environment on which the child or learner is exposed to and the subjects that the child took. Terrorism and unbecoming behaviour among young members of the society raises concern not only locally but globally. It has become easier for the youth to join bad groups and do the un-expectable. Religious studies has been considered to be contributing to moral development in schools. Morally up-right members of the society are considered blessings to such societies.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The fact that people perceive and wonder why self-confessed religious nations such as Christian nation has not become better country in terms of morality. The nations are still characterized by gambling, abortions, corruption, cheating, and killings among other immoralities. Consequently, a lot of questions are being raised about immorality in the minds of many people. The question of whether religion has no influence to the moral life of people has been asked severally especially when people witness things that threaten their lives. Some nations that are perceived or characterized with little or no religion are sometimes said to be advanced less corrupt (Abun, 2012). It is based on such arguments that the study is necessitated. This study therefore intended to examine the effect of religious studies towards development moral lives. Abun argued that many students come from different religious communities and most parents belong to specific religious communities. What remain unanswered is whether religious studies affect the morality. The results of the study might be used to reassess the religious practices at home, and other schools. It might also be used by schools to revisit ethics instructions/strategy and religious practices in the schools.

THE CONCEPT RELIGION AND ITS ROLE IN MORAL DEVELOPMENT

The word religion was derived from a Latin Latin word “religionem” (nom. “religio”) which means respect for what is sacred, reverence for the gods, obligation, the bond between man and the gods”. It therefore follows that it has more connection with Godly or ‘godly’ matters. Previous scholars such as Abun and others defined religion as a system of belief and practice that accepts a “binding relationship to such a being or beings”. Abun (2012) emphasized on the necessity to first understand the role of religion in human life before proceeding to look at its impacts on moral development in individuals. It therefore implies that religion is a belief in the existence of gods, sacred beings and their relationship with men. It therefore provides linkage between gods and men. Further religions also connect men with other fellow men.

Through religious studies we are enlightened of the existence of God that we should worship as our provider and protector. Similarly we are enlightened of God who is the creator of the Heavens and the earth and the giver and controller of life. Our beliefs in the existence of God is also strengthen during religious studies where we are oriented to the biblical teachings about creation and the fall of man and how salvation of man was made possible through love that not only unites man with God but with fellow beings. Therefore religion builds the bond between man and God and between man and other men i.e. it is a binding relationship between sacred gods and man. The sacred gods become the centre of religious studies. It is the unifying factor in a religious community (Hare, 2006).

Strong linkage exists between religion and life as Aristotle in his *Eudemian Ethics* once postulated that the goal of man’s life should be contemplation and service to the god. Previous scholars argued that man becomes like what he contemplates. It therefore follows that when a man contemplates God he tries to become like him (sacred). Aristotle further emphasized that the best thing human may desire is to become god-like which involves thinking about god and things that last forever. According to Aristotle god should be likened to a magnet that draws people by this attractive power to live the best kind of life possible for us (Hare, 2006).

Kumar (2008) posited that religion is purposefully meant to give a new direction to human life style. This involves consideration of the immediate future and contemporary point of view. It has been perceived that religion contains many eternal values as basis of direction out of which one remained principal, eternal life. Religion aims at improving human and society welfare through creation proper understanding between god and man and between man and man. The need for religion in the societies and schools cannot be overemphasized.

Reza (2010), further underscored the religion role in human life through the way he defined it. According to him, religion is “all around movement in the light of faith in Allah (God) and a sense of responsibility for the formation of thought and belief, for the promotion of high principles of human morality for the establishment of good relations among members of the society and the elimination of undue discrimination”. It becomes clear in this definition that religion has a role to play in human morality. It implies that religion is meant for promotion of the principle of morality. Morality principles could include among others: righteousness, peace, justice, virtuousness, tolerance, peace, honesty, brotherhood. Reza further asserted that if these virtues are not upheld, then human life will lose normalcy and order. He posited that despite the fact that these virtues can be acquired without religion, their meaning might be easily lost. That the virtues can only be maintained if they are based on internal feelings and religious beliefs which are beyond ordinary law as it always believed that it is God who cultivates the values within man and impels him to automatic righteousness and adherence to duty.

