

Challenges facing teaching and learning of Religious and Moral Education in Ghanaian Basic Schools: The case of Krachi-East Municipality

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Abstract

This research examined the difficulties encountered in teaching and learning Religious and Moral Education (RME) in Ghana's basic schools. A mixed-methodology approach was employed for the study, utilising the Concurrent Triangulation Strategy. The instruments used for data collection, with the help of the key informants, were questionnaires and interviews. The sample size for the study was one hundred and sixteen (116) respondents. The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and descriptive methods. The findings of the study established the following challenges: no internet connection in all the schools; non-availability of libraries and reference materials (textbooks) in most of the schools; inadequate number of trained teachers for RME; insufficient teaching and learning resources; use of teacher-centered methods of teaching; and poor attitude of learners towards the subject. The paper recommended that the government should provide adequate teaching and learning resources, internet facilities, well-resourced libraries, and recruit qualified teachers to handle the subject. On the other hand, teachers should use learner-centered teaching methods and improvised teaching and learning resources where necessary. The learners should take their studies seriously, and parents should also strive to support their wards by meeting their educational needs. The study concluded that if the aforementioned recommendations are considered and implemented by the government, parents, policymakers and educationists, among others, it would go a long way to reduce the challenges facing teaching and learning of the subject and improve the performance of the learners in Krachi-East Municipality in Oti Region and Ghana as a whole.

Keywords: *challenges, morality, religion, religious and moral education, teaching and learning*

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1. Introduction

Religious and Moral Education (RME) is one of the subjects in the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC), taught from Basic 1 to 6, and in the Common Core Programme (CCP), taught from Basic 7 to 9 in Ghanaian basic schools (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NaCCA], 2020; Mondal & Das, 2021). RME involves helping children and young people explore the meaning of life, beliefs, values, and societal norms, as well as how these beliefs and values are expressed in everyday life (Aziz, 2023; Okyere & Larbi, 2022). It integrates the three major religions in Ghana, Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religion (ATR), and combines components of religion, morality, and education (Asare-Danso & Mensah, 2021). Furthermore, it addresses both religious and secular issues. To better understand and address the challenges facing the teaching and learning of RME in Ghanaian basic schools, this study examined the historical perspectives, rationale, general aims, challenges, and possible solutions.

The origins of RME can be traced to the pre-colonial era, when religion formed an integral part of Indigenous African Education. Religious learning occurred through the acquisition of knowledge about the Supreme Being, ancestors, and deities using proverbs, folktales, songs, and myths (Aziz, 2023; Boafo et al., 2024; Kuusisto & Gearon, 2021; Nyangarika & Nombo, 2024). During the colonial era, trading castles were converted into schools, and Religious Instruction (RI) became a core component of the castle school curriculum. Missionaries subsequently established mission schools, where religion remained central. For instance, the Basel Mission established its first school at Christiansborg, Osu, in 1828 (Asare-Danso & Mensah, 2021; Opuni-Frimpong, 2021). Religion thus became the foundation of mission school curricula, as Christian missionaries viewed education as a means of evangelizing Indigenous communities (Aziz, 2023; Petersen & Gravett, 2020). Historical accounts of the castle schools support this (Boafo et al., 2024; Okyere & Larbi, 2022; Osman & Hassan, 2021).

RME also remained part of the Gold Coast school curriculum throughout the colonial period. Under Governor Sir Gordon Guggisberg, sixteen principles of education were presented to the Legislative Council in 1925. The 7th and 8th principles specifically addressed Religious and Moral Education: the 7th emphasized character training, while the 8th stipulated that religious teaching should form part of school life (Asare-Danso & Mensah, 2021; Boafo et al., 2024; Opuni-Frimpong, 2021). When Kwame Nkrumah became Head of Government

Business in 1951, he introduced the Accelerated Development Plan for Education, in which Religious Instruction continued to appear in the curriculum. However, the plan included a clause stating that no new primary school established by a denominational body would receive public funding without prior approval from the local authority. This condition displeased the church, which viewed the clause as a threat to Religious Education. Religious bodies argued that the measure was undemocratic (Asare-Danso & Mensah, 2021; Boafo et al., 2024; Opuni-Frimpong, 2021).

In 1961, the Education Act on Religious Education was enacted. Although the Act recognized the teaching of religion, challenges persisted. Religious lessons were scheduled at the beginning or end of the school day, giving parents who disapproved of the subject the opportunity to withdraw their children (Asare-Danso & Mensah, 2021). During this period, the subject was renamed Religious Knowledge (RK).

The 1974 Dzobo Education Reforms introduced another shift. The National Redemption Council (NRC) government established an Educational Review Committee chaired by Professor N. K. Dzobo. The Committee recommended merging Religious Knowledge with Music and Dance to form a new subject called Cultural Studies at the basic school level (Ansah & Osei-Owusu, 2021). This integration marked the beginning of ongoing challenges for RME in Ghana (Asare-Danso & Mensah, 2021; Boafo et al., 2024; Mahlomaholo et al., 2023).

