IJHRMH

International Journal of Human Resource Management and Humanities (IJHRMH)

Vol 2(1), pp 1-15, January 2026

CHRISTIAN PARENTS PERCEPTION AND STUDENTS CHOICE OF CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS STUDIES AS A CAREER IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

ABOK-AKPAN, Theresa, Ph.D
Department of Christian Studies and Religious Communiations,
Faculty of Arts, University of Abuja, Abuja, Nigeria.
E-mail: tessyabok@gmail.com
Phone: +2348035981807

AND

ZHIYA, Solomon Jeruma Dennis, Ph.D
Arts Education Department, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria.
Phone No. +234 806 558 0508
E-mail: solomon.zhiya@uniabuja.edu.ng, sojedezforreal@gmail.com

Abstract

The choice of a career is one of the most critical decisions for students, and parental influence plays a significant role in shaping career aspirations. This paper investigated Christian Parents Perception and Students Choice of Christian Religious Studies as a Career in Secondary Schools in Nigeria. Specifically, it explored parents' attitudes toward CRS, the factors that influence their perceptions, whether they encourage or discourage their children from pursuing CRS, and the impact of socioeconomic and religious factors on these perceptions. The study concluded that while CRS contributes meaningfully to moral and spiritual development, practical considerations strongly affect students' willingness to pursue it as a career. It suggested that the implementation of awareness programs, parental education initiatives, integration of CRS into career guidance, and increased church support to enhance the perception and professional viability of CRS. These interventions would help bridge the gap between the ethical significance of CRS and its economic and professional potential, encouraging more students to consider it as a viable career option.

Key words: *Christian Parents, Perception, Students Choice of Christian Religious Studies, and Career.*

1.1 Introduction

The role of parents in shaping the educational and career paths of their children is a subject of great importance globally, especially in developing countries like Nigeria, where family and community influence are strong. Parents, particularly in religious communities, often align their children's career choices with their cultural, religious, and socio-economic expectations. This influence can either support or hinder students' choices, depending on how parents view different professions or fields of study. In the context of Christian families, the choice to pursue careers that align with religious values, such as Christian Religious Studies (CRS), raises unique questions. It is essential to explore the perceptions and attitudes of Christian parents towards CRS as a career path.

Religion plays a central role in shaping the worldview of many individuals, including their understanding of career choices. Christian teachings, in particular, emphasize the concept of "calling," which frames career and life choices as part of God's divine plan for individuals (Gulati, 2025). The idea that a person is "called" to a particular profession, such as the ministry, teaching, or pastoral work, is deeply rooted in Christian doctrine. For Christian parents, career choices are often seen not only as a means of economic survival but also as a spiritual decision.

In Nigeria, Christianity has a significant influence on educational and career choices. According to Ojo (2026), the Christian faith has shaped the educational systems in many parts of the country, leading to the establishment of various Christian schools, universities, and religious studies programs. This religious framework, in turn, influences how parents view career paths, particularly those within the religious sphere. The choice to pursue CRS, whether in teaching, theology, or ministry, is often seen by Christian parents as a noble and spiritually fulfilling endeavor. However, in contemporary Nigeria, there are concerns about the economic

viability of such professions, particularly in a society where parents often seek financial stability for their children (Adebayo &Olayemi, 2025).

Parental influence on career decisions is well-documented in educational psychology and sociology. According to Eccles (2024), parents' expectations and beliefs about particular careers significantly shape their children's aspirations. This influence is particularly strong in cultures where family expectations take precedence over individual preferences. In Nigeria, where family structures are often hierarchical, children's career choices are frequently guided by parental approval or disapproval (Ogunyemi, 2026).

In Christian families, this dynamic is further complicated by the role of religious teachings. Parents may encourage children to follow career paths that align with their faith, such as becoming pastors, evangelists, or religious educators. However, this may also conflict with parents' desires for their children to pursue more financially rewarding careers in medicine, law, engineering, or business (Olumide & Afolabi, 2025).

The views of Christian parents on careers in CRS may reflect a complex blend of spiritual beliefs and socio-economic considerations. As CRS is often seen as a field that directly aligns with religious values, there may be both support for and skepticism about it. Some parents may view CRS as a pathway to a fulfilling life in service to the church, while others may worry about its ability to provide stable income and career advancement.