Durant in his “Pleasures of Philosophy”, rubbished morality without backing from religion. As cited in Reza (2010), Durant refers to morality without backing of religion as arithmomancy. This implies that it loses its sense of obligation. Barua (2008), established the role of religion which in India, is referred to as ‘Dharma’. Dharma is the greatest sustaining force or the binding force of the society. This affirms a similar role of religion in Christian society. Similarly, Barua provide the goal of Dharma which is to create mental and spiritual fellowship among all men and to regulate its

relation with all living beings (Abun, 2012). In Hinduism, Gandhi which is considered the most tolerant and liberal religion, contains ethical and spiritual outlook which provides that the chief value of Hinduism lies in holding the actual belief that all lives is one. They believe that all lives come from one universal source which is Allah (God).

Da'wah Group, (2010) posited the similarities in Islamic and Christian religions. For instance Qur'an provides similar virtues as those taught in Christianity (Bible). Some of these virtues include: generosity, patience, righteousness, kindness, contentment, courtesy, gratitude, humility, purity, good speech, respect, tolerance, justice, mercy, among others. Further, Zahid (2010) outlined Zakat as one of the five pillars of Islam which encourages Muslims to look beyond themselves and help the needy through giving alms to the poor particularly during the month of Ramadan. This symbolizes the significant role played by Muslim religion in teaching people on how to treat others.

According to Jakoblich (2007), Christianity is about God's love, relationship with human and how humans relate with each other as God became human to save mankind from because of love. Love of God by human should therefore be natural. Religious education enable one to understand this and operate with a particular confinement of God as they try to do as God requires and not and they require. This is amplified in God's commandments which are taught in schools. For instance, Jesus' teaching of Love provides that you should love your God with all your mind, heart and soul and love your neighbour as you love yourselves. According to Abun, such commandments are the source of inspirations on how Christians carry their live every day. Thus Christian moral life is based on trying to live and treat others with fairness.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT

According to Ngung'u (2014), morality which stems from moral development affects people in everyday life. He articulated that every individual has different morals which are instilled in them. Further, he posited that everyone develops his/her own mor-

als to live by. Ndung'u asserted that one is liable to live with consequences of every day's and the hardship that life brings if morality is kept at bay. It therefore follows that moral education must begin when a child is young.

Cohen and Rozin (2001) affirmed religion as a factor that greatly impacts on morality. This was further supported by Akinpelu (1981) who contended that religion and morality need each other and the two should not be seen as divorcees but as Siamese twins. Similarly, Greer (2013) as cited in Ndung'u (2014) defined religion as a system of beliefs, values and practices which guide the life of humanity and same time arises from a Supreme Being. On the other hand, Ninian (1989) established the linkage between religion and morality by defining religion as a six dimensional organism typically containing doctrines, myths, ethical teachings, rituals, social institutions and religious experiences of various kinds. In his Divine Command Theory, Fraser (2008) gives an instantaneous linkage between morality and religion which signifies duly the importance of a Supreme Being in morality. He posited that moral values are a creation of God's will and that human beings have always been directed on the moral values by God when he speaks to them directly, gives them special signs or reveals moral truths in the scripture.

Durkheim (2013) established the major functions of religion ensuring social cohesion, social control and provision of meaning and purpose. Gustafson (2012) also asserted that religion impacts on the moral life of individuals by stipulating the sort of person one should be. He further argued that religion gives an interpretation of particular circumstances of action. Religion helps in development of humanity by laying down values and standards. It also points on principles guiding human life (Tripathi, 2009). Religion has different aspects that can influence. Wangari (2014), stated that religious groups have taken precedence in moral development through lobbying for the introduction of Religious Education Programmes such as Christian Religious Education (C.R.E) in schools as part of the curriculum. According to Itolondo (2012) religious studies endeavors to shape an individual to fit in the society. Similarly, religion has influenced the lives of family organizations through religious groups

and as such have taken supremacy towards moral development. Stamps (2012) viewed parents as part of the family organization who influence moral development of their children hence, need to embrace them. Another determinant of moral development is ritual practices. This is evident as religious groups embrace rituals as part of their day today practices. The rituals are perceived to enhance moral development as was stipulated by Weinreich-Haste (1990). This scholar asserted that rituals can activate moral change. Religious beliefs are perceived to be associated with religious groups each of them has a set of what they believe as was posited by Adamson (2013) that religious groups often indoctrinate their followers with the beliefs and as such encourage people to lead a moral life.