The 1987 Education Review Committee, which followed the Dzobo reforms, recommended removing Cultural Studies from the curriculum, effectively eliminating Religious Education from basic schools. This led to strong protests from religious groups, especially Christian and Islamic bodies. In response, the government set up the National Education Reform Review Committee (NERRC) in 1994. One of its recommendations was the reintroduction of Religious Education, which the government accepted, renaming it Religious and Moral Education (Boafo et al., 2024; Opuni-Frimpong, 2021). The Committee also sought to reduce the number of subjects taught, which many believed had overloaded the basic school curriculum.

The 2007 Anamuah-Mensah Educational Review Committee also recommended teaching RME. However, contrary to its recommendations, the government removed RME from the basic school curriculum. Religious bodies, especially the Christian Council of Ghana and the Catholic Secretariat, strongly opposed this decision. The government reinstated RME

but designated it as a non-examinable subject. Persistent advocacy led to RME being restored as an examinable subject in 2008 (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2024).

Issues of morality and religion have long been central to human societies due to their influence on human relationships, social cohesion, and beliefs about the world and the unseen (NaCCA, 2020). Religious Education, regardless of perspective, remains essential for national development. Any development agenda that sidelines Religious Education risks lacking a strong moral and ethical foundation. NaCCA (2020) outlines several rationales for teaching RME.

In Ghanaian society, RME is important for human development. It addresses moral issues such as corruption, negative attitudes, and the influence of foreign values, while complementing informal moral training. Schools play a critical role in shaping morally upright and patriotic citizens. As education expands and lifestyles change, young people are exposed to various influences, both positive and negative. Without proper guidance, they may adopt values uncritically. Therefore, society must provide education that nurtures sound religious and moral principles. RME thus aims to develop literate, creative, and competent problem solvers who have the confidence to participate fully in Ghanaian society as responsible local and global citizens.

This study sought to answer the following questions:

What are the main challenges affecting the teaching and learning of Religious and Moral Education?

How can these challenges be addressed?

2. Literature Review

This section reviewed data on Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) results in Krachi-East, as well as relevant articles, books, and related literature, and concluded with the presentation of the theoretical framework.

2.1 BECE Results Analysis on RME in Krachi-East Municipal from 2021-2023

The Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) is a critical assessment within Ghana's education system, used to measure the academic performance of Junior High School students. This analysis examined performance trends in RME in the Krachi-East Municipality from 2021 to 2023, using data obtained from the Municipal Education Directorate.

Table 1*BECE result analysis in Krachi-East Municipal from 2021-2023*

Year	Number of candidates obtaining Grades 1-3	Number of candidates obtaining Grades 4-5	Total of Grades 1-3 & 4-5	Total number of candidates with Grades 6-9	Total number of candidates present during the exams
2021	179	360	539	885	1424
2022	204	829	1033	320	1353
2023	245	600	845	841	1686

Source: Adapted and modified BECE results of 2021-2023 at Krachi-East Education Directorate

Table 1 presents the distribution of candidates across different grade categories, classifying students into two main groups: high-performing students (grades 1–3 and grades 4–5) and low-performing students (grades 6–9). The trend in high-performing students (grades 1–5) shows that in 2021, a total of 539 students (179 + 360) obtained grades 1–5, representing 37.9% of the 1,424 candidates. In 2022, the number increased significantly to 1,033 (204 + 829), accounting for 76.3% of the 1,353 candidates. However, in 2023, the number declined to 845 (245 + 600), representing 50.1% of the 1,686 candidates. These figures indicate a strong improvement from 2021 to 2022, followed by a sharp decline in 2023. The notable increase observed in 2022 suggests the influence of possible educational interventions, enhanced teaching strategies, or other contributing factors that positively affected student performance during that year.

The trend in low-performing students (grades 6–9) further illustrates these fluctuations. In 2021, 885 students obtained grades 6–9, representing 62.1% of the total candidates. This number dropped significantly to 320 students, or 23.6%, in 2022, demonstrating a major improvement in overall student performance. However, in 2023, the number rose once more to 841 students, constituting 49.9% of the total candidates. While the improvement in 2022 was significant, the resurgence of low performance in 2023 indicates the re-emergence of challenges impacting student learning outcomes. These variations suggest inconsistencies in educational quality, resource distribution, or external factors that may have influenced students' academic achievements across the three-year period.