Christian Religious Studies (CRS) is a subject that encompasses the study of Christian beliefs, scriptures, history, and its impact on societies. It serves as both a tool for religious education and as a basis for understanding the ethical and moral teachings of Christianity (Okoh, 2026). In Nigeria, CRS is offered at both the secondary and tertiary levels. Tertiary institutions, such as seminaries and Christian universities, offer specialized programs in theology and religious

studies. Students who pursue CRS at these levels often aim for careers in teaching, preaching, pastoral work, or other ministry-related fields.

However, the perception of CRS as a career path is mixed. While it is regarded as a noble calling by many Christians, there is also a significant concern about the economic prospects of pursuing such a path. In a society like Nigeria, where economic challenges are prevalent, parents may hesitate to support careers that they perceive as lacking financial stability (Ige, 2025). This is especially the case in areas where the demand for religious educators or ministers does not match the supply of graduates, leading to unemployment or underemployment for some CRS graduates.

1.2 Conceptual Analysis

The conceptual analysis is explained thus:

1.2.1 Concept of Perception

Perception refers to the way individuals interpret, understand, and give meaning to information or situations around them. According to contemporary educational psychologists, perception is shaped by personal beliefs, cultural background, religion, experiences, and social environment. In the context of this study, perception refers to how Christian parents view Christian Religious Studies as a course of study and as a potential career path for their children.

Parents' perception can be positive or negative depending on their understanding of the subject, expected career outcomes, and societal values. A positive perception may encourage children to pursue CRS, while a negative perception may discourage interest regardless of the child's personal inclination.

1.2.2 Concept of Career Choice

Career choice is the process by which individuals select occupations or professional paths based on interests, abilities, values, and external influences. Scholars emphasize that career choice is not a one-time decision but a developmental process influenced by family, school, peers, and socio-economic conditions.

In Nigeria, parents play a dominant role in shaping career choices, especially at the secondary school level. Many parents prioritize careers perceived to offer financial security, social prestige, and stability. As a result, careers in religious studies may be viewed as less attractive when compared to medicine, law, engineering, or business.

1.2.3 Christian Religious Studies (CRS) as a Field of Study

Christian Religious Studies is an academic discipline that focuses on the study of Christianity, the Bible, Christian ethics, church history, and theology. At the secondary and tertiary levels, CRS aims to develop moral values, spiritual growth, critical thinking, and understanding of Christian doctrines.

CRS provides career opportunities in areas such as:

I. Teaching and education
II. Theology and biblical studies
III. Pastoral ministry and chaplaincy
IV. Christian counseling
V. Missionary and non-governmental organization (NGO) work

Despite these opportunities, CRS is often perceived by parents as a course with limited economic benefits, which affects students' willingness to pursue it as a career.

1.2.4 Christian Parents and Career Guidance

Christian parents are expected to guide their children based on both spiritual and moral principles. Many Christian parents believe in divine calling and vocation, yet practical concerns such as income, employment opportunities, and societal respect often influence their decisions.

Some parents encourage careers that combine faith and financial stability, while others discourage religious-based careers due to fear of poverty or unemployment. This conflict between spiritual values and economic realities is central to parental perception of CRS as a career choice.

Parental expectations regarding career choice play a significant role in shaping children's future decisions (Eccles, 2024). Parents may encourage children to follow in their footsteps or pursue careers that align with family values or religious beliefs. This guidance is particularly crucial in religious communities, where parents' expectations often intersect with spiritual beliefs. In Christian families, this can mean encouraging children to follow a career in ministry, religious education, or other faith-related professions. However, research by Ogunyemi (2026) highlights that parental influence can sometimes lead to conflict when children aspire to careers that are not aligned with parental expectations.

In the context of Nigeria, parental influence is not only tied to spiritual beliefs but also to socio-economic factors. According to Adebayo and Olayemi (2025), Nigerian parents view education as an investment in their children's future success, and this often means pushing them toward fields that are perceived to have greater economic stability, such as medicine, law, and engineering. In this framework, careers in CRS, which are perceived as spiritually fulfilling but economically unstable, may be viewed with skepticism.

