

The Role of African Traditional Religion in Nurturing the Moral Values of Students in Kenyan Secondary Schools

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Abstract: The African Traditional Religion (ATR) is part and parcel of the African Heritage which goes back many hundreds and thousands of years. It is a product of the thinking and experiences of our forefathers. The significance attached to ATR in the Christian Religious Education (CRE) syllabus has greatly reduced over the years and the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) reports clearly portray that students have been performing poorly on questions relating to ATR yet it has a significant role to play in instilling moral values in the society today. Descriptive survey design was used in the study. Concurrent mixed methods is adopted in the study. This involves merging quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem. The study used questionnaires which consisted of both close and open-ended items and interview schedule. Stratified random sampling was used to select 350 students and 80 teachers from rural and urban-based schools in Uasin Gishu County. Simple random sampling was used to select students from Form Three class and teachers from the sampled schools. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics which includes means and standard deviation whereas Qualitative data was analysed thematically. It is notable that ATR has helped to instil moral values in the learner such as respect and responsibility. There is need for the church, family and the school to work together in nurturing moral values in the young people.

Keywords: African Traditional Religion, Moral Values, Students, Kenya Secondary Schools

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I. INTRODUCTION

The African Traditional Religion (ATR) is part and parcel of the African Heritage which goes back many hundreds and thousands of years. It is a product of the thinking and experiences of our forefathers. The African Traditional Religion (ATR) content in the Christian Religious Education (CRE) Syllabus is the last topic in Form One and ushers in the New Testament teaching. The positioning of ATR between the old and the New Testament justified the belief that Africans were prepared for Christ's gospel. The Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) CRE paper 1 covers the Old Testament and African Religious Heritage. This paper consists of six questions and out of the six, only one question is on ATR. This confirms that ATR has continued to lose prominence in the CRE syllabus yet there is a lot to learn from the traditional African society which can help change the moral decadence in our society today. Currently, there is a sense of irresponsibility in the family from both the parents and children. In schools, some students lack moral values such as honesty, hard work and respect. Greater emphasis on ATR particularly on moral values in the CRE syllabus can change our society for the better if the learners internalize these teachings. This paper examines the role of ATR in nurturing moral values of students in secondary schools in Kenya.

Moral Education among African Indigenous Societies

Human beings are born neither moral nor immoral; the society is, therefore, charged with the responsibility of transmitting what is considered to be right and wrong to its new members (Kibera & Kimokoti, 2007; Hurlock, 2010). The African people who belonged to various communities were characterized by their ethnicity, common language, beliefs, customs and traditions. Each had their own set of moral standards but all African communities had more or less similar goals with regard to moral education. The African indigenous forms of education aimed at equipping individuals with relevant knowledge and skills and proper codes of conduct that would enable them to properly integrate into society. Moral values emphasized were communal in nature (ibid.).

According to Kenyatta (1953), an individual who was self-centred was considered to be anti-social; such a person was treated with suspicion and not expected to prosper. Erny (1981) also states that, in Chad, all goods were shared and no one was supposed to keep to themselves more than they distributed to their family.

This is totally different from the modern society where there is a lot of individualism and nobody cares if the person next door has had any food to eat or not. Ocitti (1973) observes that hospitality was prized among the Acholi of Uganda. The Acholi people maintained that hospitality profited the one who gave more than the beneficiary. This belief portrays a link between ATR and Christianity since the latter equally teaches that one who gives receives more blessings than the receiver.

African societies also discouraged anti-social behaviours. African societies censured uncontrolled sexual conduct. Sexual relationships in most of the African Traditional societies were confined to marriage. Sexual abuses such as adultery, rape, fornication and incest were unacceptable and people involved in these offences needed to be cleansed in a public ceremony (Kibera & Kimokoti, 2007). Fidelity was treasured in African traditional societies, especially that of the wife. Ocitti (1973) observes that among the Acholi people of Uganda, the qualities of a bride-to-be included fidelity and industriousness. Girls were trained to be honest and faithful to their husbands. Women who could not control their sexuality were considered unfit for marriage.

The family institution was sacred and everything was done to ensure that it remained intact. A family was not an individual's affair. Children had to be born in a family and grow up in it. Having children out of wedlock was heavily censured. African traditional societies believed that a family was the best environment to nurture children and bring them up in acceptable moral conduct (Kibera & Kimokoti, 2007). Among the Agikuyu, a man was not allowed to marry unless he had accumulated enough wealth as evidence that he would be able to cater for the material need of his family (Kenyatta, 1953).