The basis of religious education in schools is to help children learn the principles of morality. This was affirmed by Bull (1969) who emphasized on helping children to learn and develop the moral principles or rules to judge and make decisions. Bull further posited that morality develops in four stages. These include: anomy, heteronomy, socionomy and autonomy which is the highest level. He argued that for one to reach the last stage, some obstacles such as physical and mental punishment, authoritarianism, and indoctrination should be avoided. He established that any basis for moral education should consist of imparting those skills which are necessary to make good or reasonable moral decisions and to act on them.

Mavrodes (1986) contended that morality is bound to fail if there is no fundamental basis. He accentuated it is difficult to arrive at morality without integrating religion and any attempt to arrive at its basis independent of religion is bound to fail. According to him, secular ethics have no fundamental motive to be good since it is too superficial and lacks of metaphysics and a basis for values and obligations therefore cannot answer the question why one should be morally upright all the time. He argued that there is no basis for morality if one does not believe in life after death and salvation.

Jackson (2010) asserted that the basis for man's morality is in his belief in life after death and salvation which religion supports. He observed that religion supports the feeling of obligation to that which makes sacrifices worthwhile. Aminorishe (2014) posited that religion supports the hope in something better or richer which is to

come and makes being good and sacrificing worthwhile. According to Mavrodes, secular morality is inadequate method for providing reasons for people to be moral. Kaminer (1997) asserted that religion is essential to virtue. According to him, it is not a surprise to find faith touted as the solution to social ills. The relationship between religion and morality was also emphasized by Byron Johnson as cited by Jackson (2010). Johnson contended that there is a relationship between religion and moral values of individual persons. In his study as criminologist, he asserted that most delinquent crimes are committed by youngsters who have low levels of religious commitment. He argued that children who attended church become delinquent with far less frequency than those who do not. This was also supported by Myers who also contended that most benevolent people of the society are the ones who are involved in religious activity.

Barua (2008) established that it is difficult to maintain morality without religion. He contended that religion is a contributor to factors that shapes morality of individual persons. This was later backed by Gandhi who posited that religion and morality are inseparable and are bound up with each other. Relationship between religion and morality was also affirmed by Baier (2001) who posited that morality is valued by almost all the great religions of the world. Equally, he noted that morality is an expression of one's faith in God. Baier asserted in his book "If you love me, keep my commandments" that faith in God is a one of the requirements for morality. Similarly, in Lewis (1995), Nietzsche argued that when one gives up the Christian faith, he or she pulls the right to Christian morality out from under his/her feet. According to him, morality is by no means self-evident. In his view, morality stands or falls with faith in God.

The relationship was further affirmed by Lewis (1995) who also observed that morality begins with the character of God. Russel (1957) asserted that even though religion influences morality, its influence may take both sides of the coin i.e. may contain good and bad aspects. However, he noted that bad influence is caused by the wrong teaching which may be initiated by clergymen. According to Dixon (2008), religious beliefs are necessary to provide moral guid-

ance and standards of virtuous conduct in an otherwise corrupt, materialistic, and degenerate world. Rhodes (2010) also recorded discerning evil from good is only possible when one has infinite point which is absolutely good. In a similar view, Kelley, *et.al* (2008) revealed that there is an interactive effect for religion with deterrence efforts drinking in campus. Equally, Desmond *et al.* (2010) asserted that despite the strength of religiosity as a predictor of moral beliefs, the correlation is not perfect. This to some extent show their agreement that the relationship exists.

Corcoran *et al.* (2009) on a similar note recorded that individuals members of religious communities and regular attendants of church are more likely to be intolerant of crime. Powell *et.al.* (2007) established significant intervening factors that influence the effects of religion and tolerance of same sex marriages are the beliefs regarding morality and family. Deem (2005) established in his study that Theists got higher moral values than the Atheists in all indicators but it doesn't necessarily imply that Atheists have no moral values. Hauser (2006) affirmed this stating that both atheists and those with religious background show no difference in their moral judgments especially in an unfamiliar moral dilemmas. Aminorishe (2014) concluded that that our intuitive discernment of right and wrong operate independently from our religious beliefs. He further acknowledged that it is true religion strengthens and improve moral life.

EFFECTS OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES AND AWARENESS ON MORAL DEVELOPMENT

According to Ofsted (2003), moral development is the building of a framework of moral values which regulate the personal behaviour of individuals. He further stated that moral development involves the gaining of a sense of moral values from their experience of learning, enabling them to think and act responsibly. On the other hand, DeWitt (2002) postulated that moral development involves changes in thoughts, behaviours and feelings and also involves seeking to answer particular questions such as how individuals reason or think about moral decisions, how individuals behave in moral circumstances, how they feel about moral matters as well as what characterizes an individual's moral personality.