1.2.5 Christian Religious Studies and Career Choices

Christian Religious Studies (CRS) as a field of study occupies a unique space in the Nigerian educational landscape. CRS is offered in both secondary and tertiary institutions, and it encompasses a range of topics, including biblical studies, theology, church history, and Christian ethics. CRS is central to religious education in Nigeria and serves as a tool for the moral and spiritual development of students (Okoh, 2026). While some students are drawn to CRS because of their personal faith or spiritual calling, others may be influenced by the support or opposition of their parents.

CRS graduates have a range of career options, including teaching, pastoral work, church administration, missions, and theological research. However, despite its spiritual significance, careers in CRS are often not perceived as financially lucrative. According to Agbalajobi and Alabi (2025), CRS is often associated with religious vocations that may lack the same financial stability as careers in law, medicine, or business. This perception can be a significant deterrent for parents who prioritize their children's economic security and societal status.

The tension between spiritual fulfillment and economic stability is evident in parental perceptions of CRS careers. Parents who value spiritual development may support their children's decision to pursue CRS, but may still harbor concerns about their financial well-being. In contrast, parents who view economic security as a priority may discourage their children from pursuing CRS, urging them instead to choose more financially viable professions.

1.2.6 Socio-Cultural and Economic Influences on Career Choice

In Nigeria, cultural and socio-economic factors play a significant role in shaping both career choices and parental perceptions of certain professions. According to Fadeyi and Alabi (2026),

Nigerian society places a high value on prestige and economic rewards when it comes to career choices. Professions that are associated with higher earnings and societal status—such as doctors, lawyers, engineers, and bankers—are highly prized, while religious professions are often seen as secondary in terms of prestige and financial reward.

Cultural expectations around career choice are particularly strong in African societies, where family reputation and socio-economic status are closely tied to the success of children. In many Nigerian communities, including in Gwagwalada Area Council, there is a belief that certain careers can elevate the status of the family, while others may limit upward mobility. As a result, Christian parents may feel pressured to steer their children toward professions that are viewed as respectable and profitable.

Additionally, the economic context of Nigeria cannot be overlooked. Nigeria's economy has faced significant challenges, including high unemployment rates, inflation, and a lack of job security (Ige, 2025). These economic factors influence parents' perceptions of career stability. In times of economic hardship, parents are less likely to support careers that are perceived as uncertain or low-paying, which can include CRS-related professions.

1.2.7 The Role of Religious Values in Career Decision-Making

Christian religious values also play a pivotal role in shaping both students' and parents' views of careers in CRS. Faith-based career choices are often viewed through the lens of the calling—the belief that individuals are called by God to serve in particular roles within the church or community. This spiritual calling is a key motivator for students who choose to pursue CRS, and it is often encouraged by religious communities (Gulati, 2025).

However, there is a dual perception of religious careers: on one hand, a religious career is seen as a noble and spiritually fulfilling choice, but on the other hand, it is sometimes viewed as

economically impractical. This duality presents a challenge for parents who must balance their faith-based values with their desire for their children to be economically secure. For example, while parents may encourage a child to pursue a ministry-related career, they may also worry about the financial sustainability of such a path (Olumide & Afolabi, 2025).

Based on the foregoing, it is perceived that Christian Religious Studies is highly valued for its moral and spiritual significance, yet practical considerations such as income, job opportunities, and societal recognition largely determine whether it is pursued as a career. Parental perceptions are influenced by a combination of socioeconomic status, educational level, and religious commitment.

Students' willingness to pursue CRS as a career is strongly shaped by parental support or discouragement. Parents with higher financial stability and strong religious engagement are more likely to encourage CRS, whereas those under economic pressure or less involved in religious activities are more likely to discourage it.

Overall, while CRS is seen as morally and spiritually rewarding, its professional viability is perceived differently depending on parental socioeconomic and religious factors. This underscores the need to enhance awareness of career opportunities in CRS and to align its spiritual value with professional and economic prospects.