Moral education of children started as soon as they were born. The mother impressed on the child the type of behaviour that was expected of him/her as he/she progressed from childhood to adulthood. Through oral literature, the mother passed on to their young offspring the cultural heritage of the family clan and tribe. As the individual grew up graduating from one stage to another, they were expected to acquire and internalize the values that were prescribed by the society. The father was an agent of moral education and discipline. Children took their fathers more seriously than their mothers in matters of discipline. The authority of the father was strengthened by his religious position (Kibera & Kimokoti, 2007).

Indeed, as Kenyatta (1953) states, the father was the proper means of communication and fellowship with the ancestors. Man as the head of the family was regarded as the priest of the household and this entitled him to offer sacrifices. The institution of the family was instrumental in moral education of children. The family stood for values of the society and ensured their children adopted them. Children who deviated from what was expected or disobeyed their parents risked being cursed by them. Fear of being cursed enhanced obedience from children.

Traditional educators used various methods of instruction. The informal method of instruction included learning through play, oral literature, dance, folk-songs and proverbs. Proverbs were used to convey precise moral lessons, warnings and advice to children. As soon as children acquired communication skills at the age of two years, they were made to conform to the morals and customs of the society. Bad habits in form of disobedience, cruelty, selfishness, bullying, theft and telling lies were not tolerated. Verbal warnings and corporal punishment were also used to enforce discipline (Kibera & Kimokoti, 2007).

Informal methods of instruction involved subjecting children to work activities. Children learnt by doing and working hand-in-hand with adults. This kind of learning prepared them for their future roles as husbands and wives. Formal methods of instruction involved theoretical and practical learning of skills. Learning through apprenticeship was formal. Parents who wanted their children to acquire some occupational training sent their children to work with craftsmen such as potters, blacksmiths and basket makers. Formal instructions were also given in the constant corrections and warning to children. These included some aspects of domestic work, cultivation, teaching children the customs and manners of eating, how to behave towards relatives and different people of varying ages, preparation for marriage and handling parental and marital obligations (ibid.).

African Communities believe that their future depends on the ethical conduct of their members. Education in ethical conduct that promotes the good of the community plays a decisive role in this case. The methods used to teach virtues vary in accordance with the age of the children and young people; for example, the fairy tales and legends that are told to children again and again with special emphasis on the vices and virtues of the protagonists. The children are to internalize these as lessons for daily dealings with their fellow human beings (Bujo, 2001). Proverbs play a decisive role in communicating ethics and correct behaviour. For example, the Bahema in Eastern Congo say "if a tree is not set in an upright position very early, it remains crooked forever." This means that if a child is not corrected, it will be too late for him/her to learn correct behaviour when he is an adult. Proverbs can easily be learned. Young people learn proverbs through fellowship with older, wise persons in a society in which the spoken word is more important than the written, fellowship with old, experienced persons is an essential task in life since the young person who is growing up must not only learn how to master life, but also acquire the art of speaking (Bujo, 2001). Proverbs must be continually

expounded and actualized anew. In this process, present-day life is enriched by new proverbs drawn from recent history and experience.

In the traditional setting of Nigeria, traditional moral values are what gave Nigerians distinct cultural personalities. These values include respect for human life and property, discipline, hospitality, hard work, fear of God and good leadership. Ushe (2011) argues that these values contribute to the development of a country. Underdevelopment is a product of negative values such as materialism, greed, nepotism, bribery and corruption, fornication and adultery. Traditional moral values produces good and sustainable development in the society that is value based and cuts across all spheres of societal values such as integrity, Justice, honesty, hospitality and patriotism.

In traditional African society, conceptions of right behaviour and of sin differ. Incest, murder, theft, adultery, covetousness, injury to kinsmen or neighbours, bearing false witness and failing to honour parents or care for dependants are condemned, but they are variously defined. For instance, among the Nyakyusa of Tanzania, honouring one's father included never eating with him, or joining him beer or even sleeping in the same village (Wilson,1971). The basis of morality among the Nyakyusa was the fulfilment of obligations to kinsmen, living and dead, and to neighbours, showing respect to seniors and fulfilling obligations to dependents. It was morally wrong to neglect to celebrate traditional rituals like not slaughtering cows at a funeral and not offering beer to the shades. Greed and conspicuous wealth were commonly judged as wrong. For example, fertility in field was thought of as limited and the woman whose field was unusually productive was believed to have enticed away the fertility from a neighbour's land by using medicines or by starting to plant before her neighbour. The rule was that those whose fields adjoined must keep in step for certain crops they must cultivate, plant and reap together, lest she who started first steal the fertility from her neighbours. In the west, especially in the United States, success in economic competition is approved and encouraged. In Africa, it was not (Wilson, 1971).