Kohlberg's theory (1976) defines moral development as the progresses through a series of stages that are discontinuous and hierarchical. He asserted that each new stage reflects a qualitatively different more adequate way of thinking than the one before it. This implies that the ones who should be more advanced in moral development on average are the older and more advanced thinkers. According to Erricker (2000), religious education may make a strong contribution to moral development through the study of religious and nonreligious groups by showing how values change overtime and within different concepts such as justice, truth, love rights and equality (Abun, 2012). He posited that moral development goes beyond the demands of the study of ethics as an intellectual discipline. This is because it involves personal reflexivity, engagement, and recognition of oneself as part of the community. Erricker asserted that it becomes difficult for children to decide how behave without their personal engagement in actual moral situations as they appear in real life and them participating in it. Thus, he described moral development as process through which young people gain a sense of moral values from their experience of learning, enabling them to think and act responsibly, courageously and compassionately towards themselves, other people, society and the environment.

According to Berk (2000), there are higher chances of children developing morally becoming successful learners. It is perceived that such children develop responsibility in themselves that enable to enquire, reason, think for themselves to process information, question and evaluate, understand how they learn and learn from their mistakes and are able to learn independently and with others (Abun, 2012). As religion imply respect in other ways, these children and students who are religious oriented are to be confident individuals, self-reliant. Their relationship with pothers is also not questionable and good relations is also part of religious studies. Erricker (2000) emphasized on how religious studies modify and make young people become responsible citizen who are able to work cooperatively with others while upholding respect, independence, rationality, altruism, maturity, integrity as well as appreciate the benefits of diversity which some of the aspects of moral development.

Berk (2000) acknowledged gradual development of moral responsibility among young people especially during childhood and adolescent (school going age). This was further articulated by Stamps (2012) who posited that all children need opportunities to demonstrate that they are responsible for their actions. Wangari (2014) postulated that despite the fact that the act of responsibility involves being trusted, making decisions and answering ones behaviour, lessons on responsibility should begin early and continue throughout childhood and adolescence. All these can be boosted through exposing the learner to religious studies that helps in character building. Similarly, Markham (2014) cited by Wangari emphasize on the need to give child guidance about moral principles and expected behaviour so as to enable them assume responsibility for their actions including making amendments and avoid repeat of the same. He posited that there is need ti give a child the tools to manage emotions and therefore behaviour. Responsible children build on their self-esteem thereby providing opportunities for success (Stamps, 2012). Consequently, the responsibility acquired while demonstrated influences the people around in that children are more likely to emulate responsibility when they see concrete examples (Ndung'u, 2014).

The other feature modified and influenced by religious studies is the sense of maturity. Wilder (2004) asserted that maturity develops from infant stage to childhood stage and to adult stage. He noted that the immediate family and the environment the child is exposed to such as schools, might influence their behaviour, character and the manner they perceive things and handle themselves. Further, he postulated that child stage is the time when children learn to do what they do not feel like doing and must sort out feelings from imagination to reality. Therefore the adults and immediate family is quite important at this stage since it is a development stage that needs feedback on guesses, attempts and failures as they learn and it is the time they are taught the big picture in life (Wilder, 2004).

Religious studies also build the character of independence among the learners. Frankel (1990) asserted that children who are securely attached as infants are more likely to show age appropriate

independence, curiosity and creative problem solving abilities during childhood and adolescence. In that cases role of the caregivers and adults around these young people at this age cannot be over-emphasized since it is a stage where a child needs to explore world independently within certain limits. It may be referred to as a consultation stage where the learner goes back to the caregivers for support when they feel afraid or threatened.

Religious studies promotes altruism among the learners. Tomasello (2004) established that children have a natural predisposition of the Altruistic behaviour. This may be developed morally to become an individual's character depending on what the learner is exposed to. Tomasello argued that children come up when they are naturally cooperative and helpful and as they develop, the spirit of cooperation is shaped by how they judge their surroundings and perceive what others think of them. Further, he articulated that children as they develop begin to worry more about what it is like and what it means to be a member of a group (Ndung'u, 2014). Consequently, they are driven to cooperation and a predisposition for helpfulness. Similarly, they also learn to be selective about whom to help, inform and share with, as they also learn to manage the impression they are making on others as was asserted by Ndung'u.