A broader analysis of BECE results for 2022 and 2023 indicates a worsening trend in student performance across the Krachi-East Municipality. In 2022, six schools recorded poor performance, with all candidates obtaining aggregate scores of 31 or higher. These schools included Tokuroano St. Paul's R/C JHS, Tokuroano St. Francis Anglican JHS, Zikpo No. 2

M/A Basic School, Kadzasikope M/A Basic School, Abomba Kwadwo M/A Basic School, and Yariga M/A Basic School. By 2023, the number of underperforming schools increased to nine, and some institutions recorded a complete failure in all subjects, including Religious and Moral Education (RME). The nine schools identified in 2023 were Zikpo No. 2 M/A JHS, Okanease M/A JHS, Asukawkaw R/C JHS, Kplesu M/A Basic School, Kadzasikope M/A JHS, Dambai English and Arabic Basic School, Abomba Kwadwo M/A Basic School, Monkurate M/A Basic School, and Kwame Akura M/A Basic School. Notably, some schools from the 2022 list, such as Zikpo No. 2 M/A Basic School, Kadzasikope M/A Basic School, and Abomba Kwadwo M/A Basic School, reappeared in 2023, highlighting persistent structural and instructional challenges within these institutions that require further investigation and intervention.

It was against this backdrop that three low-performing and three high-performing schools were selected for the case study. The selection aimed to provide a balanced and comparative understanding of the factors contributing to both success and underperformance in Religious and Moral Education within the Krachi-East Municipality.

2.2 Challenges Facing the Teaching and Learning of Religious and Moral Education

Teaching is an attempt to help an individual acquire or modify skills, attitudes, knowledge, or appreciation (Munna & Kalam, 2021). Learning involves more than what appears on the surface (Munna & Kalam, 2021). Although imitation, repetition, motivation, punishment, reward, or action may contribute to learning, they do not in themselves constitute learning. Munna and Kalam concluded that learning can be said to have occurred only when there is a noticeable change or improvement in the learner's behaviour. Teaching, therefore, is not merely the pouring of knowledge, nor is hearing lessons sufficient for true learning. Rather, teaching involves reaching the heart and mind of the learner so that he or she begins to value learning and believe in the possibility of achieving it (Boafo et al., 2024; Owusu-Ansah & Neill, 2020).

Agyei and Voogt (2023) noted that many researchers have identified several challenges affecting teaching and learning in Ghana, and RME is no exception (Owusu-Fordjour et al., 2020). These challenges include inadequate subject knowledge and pedagogical skills resulting from poor teacher preparation, a lack of adequate and appropriate instructional materials, difficulties with the medium of instruction, ineffective supervision and monitoring in schools,

and insufficient motivation for teachers. According to the Chief Examiner's Report (West African Examinations Council [WAEC], 2023), these factors contribute significantly to poor student performance in the Basic Education Certificate Examination. Additionally, other challenges highlighted include an insufficient number of qualified teachers to fill vacant classrooms, as well as poor pupil attitudes and low levels of interest toward learning (Amponsah et al., 2021; Quansah et al., 2020).

2.2.1 Teaching and Learning Resources (TLR)

Asano (2021) and Alam and Mohanty (2023) indicated that the lack of technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge among many RME teachers in Ghana negatively affects the effective teaching of the subject. They further noted that the inability of most RME teachers to integrate a variety of instructional resources, along with appropriate knowledge and content, hinders students' understanding of key concepts. Effective teaching and learning depend greatly on the availability and use of instructional resources, which play a critical role in lesson delivery and comprehension (Asano, 2021).

According to the widely cited perspectives of Fiorella (2023), Rittle-Johnson et al. (2021), and Seyfer (2023), based on the work of Dale Edgar, students remember 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they see, 50% of what they both see and hear, 70% of what they say, and 90% of what they see, hear, say, and do. However, some scholars have challenged these percentages, arguing that such retention claims contradict empirical evidence (Clark & Mayer, 2023; Mayer, 2021; Plass et al., 2022). Nonetheless, the general consensus remains that instructional resources significantly enhance teaching and learning in RME.

Ampem (2024), Schwartz (2021), and Westbrook (2020) explained that teaching materials are tools teachers prepare or use to simplify learning, making it more effective than it would be without such resources. Ampem (2024) and Mensah et al. (2025) further asserted that for effective instruction to occur in any subject, teaching aids such as transparencies, films, and videos should be used to help students visualize the content. In support of this view, Kuponu and Akinsanya (2025) emphasized that the use of teaching and learning aids is especially beneficial in the teaching of Religious Knowledge.

2.2.2 Unqualified teachers

Amponsah et al. (2021) and Quansah et al. (2020) acknowledged teachers as the key figures in ensuring the successful implementation of any curriculum. Hattie and Zierer (2019), Stronge and Xu (2021), and Wiliam (2021) emphasized that teachers should possess greater knowledge and qualifications than the pupils they guide to effectively facilitate learning. Mashiane et al. (2025) and Quansah et al. (2020) further noted that schools may experience setbacks in their training processes if teachers are inadequately prepared or lag behind in their professional development. One of the challenges likely to affect the teaching and learning of RME is indoctrination, particularly when teachers are unqualified or lack the necessary pedagogical skills. Annobil (2020) defined indoctrination as the biased and subjective teaching of RME, which poses a significant obstacle to effective learning. He further observed that in many schools, Religious Studies is often taught by Reverend Ministers who perceive the classroom as an extension of their church and treat students as a congregation to whom they preach. According to Annobil (2020), the preaching method commonly adopted by these ministers restricts students' opportunities to ask questions or express their opinions, as lessons are expected to be accepted on faith rather than critically engaged with. This practice, therefore, limits interactive learning and impedes the development of critical thinking in RME.