Indigenous African Education was largely informal and participatory, the young learnt by participating in activities alongside their elders. The older generation would pass on to the young the knowledge, skills, modes of behaviour and beliefs deemed necessary for them if they were to play their social roles in adult life and contribute to the continued existence of society. They were taught their roles in the all-embracing network of kinship relations and the rights and obligations connected with it (Busia, 1964). Children learnt by doing. The methods of learning were largely informal, as Ocitti (1973) indicates about the Acholi of Uganda. There was no systematic teaching in the classroom style by specially trained teachers. Everybody was a teacher and experience was the most important teacher. At all stages of growing up, attention was focused on the desirability of learning as against the desirability of teaching (Ocitti, 1973).

Customs and example were the principal teaching methods in the educational process in which the community had a vital role to play. Education was seen as a collective responsibility, a task of the entire village community. The child was in the centre of this education system and the nuclear and extended families were the primary agents for instructing the youth. They would teach them what the community regarded as good and evil and how they behaved would affect their families.

After the first years of depending on its parents, the child would start to participate in some sort of social life from about the age of six. The final stages of its education would take place in and by the community itself from the age of fifteen and according to sex. Religious life was closely tied up with most other aspects of society whether these were political, economical, social or educational. Religion pervaded all activities and relationships and education inculcated a religious attitude to life; reverence towards nature and unknown universe. Customs and traditions played an important role and instructions started early in life in the form of participation in rituals and ceremonies which a sense of dependence on God and spirit were expressed (Busia, 1964).

The task of explaining and imparting desirable religious knowledge, practices and observations was entrusted to the parents. Parents were expected to not only set good examples but also be custodians of ethics and social customs as well as of religious observances (Ocitti, 1973). Instructions in African social norms would not be complete without the knowledge of the place of ancestors in the fabric relationships. Indigenous education emphasized spiritual and moral ways of living, because the ancestors are the living dead (Osaf-Gyima, 1974). Africans revered their dead ancestors because they believed that souls of persons retained functional roles after death. These functional roles were believed to affect the living.

Ocitti (1973) notes that as the Acholi children watched the numerous religious ceremonies, they were made to understand that the clan shrines were the focal point of the unity of the clan where all its members gathered to offer blood, meat, beer and prayers to the ancestors whenever danger threatened the whole chiefdom or clan group. These way children learnt a lot about the social organization of the clan and the laws that governed life and little by little, they would learn to adjust themselves to their spiritual environment. The social relationships in which individuals lived constitute links of authority indicating the proper places of individuals

and prescribing courses of conduct for them. Man lives in a moral community and his behaviour is prescribed by relationship (Parrinder, 1969).

Dzobo (1975) observes that the value systems of African societies are based on a number of principles summed up as follows:

- i. Life is the greatest thing in the whole world.
- ii. Man's humanity has an inalienable worth.
- iii. The good of the individual is a function of the good of the community.
- iv. The solidarity of the extended family is supreme.
- v. The universe is friendly and this implies a belief in a benevolent creator, God.

Value teaching was considered an important part of a child's education. It was entrusted to the appropriate bodies and closely linked to religion. Some of the occasions which were used to teach the young included festivals and customary rites, family gatherings and planting and harvesting occasions, installation of chiefs and funeral ritual observance (Dzobo, 1975).

The relationship between education and culture is considered of vital importance by all African scholars. Therefore, in spite of its weaknesses and shortcomings in the light of modern times, it would be a mistake to ignore the cultural values inherent in the traditional systems (Haar *et al.*, 1992). The differences between the modern education and the traditional one is that whereas in the old education system the family played a central role in the formation of the child, in modern times, this role has been taken over by the school. Sanda (1972) describes the western type of education as an instrument of alienation, a vehicle for exploitation and the realization of cultural imperialism which together form part of the process of 'de-Africanization' of the African. Many Africans feel that western education has deformed their identity and often put the blame on the missionaries whom they view as responsible for the whole sale introduction into Africa of western values through schools (Haar *et al.*, 1992).

African religion is entirely a lived religion not a doctrinal one. It requires no formal induction. One is born into it and one learns it from childhood throughout one's life through normal socialization. Whatever one thinks, says or does is religious or at least can have religious implications. At all times in a person's life, a religious consciousness is always present. In no way is anything understood apart from the context of God, the ancestors and the spirits. No thought, word or act is understood except in terms of good and bad in the sense that such an attitude or behaviour either enhances or diminishes life (Magesa, 2008). The understanding of God in the African religion remains the standard against which the morality of individuals is measured. God represents the ideal moral qualities that the human spirit universally aspires to.