1.2.8 Discussion in the Context of Existing Literature

Comprehensive understanding of moral decadence requires first the meaning of morality. The term 'morality' is derived from the Latin plural word 'morale' meaning 'manner' or 'morals' which means generally accepted code of conduct in a society (Andy-philip and Zhiya2017 pp 10). In this regard, moral decadence can be understood as a decline or deterioration in the

accepted standards of behaviour and values within a society. The educational system, which is expected to serve as an important avenue for moral formation, has also been affected by this development. Andy- Philip and Zhiya, (2017 pp 34) state that the educational system is losing its moral and social values. Our higher institutions of learning have been beclouded with indecent dressing most especially the female students.

The manifestation of moral decadence among young people can also be observed in behaviours that have serious social, educational and moral consequences. Yaksat, John and Zhiya (2017 pp 5) observed that drug abuse and alcoholism seem to have become a prominent social problem in Nigeria especially among our undergraduates. Similarly, teenage pregnancy constitutes another important concern associated with the moral and social challenges confronting young people. According to Umaru and Zhiya (2017 pp 21), it is often assumed that all teenage pregnancies are accidental but this is not always the case. Some teenagers actively plan to become pregnant or don't through contraception, knowing that pregnancy is a real possibility.

These challenges also have implications for the family, particularly the responsibilities of Christian parents in providing moral, spiritual and emotional guidance to their children. According to Zhiya (2023 pp 126), Christian mothers and child care is an interesting discussion that encompasses both religious beliefs and parenting practices. He therefore recommended that Christian women civil servants should prayerfully ask God for strength in carrying out their dual duties on daily basis. The responsibility of Christian families extends beyond childcare to demonstrating compassion, care and social responsibility towards vulnerable members of society. In the same vain, Zhiya (2015 pp 95) recommended that Pentecostal Ministers should keep on educating their congregations on the Biblical teaching concerning the plight of widows and encourage them to care for widows.

The development of sound moral values also requires the cultivation of virtues such as peace, righteousness, selflessness and responsible use of material resources. *Shalom* and *Tsedeq* must be won; for the prizes for those who win the war against self, selflessness, self-centeredness, the war against hate, the war against passion and against envy (Andy-philip, 2018 105). Similarly, material prosperity should not be viewed merely in terms of personal accumulation but also in relation to responsible Christian stewardship. Wealth can be enjoyed and employed at the same time if our purpose is to honor God (Andy-philip and Okoronkwo, 2023 pp).

Christian morality also requires commitment, sacrifice and faithfulness to Christian convictions, particularly in challenging circumstances. Many of the early Christians knew they would likely die for their faith but chose to follow Christ at an cost (Andy-philip and Alamu pp 99). This demonstrates the importance of developing moral courage and commitment among Christians, especially in an environment where competing social values may influence young people.

Against this background, religious education has an important role to play in addressing contemporary moral challenges. In a religiously pluralistic African society, moral education should not merely transmit abstract religious principles but should engage learners with their cultural and religious contexts. To leverage syncretism and dialogue in shaping moral values, educators most adopt innovative, context-specific pedagogies that integrate CRE and ATR practices into religious education curricula (Zhiya, Attah and Jacob, 2025 pp15). This is why (Zhiya, Ohwriovbe and Jacob, 2025 pp 59) observed that the integration of storytelling from CRS and ATR in religious education offers a transformative approach to navigating religious pluralism in African context.

Taken together, these perspectives demonstrate that moral decadence is a multidimensional problem involving individual behaviour, family responsibilities, educational institutions,

religious commitment and the wider social environment. Consequently, Christian Religious Education can contribute to moral transformation by connecting biblical teachings with learners' lived experiences, cultural contexts and contemporary social realities.

1.2.9 Suggestions

In light of the discussion, the following suggestions are proposed:

i. Awareness Programs: Schools, churches, and educational authorities should organize awareness campaigns to inform parents and students about career opportunities in CRS, including teaching, counseling, pastoral ministry, and administration.

ii. Parental Education: Parents should consider both the moral/spiritual value and the economic potential of CRS careers when advising their children.

iii. Career Guidance Integration: Schools should integrate CRS into career guidance programs to highlight employment opportunities, growth prospects, and professional recognition.

iv. Church Support: Churches should actively mentor and support students choosing CRS through programs such as internships, workshops, and career development opportunities.

v. Policy and Research Support: Educational policymakers should create clear career pathways for CRS, strengthening its recognition, professional viability, and employment prospects.