2.2.3 Negative attitude of teachers, learners and parents toward RME

The negative attitude of teachers, pupils, and parents is widely recognized by contemporary religious scholars as a significant challenge to the teaching and learning of Religious and Moral Education (RME). Asare-Danso and Mensah (2021), Kuponu and Akinsanya (2025), and Mahome and Mphahlele (2024) noted that the attitude of teachers can either positively or negatively influence the moral development of children. Effective teachers are characterized as fair, democratic, responsive, understanding, kind, stimulating, original, alert, attractive, responsible, steady, poised, and confident. In contrast, ineffective teachers are described as partial, autocratic, aloof, restrictive, harsh, dull, and unimpressive. Asare-Danso and Mensah (2021) further asserted that many students regard RME as irrelevant, particularly in an age dominated by science and technology, leading them to undervalue the subject. Attitudinal challenges are not limited to students; parents may also demonstrate a lack of interest or negative perceptions toward certain subjects. When this occurs, parents may be

reluctant to support their children's learning at home or provide necessary academic materials, further hindering students' engagement and achievement in RME.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study examines the challenges in teaching RME in Ghana's Krachi-East Municipality through the lens of Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) and Vygotsky's Constructivist Learning Theory (1978). Bandura's theory emphasizes that students acquire moral values through observation, imitation, and modeling from teachers, parents, and religious leaders, though its effectiveness depends on parental involvement, adequate resources, and qualified educators (Bandura, 1977). Vygotsky's Constructivist Learning Theory posits that children actively construct knowledge through social interactions and cultural engagement, with learning optimized within the Zone of Proximal Development under expert guidance (Vygotsky, 1978). Together, these theories highlight critical challenges in RME, including the scarcity of moral role models, negative societal influences, inadequate teaching methodologies, insufficient instructional materials, and cultural diversity considerations. The integrated framework suggests potential solutions such as strengthened teacher training, interactive learning strategies, the use of real-life moral case studies, enhanced parental involvement, and culturally contextualized approaches, emphasizing collaboration among educators, policymakers, and communities to ensure effective RME delivery.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A mixed-methods approach was employed to collect data for this study. This approach involves gathering both qualitative (open-ended) and quantitative (closed-ended) data in response to research questions. It was chosen because it allows researchers to draw on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods while minimizing their respective limitations (Fàbregues et al., 2023; Creswell, 2024). Within this approach, a concurrent triangulation strategy was utilized. In this strategy, quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously and then compared to determine convergence, divergence, or a combination of findings. This comparison is often referred to as confirmation, disconfirmation, cross-validation, or corroboration (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2025; Fàbregues et al., 2023; Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2021). Quantitative methods focus on numerical data, whereas

qualitative methods target a smaller number of participants to gather richer, more detailed information for deeper insights and generalizations (Agyei & Voogt, 2023; Owusu-Fordjour et al., 2020). The study employed both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected using interviews and questionnaires, which allowed for detailed information to be obtained from respondents (Magulod et al., 2021), while secondary data comprised analyses of research articles and both published and unpublished books.

3.2 Participants of the Study

The population for this research was drawn from six basic schools in the Krachi-East Municipality, located in the Oti Region of Ghana, with a focus on Junior High Schools where students were old enough to respond effectively to interview questions and questionnaires. The sample size comprised 116 respondents, including 104 teachers and 12 students. A non-probability sampling method, specifically purposive sampling, was used to select the six schools. Purposive sampling was deemed appropriate because the units were intentionally selected based on their characteristics or their relevance to the study's objectives, rather than through a random procedure (Nikolopoulou, 2023). This technique enabled the researchers to deliberately select schools that could provide rich and relevant information. Three low-performing and three high-performing schools were purposively selected based on their academic performance in RME, ensuring representation of different performance levels and allowing for comparative analysis of factors influencing RME teaching and learning (Magulod et al., 2021).

Teacher participants included 104 teachers, comprising head teachers and RME teachers (both full-time RME teachers and student teachers), selected through a combination of purposive and convenience sampling. Purposive sampling targeted teachers and head teachers with direct experience in RME instruction and curriculum implementation, while convenience sampling allowed the inclusion of teachers who were available and willing to participate during the data collection period. These teachers were chosen for their firsthand knowledge of RME teaching practices, curriculum challenges, and pedagogical approaches, making them key informants for the study. Student participants consisted of two students from each school, purposively selected based on their ability to articulate responses thoughtfully and provide detailed insights during interviews, yielding a total of twelve students. Teachers

recommended students who demonstrated strong communication skills, and a gender balance of one male and one female per school was maintained to ensure diverse perspectives.