Ethical insight involves more than just the individual who depends on others to understand and discern moral norms. It has been rightly noted that homosexuality is rare in traditional black Africa and the reason for this is precisely the communal dimension. A man-man or woman-woman relationship is against the natural law. The prohibition of incest has deep roots in the concept of community as well and is not to be legitimated (as in the west) on the grounds that incest is contrary to nature (Bujo, 2001). One who has sexual intercourse with his own relatives offends the natural feeling. The gravity of his action consists in the fact that both partners are unwilling to approach others outside their own family in order to exchange or share their blood with them.

In the traditional African Society, parents must be in good moral standing for the birth of a child to take place smoothly. A difficult or delayed birth indicates that a sexual taboo has been broken. A husband and expectant wife must avoid sexual intercourse for a specified time before birth. The couple should also avoid sexual intercourse during menstruation. Unfaithfulness of one or the other spouse, or an incestuous relationship results in a difficult delivery, still-birth, birth of an abnormal child or death of the child before it has been taken out and formally named. This is with reference to western Kenya (Magesa, 2008). African ethics is concerned with the significance of the community for the discernment and laying down of norms and for ethical conduct as a whole. Black African ethics goes beyond the concrete visible community to embrace the dead as well, indeed even those not yet born constitute an important dimension. This inalienable fundamental principle of African ethics has been repeated in the proverbial formula 'I am because we are and because we are, I am too'. These principles articulate the conviction that one becomes a human being only in a fellowship of life with others. This does not refer exclusively to an ethnic group. The human person acts more effectively to the extent that he holds fast solidarity with those like himself. This shows a universal perspective since hospitality, daily friendship and dialogue with the members of other ethnic groups are vital laws from which no one is exempted (Bujo, 2001).

Indigenous education was essentially an education for living; its main purpose was to train the youth for adulthood within society. Emphasis was placed on normative and expressive goals. Normative goals were concerned with instilling the accepted standards and beliefs governing correct behaviour and expressive goals with creating unity and consensus. What was taught was related to the social content in which people were called to live. Among the Chagga of Tanzania, there was a course for initiative play. It consisted of representation of scenes from adult life by means of which the young were made familiar with the norms and

ideals expected from full responsible members of society (Sifuna & Otiende, 2009). Indigenous education emphasized social responsibility, job orientation, political participation, spiritual and moral values.

As concerns the curriculum, education grew out of the immediate environment, real or imaginary. From the physical environment, children had to learn about the weather, the types of landscapes as well as their associated numerous animal and insect life. An individual was to live and serve other people in accordance with the accepted manners, customs, laws, avoidance of taboos and a rigorous code of morality. Children were also taught their roles in the all-embracing network of kinship relationships and what their rights and obligations were within it. Every person in the homestead as well as the community knew his or her economic part in the daily activities of the community. The economic role of the children featured prominently in their training. From their earliest years, elders taught children how to adapt to their surroundings. Within the homestead and its environs parents and older relatives were responsible for the training in economic responsibilities. Learning by imitation played a big part as the smaller children followed the example of the older members in building, herding and hunting in the case of boys to sweeping, carrying firewood, water and cooking in the case of girls (Sifuna & Otiende, 2009; Datta, 1984).

Indigenous education inculcated a religious attitude of life. Religion, which was concerned with morality, gave support to the laws and customs of the community and its accepted rules of conduct which included courtesy, generosity and honesty. Religion had much to do with moral principles such as conduct of one individual towards another. It was also ethical since it covered and controlled the relations of the individual to the community. Individuals had to learn when to use as well as when to avoid the ancestral spirits together with other mysterious powers if they had to adjust themselves for the sake of their survival.

The mother educated all children in the early years but later the father took over the education of the male children while the mother remained in control of the females. After learning to walk, speak and count, the male child went to his father and male elders to begin his training for manhood. The female child continued to be taught by her mother assisted by other women in the community and began to learn how to live and work as a woman in the community (ibid.).

Role of Rites of Passage in Inculcating Moral Values

In traditional African communities, people learnt moral values through everyday activities and through the education provided. According to Gichaga *et al.* (2003), some of the moral values that the young people learnt as they grew up and during some rites of passage are:

Obedience: Children were taught the importance of obeying their parents and they were assured of receiving blessings. During initiation and marriage rites, this moral value was reinforced.

Respect: Young people were trained to respect their parents and their property. They were expected to respect all elders and customs of the community. When talking to elders, they were expected to use respectful language.