Rationality is another aspect of morality promoted by religious studies. Moshmann (2011) posited that rationality construes individuals as rational agents acting on the basis of their own interpretations, values and goals. Besides, he articulated that learners construct increasingly sophisticated conceptions of the nature of the mind including reflective understanding about such morally relevant phenomena as beliefs, desires, intentions and differences in perspectives. Australian Health initiative (2013) postulated that children's abilities for making decisions develop with experience and maturity hence should therefore be provided with chances to practice as well as with the structure and input to help them make decisions that are appropriate for their age and level of responsibility.

THEORIES OF RELIGION

According to Aminorishe (2014) theories of Religious Studies are coherently a body of explanation, rules, ideas, principles, and

techniques that are systematically arranged for comprehension. He asserted that these theories help “scholars evaluate and unravel the underlying principles of the study, of why religion exists, how it developed, what needs religion serves among the people group, especially when seen as distinct from actual practice.” Tweed (2006) posited that scholars in social science and humanities have understood theories in different ways. A helpful over-view highlights five primary notions of what theories are and how they function. The five primary notions include: (a) the idealizing notion which refines the deductive-nomological view by suggesting that the regularities not laws should be understood as ‘ideal types’, or the scholars’ idealizations of human motives; (b) deductive nomological view, which understands theories as systems of universal laws deduced from axioms and corresponding to mind-independent to external reality; (c) the constructivist view which goes further still in rejecting the idea of attaining universal laws as it challenges correspondence theories of truth and proposes the theory offers only “contextual understanding motives”, (d) the law-oriented view, which trumpets the same ideal but suggests we cannot identify universal laws but only “law-like regularities”; and (e) critical theory, which agrees with constructivists in their criticism of the deductive nomological approach but emphasizes power relations and ethical issues (Tweed, 2006).

Frank Whaling (2006) cited by Aminorishe posited that what constitutes religious study is the ‘notion that such a study is the objective and comparative study of religion.’ It therefore imply that in principle it is the study of all religions from a viewpoint not isolated within any one of them (Aminorishe, 2014). The study will focus on the following theories:

COGNITIVE THEORY

Cognitive theory is a psychological theory that attempts to explain human behaviour by understanding the thought processes. It is assumed that humans are logical beings who make the choices that are most sensible to them. In this theory Todd Tremelin, (2006), ‘The Cognitive Foundations of Religion’, gave an explanation of why people believe in supernatural beings and other specific in particular beings. He postulated that ‘gods are described not primarily as theological concepts or as social or cultural constructs but as the

products of human cognition'. He tried to justify this by referring people to the manner the brain functions. He contended that minds and gods are connected because supernatural beings as well as the religious system which they are part of are among the plethora of mental conceptions acquired, represented and transmitted by human brains. In other words, cognitive science of religion explains human religiosity. The theory provides that man can only accommodate religious ideas which his brain can precipitate. (Tremelin, 2006) posited that religious concepts can easily become personally compelling. Cognitive theory is one of the current trends to reckon with in religious studies.

RATIONAL CHOICE THEORY

In this theory, rationality is characterized by marked consistent and goal-related activity. The theory pictured religion as essentially a rational response to human needs. The title of this theory, Rational Choice Theory therefore emanated from such basis. Sociologists like Stark and Bainbridge who have applied this theory perceived religions as systems of compensators that relies on the supernatural being. According to Stark and Bainbridge only a supernatural compensator can explain death or the meaning of life (Stark and Bainbridge, 1996). Similarly, they contended that there exists four models of cult formation which includes: Normal Revelations model, Social Model, the Psychopathological Model, and Entrepreneurial Model of which they asserted that one of the reasons for religious plurality, which is a trend in religious practices in modern times, is the inclination to these models. It therefore follows that this theory is perceived part of trends responsible for religious proliferation.

THEORY OF RELIGIOUS ECONOMY

This involved the application of rational choice theory as a theory of religion. The theory of religious economy stated that the economic model of supply and demand has a significant role in the development and success of organized religions (Muller, 1975 cited in Aminorishe 2014). According to Muller, a religious economy consists of a market which in this case is demand for religion and a supply of various religious organizations. He posited that a competitive free market or economy enables religious suppliers to meet the

demands of various religious consumers. In order for activities in the marketplace to be stimulated, an array of religions and religious products must be offered and this is how various religious organizations compete for followers in a religious economy. The theory contended that the more the religions the more likely the population is to be religious. Aminorishe (2014) disagreed to some extent with this theory arguing that, despite the application of this theory to a particular period and culture, the theory is perfectly general and has implications for behaviour in other cultures and other periods in history.