The combination of teacher and student participants allowed for comprehensive triangulation of data, providing multiple perspectives on the research questions and enabling a thorough understanding of the challenges and experiences associated with RME teaching and learning in the Krachi-East Municipality.

Table 2 presents a demographic overview of 104 basic school teachers who participated in a study aimed at exploring the challenges faced in the teaching and learning of RME.

Table 2
Background information

Variables	Schools						Total
	A	B	C	D	E	F	
	22 (21.2%)	12 (11.5%)	16 (15.4%)	18 (17.3)	14 (13.5%)	22 (21.2%)	104 (100%)
Gender							
Males	14(13.5%)	10(9.5%)	2(1.9%)	16(15.4%)	8(7.7%)	14(13.5%)	64(61.5%)
Females	8(7.7%)	2(1.9%)	14(13.5%)	2(1.9%)	6(5.8%)	8(7.7%)	40(38.5%)
Age							
18 - 30 years	16(15.4%)	6(5.8%)	6(5.8%)	20(19.2%)	10(9.6%)	6(5.8%)	64(61.5%)
31 - 40 years	6(5.8%)	6(5.8%)	4(3.8%)	2(1.9%)	4(3.8%)	6(5.8%)	28(26.9%)
41 - 50 years	0(0%)	0(0.0%)	2(1.9%)	0(0%)	4(3.8%)	2(1.9%)	8(7.7%)
51 - 60 years	0(0%)	0(0%)	4(3.8%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4(3.8%)
Education							
Masters	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	8(7.7%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	8(7.7%)
Degree	12(11.5%)	4(3.8%)	6(5.8%)	10(9.6%)	8(7.7%)	8(7.7%)	48(46.2%)
Diploma	10(9.6%)	8(7.7%)	8(7.7%)	4(3.8%)	10(9.6%)	6(5.8%)	46(44.2%)
Cert A	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	2(1.9%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	2(1.9%)

Source: Field data, 2024

Among the respondents, 64 were male, representing 61.5% of the sample, while 40 were female, accounting for 38.5%. This gender distribution indicates a male-dominated teaching staff, although the presence of female teachers remains significant. In terms of age, the majority of participants (64 teachers, 61.5%) were between 18 and 30 years, suggesting that many educators are in the early stages of their careers, which may influence their perspectives and experiences regarding the challenges they face. Twenty-eight teachers (26.9%) were aged 31 to 40 years, representing a smaller but notable group of middle-aged educators. Representation in older age brackets was lower, with only 8 teachers (7.7%) in the

41 to 50 years category and 4 teachers (3.8%) aged 51 to 60 years, highlighting a potential gap in the insights of more experienced educators. Regarding educational qualifications, only 8 teachers (7.7%) held a Master's degree, indicating limited access to advanced education among respondents. Forty-eight teachers (46.2%) held undergraduate degrees, while 46 teachers (44.2%) possessed diplomas, showing that a substantial portion of the teaching staff had completed post-secondary education but had not pursued higher degrees. Lastly, only 2 teachers (1.9%) held a Certification "A", suggesting that this qualification was uncommon among the educators surveyed.

3.3 Instrumentation

The study utilized two primary data collection instruments: questionnaires and interview guides, each designed to capture specific types of data relevant to the research objectives.

A structured questionnaire containing both closed-ended and open-ended questions was developed to collect quantitative and qualitative data from the 104 teacher participants. The questionnaire was organized into sections addressing demographic information, teaching practices, curriculum implementation challenges, resource availability, and professional development needs. Closed-ended questions employed Likert scales, multiple-choice options, and dichotomous responses to facilitate statistical analysis, while open-ended questions enabled respondents to provide detailed explanations and additional insights. The content validity of the questionnaire was established through expert review. Experienced researchers and RME education specialists assessed the relevance, clarity, and comprehensiveness of the items in relation to the study's objectives. Based on their feedback, modifications were made to enhance clarity and ensure alignment with the research questions. Additionally, a pilot test was conducted with 10 teachers from schools not included in the main study to identify ambiguous items and assess feasibility. Results from the pilot informed further refinement of the instrument. The internal consistency reliability of the scaled items was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a value of 0.82, indicating acceptable reliability. Test-retest reliability was also evaluated by administering the questionnaire to the pilot group after a two-week interval, with correlation analysis showing strong consistency between administrations.