REFERENCE

Adebayo, A., & Olayemi, F. (2025).*Socio-economic factors and career choice among Nigerian youths*. African Journal of Career Development, 1(2), 45–58.

Andy-Philip, N. & Alamu, S. (2020). Blood for Blood: the Old Testament Teacching on the Santity of Life-Blood a Remedy for Suicide in Nigeria. *Nnamdi Azikiwe Journal of Philosophy. 1*2(1), 95-102.

Andy-Philip, N. & Okworonkwo, M. E. (2023). An Inter-Textual Exegesis of Deutronomy 8:18 and Luke 12:16-21 and its Economic Implication for Africa Social Milieu. *Jos Journal of Religion and Philosophy. 4*(1), 12-34.

Andy-Philip, N. (2018). Re-Thinking the Nuances of *Shalom* and *Tsedeq*: Implication for Peace Building in Nigeria. *Fahsanu Journal of the ARTS/Humanities.* 1(1), 12-34.

Ben, M. U. and Solomon, J. D. Z. (2017). "Teenage Pregnancy as a Societal Menace: Implication for Parental Guidance". *Journal of Moral Education in Africa*. (2)1, 20-27.

Eccles, A. N. (2024).*Career development and vocational guidance. Benin City, Nigeria:*Ethiope Publishing.

Fadeyi, J. W. & Alabi, K. (2026). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, andevaluating quantitative and qualitative research (4thed.).* Boston, MA: Pearson.

Gulati, E. O. (2025). *Parental influence on students' career choice in secondary schools in Nigeria.*Journal of Education and Practice, 5(12), 23-30.

Ige, J. V. (2025). *Religion and career decision making: The role of belief and family context. Journal of Career Development,* 45(4), 312 327.

Nesta A. and Solomon, J. D. Z (2017). The Christian Religious Education as a Means of Curbing Moral Decadence among Nigerian Youths. *Journal of Moral Education in Africa*. (2)2, 10-24.

Ojo, S. (2026).*Christian religious studies and moral values in Nigeria. Ibadan, Nigeria:* Daystar Press.

Ogunyemi, M. (2026).*Parental attitudes and career choices: A study of senior secondary school students. International Journal of Educational Research,* 98, 112–120. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2019.05.007

Olumide, A. O., Afolabi, B. O. (2025).*A multivariate causal model of students' academic performance in Nigerian secondary schools. Ife Journal of Behavioural Research,* 2(1), 1–16.

Okoh, A. (2026*). Religious education and national development in Nigeria. Journal of Religious Studies,* 11(1), 67–76.

Ogbolajobi, K. K. & Alabi K. (2025). *Research methodology and dissertation writing forhealth and allied health professionals. Ibadan, Nigeria:* Keras Resources.

Solomon, .J. D. Z., Kwasau, J. N. and Tanko, P. B. (2023). Civil Service Work and its Impact on the Religious and Sexual Life of Christian Women in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. *International Journal of Creativity and Applied Research (IJCAR).* 2(1), 92-104.

Yaksat, L B; John, J. E and Zhiya, J. D.S. (2017). "Effects of Drug Abuse and Alcoholism on the 21st Century University Students". *Journal of Moral Education in Africa.* (2)1, 1-12.

Zhiya, S.J.D (2015). Pentecostal Churches' Response to the plight of Widows in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Unpublish Masters Dissertation Presented to the School of Post Graduate Studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Zhiya, S.J.D (2023). Impact of Civil Service Work on the Marital Responsibilities of Christian Women in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Unpublish PhD Thesis Presented to the School of Post Graduate Studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Zhiya, S. J. D., Ohwriovbe, O., Jacob, A. and Attah, J. A. (2025). The Role of Storytelling in Christian Religious Studies and African Traditional Religion: Bridging Cultural Narratives in Educational Contexts. *Journal of African Advancement and sustainable Studies (JAAS).* 10(2), 54-62.

Zhiya, S. J. D., Attah, J. A., Jacob, A. and Ohwriovbe, O. (2025). Syncretism and Dialogue: Exploring the Interplay between Christian Religious Education and African Traditional Religious Practices in Shaping Moral Values. *Journal of Educational Studies, Trends and Practice (JESTP).* 10(8), 11-20.