Honesty: Young people were taught the importance of telling the truth at importance of telling the truth at all times. They were trained to be honest with themselves and everything they did. In marriage, they were taught that it is important to be honest with their partners so that their marriage can work. Dishonesty was condemned in marriage.

Self-control: The young were taught the need to have self-control in all situations of life. As they become adolescents, they were educated on the need to have self-control in sexual matters. This moral value was particularly emphasized during initiation rites.

Mutual concern and sharing: The young people learnt that it is necessary to be concerned with the welfare of other people. This begins at the family level and extended to other members of the community. Those who were blessed with wealth shared with those who did not have. Through the kinship systems, people learnt the importance of treating one another as a brother or a sister.

Responsibility: Children were taught responsibility from the time they were young. Girls were left in charge of household chores while boys were required to look after animals or till land. They also took up responsibilities such as looking after parents when they grew old or when they become sick.

Courage: Parents and members of a community taught the young to be courageous so that they could be able to face life challenges. In some communities, the youth were expected to defend their people and property in case of an attack from an enemy: cowards were despised. For example, during initiation they were expected to bear the pain without crying or fear. Expectant mothers were also expected to deliver their babies without crying.

Hard work: Everybody in a community was expected to work hard in everything that they did. During marriage rites, prospective husbands and wives were taught the value of hard work in order to provide for their families.

Patriotism: Young people were trained to love themselves and their communities. Kinship systems promoted unity and cooperation.

Hospitality: The young learnt the importance of generosity and hospitality. During rites of passage, food and drinks were shared. During difficult times such as famine, those who had shared what they had with their

relatives. In some circumstances, a poor relative who did not have land to cultivate was given land by a rich relative.

Loyalty: Children and young people learnt to be loyal to their parents, relatives and to one another. For example, initiates who form an age set were expected to be loyal to protect one another. If one of the age mates misbehaved, other members of that age set had him/her disciplined.

Thankfulness: As a person went through the rites of passage, they learnt to be thankful to their parents and other members of the community. They also offered sacrifices and offerings of thanksgiving. They also learnt the value of thanking the ancestors through libations and other practices.

After the puberty rite of passage, these individuals were expected to think and weigh all aspects of a situation before talking or acting. The knowledge acquired prepared the youth for family life. They were properly instructed on the choice of marriage partners. They were advised to look for positive qualities in their prospective spouses such as honesty, cooperation, courage, tolerance and dependability. Young men were reminded that it was their responsibility to take care of the family, parents, weak and the elderly. They also got useful knowledge about medicinal herbs that could be administered to children and other people when they fell sick (Kibera & Kimokoti, 2007).

Although indigenous education seems to be declining, it is possible to find some elements of traditional African education in most African communities. The initiation institution has become quite fragile. The urban setting in Africa threatens traditional education sustenance. There is a decline of the role of the family in sustaining cultural values in urban environments. Indigenous education and western forms of education do not necessarily oppose each other. In both systems, children receive functional learning which largely prepares them to live and work on the land as well as specialized occupations.

The reason for the success of moral education in pre-colonial Africa was because the society had well defined goals on moral education. There was no room for deviants since effective methods of teaching were used such as lullabies, songs, proverbs and stories. Erny (1981) observes that members of African societies were compelled to lead morally upright lives for fear of being psychologically and physically removed from society. Showing disrespect to the ancestral spirits through misconduct left the individuals open to the wrath of the spirits. Everyone believed in the power of the spirits in punishing wrongdoers. Parents contributed to the success of moral education. The parents knew the type of education society expected them to give their children and they transmitted it with modesty. They also acted as models of good behaviour for their children. Discipline was achieved through rewards, encouragement, counselling and teaching. Children learnt to be disciplined by internalizing all the moral values contained in the songs, proverbs, riddles and folklores unconsciously.

At the beginning of the process of initiation, the initiates are usually physically removed from the mainstream of society and sent to a secluded place where they have practically no contact with the people from their community. The initial phase of the initiation process involves learning the values of cooperation and sharing and the central importance of belonging to a family, clan and a community as an integral and responsible member (Magesa, 2008). Clear verbal instructions are given concerning the duties, responsibilities and rights entailed in belonging to a community. The wisdom of the community is imparted on the young during this stage – the wisdom of the ancestors, religious wisdom and wisdom for living well and for the sake of the community.

The phase of formal instructions stressed five areas of ethical concern in the life of the individual and society: religion, the mystery of life and death, domestic and social virtues, sex and sexuality and forms of self-identity. The link of these five concerns was emphasized. The most central theme among them was the absolute value of life. Instruction was emphasized on sexuality since the transmission of life and the preservation of the life-force depend on sexuality. Coded language was used. When the initiates were healing or had completely healed, they were re-integrated into society. Much as initiation is still practiced in the society today, moral values are no longer emphasized as it was done in the African traditional systems.