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to collect in-depth qualitative data from the 12 student participants. The guide contained open-ended questions designed to elicit

detailed narratives regarding students' experiences with RME, perceptions of teaching methods, encountered challenges, and suggestions for improvement. The semi-structured format provided flexibility, allowing researchers to probe responses and explore emerging themes while maintaining consistency across interviews. The validity of the interview guide was ensured through alignment with research objectives and the theoretical framework, peer debriefing with colleagues experienced in qualitative research and RME education, and member checking during and after interviews to confirm accurate interpretation of participants' responses. Reliability was maintained by standardizing interview protocols, using consistent probing techniques, audio-recording and transcribing all interviews verbatim, and keeping an audit trail documenting all methodological decisions. Inter-rater reliability was further established during analysis, with two independent researchers coding a subset of transcripts and comparing results for consistency.

3.4 Data Gathering Procedures

Data collection was conducted systematically in three phases to ensure methodological rigor and ethical compliance.

In Phase 1, preparation and ethical approval were obtained. Ethical clearance was granted by the researchers' ethics committee, followed by formal permission from the Krachi-East Municipal Education Directorate and the Headteachers of the selected schools.

Phase 2 involved questionnaire administration, carried out over eight weeks. Researchers personally visited each school to distribute questionnaires, explained the study's purpose, obtained informed consent, and assured participants of confidentiality and anonymity. Teachers were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaires, either immediately or within an agreed timeframe. Follow-up visits were made to collect completed questionnaires and address queries, resulting in a response rate of 96.2%, with 104 of 108 questionnaires returned in usable condition.

Phase 3 involved conducting individual face-to-face interviews with the 12 selected student participants. Each interview lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes and was conducted in quiet, private spaces within the schools to ensure confidentiality. Informed consent was obtained from students and assent from parents/guardians prior to interviews. With participants' permission, interviews were audio-recorded, and field notes were taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual observations. An interview schedule ensured that all

participants were interviewed within two weeks, maintaining consistency across data collection conditions.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis. Responses from the questionnaires were subjected to rigorous quantitative analysis. All completed questionnaires were first carefully edited to identify incomplete responses, inconsistencies, or errors. Valid responses were then systematically coded, with numerical values assigned to categorical variables and response options to facilitate statistical processing. The coded data were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27 for analysis. Data cleaning procedures were performed to detect and correct entry errors, identify outliers, and handle missing data appropriately. Descriptive statistical analyses were conducted to summarize and present the quantitative data. Frequency distributions were generated to show the number of responses in each category for discrete variables, while percentages illustrated the proportional representation of different response categories, enabling comparisons across variables. Mean scores and standard deviations were computed for continuous variables and Likert-scale items to indicate central tendency and variability. Cross-tabulations were performed to examine relationships between categorical variables, such as teacher qualifications and teaching practices, or school performance levels and resource availability. One-way ANOVA was applied to determine the statistical significance of observed differences or relationships in selected tables. The results of the quantitative analysis were presented in tables, accompanied by narrative explanations highlighting key findings and their implications for the research questions.

The qualitative data obtained from student interviews underwent comprehensive thematic analysis. All audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, producing detailed written records, and transcripts were carefully reviewed to ensure accuracy, with unclear segments re-listened to and clarified. Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework (Ahmed et al., 2025). First, researchers familiarized themselves with the data through repeated reading, noting initial impressions and potential patterns. Second, initial codes were systematically generated across the dataset, with segments labeled according to their semantic or conceptual content. Both descriptive codes, summarizing content, and interpretive codes, inferring meaning, were employed. Third, codes were organized into

potential themes by grouping related codes and identifying patterns of meaning. Fourth, candidate themes were reviewed against the coded data and entire dataset to ensure they accurately represented the data and addressed the research questions, with themes refined, split, combined, or discarded as necessary. Fifth, themes were clearly defined and named, with their scope and contribution to understanding the research questions articulated. Finally, the analysis was written up, using vivid and compelling extract examples to illustrate each theme and demonstrate their prevalence across the dataset. To enhance trustworthiness, multiple coders independently analyzed subsets of data to establish inter-coder agreement, negative case analysis was conducted to identify contradictory instances, and rich, thick descriptions were provided to allow readers to assess transferability of findings.

Following the separate analyses, quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated through triangulation. Results from the teacher questionnaires were compared with qualitative themes from student interviews to identify areas of agreement, complementarity, or disagreement. This integration provided a more comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon than could be achieved using either method alone, allowing the study to capture multiple perspectives on the challenges of teaching and learning RME in the Krachi-East Municipality.