SENSITIVITY THEORY

This has been considered a comprehensive, psychological theory of religion. It emphasizes the attraction of people to religions based on their felt needs. The theory posited social contact, power, acceptance, idealism, physical exercise, independence, order, saving, curiosity, honour, family, status, vengeance, tranquility, romance and eating as the 16 basic propensities in man that impact the psychological appeal of religious behaviour. Steven Reiss, postulated that idealism, acceptance, honour, and curiosity which are considered basic religious human needs can explain why certain people are attracted to religion (Reiss, 2000). He posited that the quest for independence is a key psychological desire that separates religious and non-religious people. Further he established that religious people express a strong desire for interdependence with others and valued honour (mostly Christians) whereas the non-religious however show a stronger need to be self-reliant and independent. To him, people embrace the aspects of religious imagery that express their strongest psychological needs and deepest personal values.

VIEWS OF SOME SCHOLARS IN THEORIES OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard (1902–1973) did not see the primitivity in Azande and Nuer people that he was studying. Similarly, he did not propose a grand universal theory but rather did extensive long-term fieldwork among "primitive" peoples whose culture and religion he studied. Pritchard opted for detailed ethno-

graphical study of a specific tribe and their religion to form a theory because of the existence of many unverified speculation about the origins of various religions. He proposed a theory of the religion of the particular people group he studied so as to circumvent generalization which a fault so obvious in other theorists.

Karl Marx (1818–1883) postulated that the dynamics of society was driven by economics. In his perception, religion originated from alienation and aided the persistence of alienation. He indicated that “Religion is supportive of a status quo in correspondence with his famous saying that religion is opium of the people”. The existence of certain religious groups for instance the liberation theologians made his perception illogical to some extent. A good example of such criticism comes from Milton Yinger who posited that “opium is the religion of the people” (Yinger, 1970: 163), which is a direct opposite of Marx’s thesis in this regard (Aminorishe, 2014). To Marx, religion is a source of happiness despite it being illusory and temporary, or at least a source of comfort. He dismissed the fact that religion is part of human culture.

Edward Burnett Tylor and James George Frazer. According to Edward Burnett Tylor (1832–1917), religion is belief in supernatural beings this belief originated as explanations to the world. To him, this belief grew out in an attempt to explain life and death concepts. His theory assumed that the psyches of all peoples at all times are almost the similar and the explanations in cultures and religions become more sophisticated through monotheist religions such as Christianity. He pointed on backward practices and beliefs in modern societies as ‘survivals’ but failed to explain why they survived.

James George Frazer (1854-1941) in his ‘Comparative Religion’ that followed Tylor’s theories, distinguished between magic and religion. Frazer posited that the use of magic is to influence the natural world in the primitive man’s struggle for survival. According to him, magic is dependent upon an uncritical belief of primitive people in contact and imitation. Further, Frazer contended that, to primitive people, magic worked through laws. On the other hand, he defined religion as faith that the natural world is ruled by one of more deities with personal characteristics with whom can be pleaded, not by laws. Despite these attempts of explanation, Tylor’s and

Frazer's theory falls short of adequacy in addressing the social aspect of religion in that they consider religion and animism as purely intellectual moves with the social aspects being simply secondary. Aminorishe argued that, religion has more than what Tylor and Frazer revealed as its intellectual component in an attempt to explain things.

Emile Durkheim (1858 – 1917) considered concept of the sacred to be defining characteristic of religion, not faith in the supernatural. He perceived religion as a reflection of the concern for society. Similarly, perceived religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things. He looked at religion as social function. He asserted that religious beliefs are symbolic expressions of social realities whose absence or lack of their service as a foundation, the beliefs become meaningless.

Max Weber's (1864-1920) major contribution was development of theories that emanated from the sociological classifications of religious movements. Weber recognized strong social component of religion. Weber emphasized on interaction between society and religion where he introduced concepts of Charismatic authority, Ideal type, a hypothetical "pure" or "clear" form, and Church sect typology, widely used up to date in the sociology of religion.

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