Among the numerous taboos concerned with sexuality the two most significant are the taboo against intercourse during menstruation and taboo against incest. The expectations of the Mbuti of Zaire demand that a man with a pregnant wife or whose wife has just delivered a child, must not hunt until her blood has absolutely ceased flowing and she has put on her loin cloth. In the same way, the husband of a menstruating woman must stay in the camp and cannot hunt (Schapera, 1966).

It was a taboo to marry or have sexual relations with one's own parent or child, grandparent or half-brother, aunt, sister, half-sister, brother or half-brother aunt, uncle, the children of one's sister or brother or brother in law (Magesa, 2008). Taboos connected Africans to the benevolent creator, so they were an essential feature of the moral perception of African religion. The rhythms of the life-force of nature and of humanity were always in communion, influencing each other for good or evil, and the delicate balance between them was carefully preserved. The preservation of the balance ultimately depended upon human ethical behaviour, including the conservation of taboos. That is why such anti-life attitudes as enmity among members of a family lineage or clan inevitably affected the rhythm of the universe (ibid.).

Good behaviour on the part of human beings assures success and abundance in the spheres of nature. Abundance affirms that the moral codes of the community have been observed (ibid.). In African religion, wrong-doing relates to the contravention of specific codes of community expectation including taboos. Individuals and the whole community must observe these forms of behaviour to preserve order and assure the continuation of life in its fullness. During initiation process, these moral codes were imprinted on the body and mind of an individual in a practically unforgettable way. No moral code was too small or insignificant to be taken seriously.

Initiation aims at attaining a new birth and become a new person in order to contribute a new dynamism to the community and to pass on to the coming generations the virtues acquired through the new birth (Bujo, 2001). Prudence does not come with age; one must listen to the tradition or to one's ancestors. Understanding or reason alone cannot suffice to make a person capable of giving life – each one needs to be integrated actively into the community, seeking contact with its other members and in particular taking into consideration the experience of past generation.

Instruction in behaviour, tribal custom and religion could go on for years before the arrival of puberty. This instruction was increased and made more explicit in the initiation ceremonies and without passing through such rites, young people could take part in the adult life of the tribe. Modern life and ways have thinned down customs to a minimum and circumcision is the sole remaining rite. Dr. Leakey says that education and many other factors have reduced the initiation rites of the Kikuyu to nothing more than the hurried performance of circumcision (Parrinder, 1968).

Although the conception of morality in African Religion demands that both individuals and communities refrain from wrong-doing, it requires people to consciously pursue right behaviour (Magesa, 2008).

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in Uasin Gishu County. Most people living in Uasin Gishu today profess the Christian faith (SoftKenya, n.d.). Uasin Gishu County was chosen as a study area because it is a cosmopolitan region with diverse ethnic communities and religions. With the County headquarters being Eldoret town, the study was able to incorporate the views of both rural and urban based schools which made the sample representative. Eldoret being a major urban centre experiences vices such as robbery, murder, rape and prostitution.

The study applied the mixed methods approach. Descriptive survey was used. The target population consisted of secondary school CRE students and teachers from Uasin Gishu County. The Form Three class was targeted because the students have adequate knowledge and experience on ATR and in particular the sub topics that fall under ATR. At the time of this study, there were 1,100 Form Three CRE students. Form Four Students did not participate in the study since they were busy preparing for KCSE. There were 196 CRE teachers in Uasin Gishu County who, at the time of the study were teaching the subject.

Stratified random sampling was used to select the sample that participated in the study. Simple random sampling was used to select students from the sampled schools. From the target population of 1,100 Form 3 CRE students, a sample of 350 was selected to participate in the study. Using stratified simple random sampling procedure, a sample of 80 CRE teachers was drawn.

Methodological triangulation was used in the study. This involved the use of questionnaires and interviews. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze quantitative data. Data was coded and entered into the computer using Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS). The closed-ended items in the questionnaires were rated on a 5-Point Likert Scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. A response indicative of the most favourable attitude was given the highest score of 5 and that with the most unfavourable attitude was given the lowest score of 1. The data was presented in form of tables, means and Standard Deviation. Qualitative data was analyzed and presented thematically.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study sought to establish the role ATR plays in nurturing moral values. Students' perception of the role ATR plays in imparting moral values was analyzed from two perspectives. First, descriptive statistics were used to analyze students' perceptions on the structured questionnaire items. Secondly, a thematic analysis approach was used to analyze the unstructured questionnaire items.