4. Findings

Table 3 shows the challenges facing the teaching and learning of RME in Ghana. Based on the data presented, one of the major concerns is the inadequate number of qualified teachers handling RME. Thirty-four respondents (32.7%) strongly disagreed that this is a challenge, while 10 respondents (9.6%) strongly agreed, highlighting some variation in perception. The non-availability of reference materials, such as textbooks, emerged as a significant challenge, with 45 respondents (43.3%) strongly agreeing that this is a problem. Similarly, 39 respondents (37.5%) strongly agreed that the lack of teaching and learning resources (TLMs) constitutes a major obstacle. The use of teacher-centered instructional methods was also identified as a challenge, with 23 respondents (22.1%) strongly agreeing that this approach is ineffective. Additionally, 22 respondents (21.2%) strongly agreed that an overloaded curriculum content makes it difficult for students to learn effectively. Misconceptions about RME among some parents, such as the belief that studying the subject could lead their children to become

traditional priests or imams, was considered a challenge by 26 respondents (25.0%). Furthermore, indoctrination by some teachers, who attempt to convince students to abandon their own religious beliefs, was recognized as a problem by 14 respondents (13.5%).

Table 3

Challenges facing the teaching and learning of Religious and Moral Education

Challenges	SA	A	N	D	SD
Unqualified teachers handling the subject	10(9.6%)	16(15.5%)	13(12.5%)	31(29.8%)	34(32.7%)
Non-availability of reference materials (e.g., textbooks)	45(43.3%)	23(22.1%)	10(9.6%)	17(16.3%)	9(8.7%)
Non-availability of teaching and learning resources or TLMs	39(37.5%)	25(24.0%)	14(13.5%)	15(14.4%)	11(10.6%)
Non-use of teaching resources or TLMs by most teachers during teaching and learning	19(18.3%)	35(33.7%)	22(21.2%)	23(22.1%)	5(4.8%)
The content of the curriculum is overloaded	22(21.2%)	19(18.3%)	4(3.8%)	40(38.5%)	19(18.3%)
Use of teacher-centered methods of teaching	23(22.1%)	23(22.1%)	2(1.9%)	29(27.9%)	27(26.0%)
Misconception about Religious and Moral Education by some parents (e.g., their wards will become Traditional Priests, Pastors, Imams, etc)	26(25.0%)	19(18.3%)	24(23.1%)	14(13.5%)	21(20.2%)
Indoctrination on the part of some teachers (i.e., some teachers try to convince the pupils to abandon their religion and follow theirs)	14(13.5%)	20(19.2%)	17(16.3%)	20(19.2%)	33(31.7%)
Deliberate government policies to remove RME from the basic school curriculum	22(21.2%)	18(17.3%)	18(17.3%)	20(19.2%)	26(25.0%)
Absenteeism on the part of some pupils	27(26.0%)	22(21.2%)	10(9.6%)	36(34.6%)	9(8.7%)
Absenteeism on the part of some teachers	17(16.3%)	18(17.3%)	16(15.4%)	39(37.5%)	14(13.5%)
Some pupils are not taking their studies and assignments seriously	43(41.3%)	20(19.2%)	8(7.7%)	23(22.1%)	10(9.6%)
Non-availability of libraries in the schools for research work	59(56.7%)	20(19.2%)	10(9.6%)	8(7.7%)	7(6.7%)
No internet connectivity in the school	60(57.7%)	14(13.5%)	14(13.5%)	8(7.7%)	8(7.7%)
Cost of credit for downloading materials from the net	9(8.7%)	12(11.5%)	14(13.5%)	20(19.2%)	49(47.1%)
Inadequately trained teachers to handle the subject	21(20.2%)	24(23.1%)	6(5.8%)	22(21.2%)	31(29.8%)

Legend: SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neutral; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree.

Source: Field data, 2024

Government policies aimed at removing RME from the basic school curriculum were also perceived as a challenge, with 22 respondents (21.2%) expressing concern. Absenteeism among pupils and teachers was highlighted as an additional issue, with 27 respondents (26.0%) and 17 respondents (16.3%), respectively, strongly agreeing that this affects learning. Lack of student commitment to studies and assignments was seen as a challenge by 43 respondents (41.3%). Moreover, the absence of school libraries for research purposes was reported as a major obstacle by 59 respondents (56.7%), while the lack of internet connectivity in schools

was highlighted by 60 respondents (57.7%). The cost of internet credit for downloading materials was identified as a challenge by 9 respondents (8.7%), and the inadequate training of teachers to handle RME was noted by 21 respondents (20.2%). Overall, these findings underscore the multifaceted challenges affecting the teaching and learning of RME, highlighting the urgent need for targeted interventions to improve instructional quality, resource availability, and student engagement in basic schools.

The respondents proposed several strategies to address the challenges affecting the teaching and learning of Religious and Moral Education, as summarized in Table 4.