Descriptive Analysis of Students' Perceived Role of ATR in Imparting Moral Values

Fifteen items were initially proposed to measure students' perceptions on the role of ATR in nurturing moral values. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) extracted twelve items which loaded highly on five factors (Table 1). The five factors were designated: Responsibility/Respect; Source of moral values; Maintenance of

traditional values; Social support, and Strengthening faith and belief. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.740 indicating that data were adequate for factor analysis.

Table 1: Underlying Factor Structure of the Role played by ATR in Nurturing Moral Values

| Factor Structure role of A.T.R. | Loading | Eigen values | Variance explained |
|---|----------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Responsibility/Respect | | 2.512 | 16.746% |
| The learning of ATR has made me more responsible in my undertakings | .583 | | |
| ATR has made me to be mindful about other people's welfare | .574 | | |
| ATR has helped me to acquire good virtues and respect others | .768 | | |
| ATR has made me more respectful and hospitable | .730 | | |
| Source of Moral Values | | 1.545 | 27.046% |
| ATR has changed me to become morally upright in the society | .587 | | |
| ATR has helped me adopt social behaviours such as sharing, helping the needy and respecting authority | .647 | | |
| Maintenance of Traditional Values | | 1.533 | 37.267% |
| ATR has enabled me to understand and appreciate my culture and other peoples culture | .678 | | |
| ATR enables me to remain in touch with our tradition | .716 | | |
| Social Support | | 1.300 | 46.332% |
| ATR has made me to become more honest and obedient | .675 | | |
| ATR has made me to identify and shun irresponsible behaviour | | | |
| Strengthening Faith and Belief | .687 | | |
| ATR in conjunction with Christianity have instilled moral values in me | .654 | 1.289 | 54.927 |
| ATR has instilled in me a sense of togetherness through communal worship and participation | .661 | | |
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin MSA | .740 | | |
| Bartlett's test of Sphericity | .000 | | |

The study, therefore, differentiated five main roles that ATR plays in imparting moral values. The five roles were: nurturing responsibility and respect, shaping moral values, maintaining traditional values, providing social support and strengthening faith and belief. Table 2 presents a summary of the descriptive statistics of the extracted factors regarding the role of ATR

Four items loaded highly on the responsibility/respect factor. Students agreed that the learning of ATR made them: more responsible in their undertakings (M=4.08, SD = 1.105); mindful of each other's welfare (M=4.00, SD = 1.066); acquire good virtues and respect for others (M=3.77, SD = 1.378), and more respectful and hospitable (M=3.90, SD 1.235).

Two items were segregated to measure ATR's role of shaping moral values. Similar to their negative attitude towards moral utility of ATR, the students were undecided in their perceptions of ATR in making them become morally upright (M = 2.83, SD = 1.446) and helping them adopt social behaviours such as sharing, helping the needy and respecting authority (M = 2.51, SD = 1.494).

Regarding ATR's role in traditional values, two items were again extracted. The mean response scores to the two items suggest that students' perceived ATR useful in enabling them to understand and appreciate their culture and other peoples culture (M = 3.65, SD = 1.355) and to remain in touch with their tradition (m = 3.65, SD = 1.355). There were conflicting perceptions among the students regarding the two items extracted to measure ATR as social support. Whereas the students were undecided as to whether or not ATR had made them to become more honest and obedient (M=2.55, SD = 1.425), they agreed that ATR had made them to identify and shun irresponsible behaviour (M = 4.49, SD = 0.790). The last two items extracted loaded highly on the factor designated 'Faith and belief'. From the mean response scores to the items, the students tended to agree that ATR in conjunction with Christianity had instilled moral values in them (M = 4.32, SD = 0.926) and that ATR had instilled in them a sense of togetherness through communal worship and participation (M=4.17, SD = 1.138). Table 2 presents a summary of the descriptive statistics of the extracted factors regarding the role of ATR.

Table 2: Students' Perceptions of the Role Played by ATR in Nurturing Moral Values

| A.T.R. Roles | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|------|----------------|
| Responsibility/Respect | | |
| The learning of ATR has made me more responsible in my undertakings | 4.08 | 1.105 |
| ATR has made me to be mindful about other people's welfare | 4.00 | 1.066 |
| ATR has helped me to acquire good virtues and respect others | 3.77 | 1.378 |
| ATR has made me more respectful and hospitable | 3.90 | 1.235 |
| Moral Values | | |
| ATR has changed me to become morally upright in the society | 2.83 | 1.446 |
| ATR has helped me adopt social behaviours such as sharing, helping the needy and respecting authority | 2.51 | 1.494 |
| Traditional Values | | |
| ATR has enabled me to understand and appreciate my culture and other peoples culture | 3.65 | 1.355 |
| ATR enables me to remain in touch with our tradition | 4.04 | 1.031 |
| Social Support | | |
| ATR has made me to become more honest and obedient | 2.55 | 1.425 |
| ATR has made me to identify and shun irresponsible behaviour | 4.49 | .790 |
| Faith and Beliefs | | |
| ATR in conjunction with Christianity have instilled moral values in me | 4.32 | .926 |
| ATR has instilled in me a sense of togetherness through communal worship and participation | 4.17 | 1.138 |

The above results imply that students in the study area positively perceived the role of ATR in imparting moral values. They concurred that ATR, among other roles, has nurtured them to be responsible and respectful, made them stay in touch with their traditional values, offered them social support necessary for abiding with societal norms, and strengthened their faith and beliefs. The results, however, showed that students did not perceive ATR highly in its role of shaping moral values. This is in line with what Lulley (2009) established, that few students are in agreement that ATR helps them to develop into morally upright people. This can be attributed to the spread of Christianity which students derive their moral values from. The young people also consider the teachings of ATR to be outdated to some extent since they interact with technology and acquire new ideas through social media. Some of the ideas acquired are contrary to teachings in ATR. Chepkwony (1997) similarly noted that some Africans have idolised and copied ideas from the western world and neglected African ideas with the assumption that European culture and religion is better.

Thematic Analysis of Students' Perceived Role of ATR in Moulding Behaviour

The results obtained from the structured items of the students' questionnaire were supported by those obtained from the unstructured questionnaire items. The responses to the question requiring students to briefly explain the role that ATR plays in moulding their behaviour were grouped under four themes and sixteen sub-themes. In relation to the theme on behaviour change the students said that ATR had made them obedient and honest. Some participants had this to say about ATR:

It has made me a good student at school and at home. It has helped me to be honest.

It has made me to obey parents and know how to relate with those of the opposite sex.

Through ATR, I have learnt that sexual immorality is a source of shame since long ago and has helped me to avoid it.

On the theme of culture, a participant had this to say:

ATR has made me grow up knowing some taboos and I try to avoid them.

It has helped me to be morally upright.

The above comments clearly show that ATR has played an important role in moulding students' behaviour. Traditional African Societies discouraged anti-social behaviour throughout the life of the individual. Sexual abuses such as adultery, rape, fornication and incest were unacceptable and people involved in these offences needed to be cleansed in a public ceremony. Walaba (1998) observes that CRE contributes to moulding students' behaviour and those who adopt religious teachings rarely have problems with the teachers in relation to their behaviour. Similar sentiments have been expressed by Ndarwa (2006) and Musya (1996). Table 3 presents the themes and sub-themes elicited from the unstructured questionnaire items.

Table 3: The Role of ATR in Moulding Behaviour

| Question | Themes | Sub-themes |
|---|-----------------------------|---|
| Briefly explain the role that ATR has played in moulding your behaviour | Faith and belief (n-120) | i) Belief in God as the only living God ii) Belief in spirituality iii) Belief in ancestors |
| | Behaviour change (n-96) | i) Obedience and Honesty ii) Self expression iii) Moral values iv) shunning unwanted behaviour v) Sharing |
| | Culture (n-64) | i) Understanding own culture ii) Respect and appreciation of others culture iii) Respect for elders and parents iv) Traditional values |
| | Moral responsibility (n-53) | i) Shun/irresponsible behaviour ii) Good morals iii) Control of peer pressure iv) Courage, patience and care |

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the study findings, it is clear that students perceive ATR positively in its role of nurturing moral values. They believe that ATR has instilled in them a sense of responsibility and respect as well as appreciate their culture and other people's cultures. The study of ATR in the CRE syllabus also fulfils one of the national goals of education, which is to promote respect and development of cultural heritage.

Thematic analysis of the study findings has also shown that ATR shapes the students' belief systems. Students admitted that ATR has made them believe in only one God having learnt that the Africans had one God known by different names in various communities. ATR has also made students to shun irresponsible behaviour in spite of the negative influences of behaviour from the mass media. ATR has also promoted respect for elders and parents as well as other moral values like courage, patience and hospitality. The study further established that ATR in conjunction with Christianity has instilled moral values in the students.

From the study findings, it is recommended that the government should censor the mass media to avoid exposing young people to programmes that erode their moral values. The government should instigate stringent measures to curb all forms of vices that are targeted at young people.

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