Table 4
Strategies for addressing challenges

Strategies	SA	A	N	D	SD
Use of qualified teachers to handle the subject	52(50.0%)	36(34.6%)	10(9.6%)	4(3.8%)	2(1.9%)
Provision of reference materials (e.g., textbooks)	74(71.2%)	26(25.0%)	2(1.9%)	0(0%)	2(1.9%)
Provision of teaching and learning resources or TLMs	68(65.4%)	16(15.4%)	14(13.5%)	4(3.8%)	2(1.9%)
Use of teaching and learning resources or TLMs by teachers during teaching and learning	53(51.0%)	43(41.3%)	0(0%)	2(1.9%)	6(5.8%)
The content of the curriculum or the syllabus should not be overloaded.	44(42.3%)	52(50.0%)	2(1.9%)	6(5.8%)	0(0%)
Use of learner-centered methods of teaching	76(73.1%)	18(17.3%)	2(1.9%)	4(3.8%)	4(3.8%)
Disabuse the misconceptions that some people hold that when their wards learn Religious and Moral Education, they will become Traditional Priests, Pastors, Imams, etc	58(55.8%)	27(26.0%)	11(10.6%)	6(5.8%)	2(1.9%)
Teachers should learn to teach the subject objectively without trying to indoctrinate the pupils or convince them to abandon their religion and follow theirs	55(52.9%)	41(39.4%)	6(5.8%)	0(0%)	2(1.9%)
Deliberate government policies to remove RME from the basic school curriculum	20(19.2%)	14(13.5%)	20(19.2%)	23(22.1%)	27(26.0%)
Teachers should check the attendance of their pupils regularly to reduce truancy among the pupils	48(46.2%)	46(44.2%)	4(3.8%)	6(5.8%)	0(0%)
Teachers should be punctual and regular at school to serve as role models to their pupils	62(59.6%)	34(32.7%)	6(5.8%)	2(1.9%)	0(0%)
Institution of award systems in the school to motivate the pupils to take their studies seriously	56(53.8%)	42(40.4%)	2(1.9%)	2(1.9%)	2(1.9%)
Provision of libraries stocked with books in the schools for research work	67(64.4%)	32(30.8%)	5(4.8%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Provision of internet facilities in the basic schools	58(55.8%)	26(25.0%)	14(13.5%)	4(3.8%)	2(1.9%)
Teachers should be given some incentives to help them buy some credit to download materials from the net	66(63.5%)	27(26.0%)	5(4.8%)	4(3.8%)	2(1.9%)

Legend: SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neutral; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree.

Source: Field data, 2024

Based on the data in Table 4, one of the most strongly endorsed strategies is the provision of reference materials, such as textbooks, with 74 respondents (71.2%) strongly agreeing that this is essential. Similarly, 68 respondents (65.4%) strongly agreed that the provision of teaching and learning resources (TLMs) is crucial for effective instruction. The use of qualified teachers to handle RME was also emphasized, with 52 respondents (50.0%) strongly agreeing that this is necessary, while 53 respondents (51.0%) strongly agreed that teachers should consistently utilize teaching resources during lessons. The adoption of learner-centered teaching methods was viewed as particularly important, with 76 respondents (73.1%) strongly agreeing on its effectiveness, and 58 respondents (55.8%) strongly endorsed the need to disabuse misconceptions about RME among students and parents. Furthermore, 55 respondents (52.9%) strongly agreed that teachers should deliver RME objectively without attempting to indoctrinate students.

Regular monitoring of pupil attendance was identified as a strategy to reduce truancy, with 48 respondents (46.2%) strongly supporting this measure. Teacher punctuality and regularity were also highlighted, with 62 respondents (59.6%) emphasizing the importance of setting a good example for students. Institutionalizing award systems to motivate pupils to take their studies seriously was supported by 56 respondents (53.8%), while 67 respondents (64.4%) strongly agreed on the necessity of providing school libraries equipped with research materials. The provision of internet facilities in schools was endorsed by 58 respondents (55.8%), and 66 respondents (63.5%) strongly agreed that teachers should receive incentives to help cover the cost of internet credit for downloading teaching materials. Overall, these findings indicate that addressing the challenges of teaching and learning RME requires a multifaceted approach, combining improvements in resources, teacher qualifications, instructional methods, student motivation, and technological support in basic schools.

An interview guide was also used to collect qualitative information from students, focusing on three thematic areas: teaching and learning resources (TLRs), the use of unqualified teachers, and the poor attitudes of teachers, learners, and parents toward Religious and Moral Education (RME). The findings from these interviews are presented according to these themes, providing in-depth insights into the challenges affecting RME instruction.

Teaching and Learning Resources (TLRs). Students highlighted significant challenges in accessing technology, internet services, and learning materials. Most schools lacked sufficient computer facilities and reliable internet connections, which impeded

students' ability to conduct research for Religious and Moral Education (RME). The use of teaching aids by teachers was also limited, with many relying primarily on textbooks and blackboards. Moreover, school libraries were either non-existent or poorly resourced, often lacking current and relevant RME materials. These challenges were clearly reflected in students' responses, as illustrated in the following quotations:

"Sometimes, but we mostly rely on textbooks if we have any. We rarely have access to extra resources like videos or pictures." - **Student A**

"We do not have enough teaching and learning resources. Most of the time, we just listen to the teacher teach without using any form of visual aids." - **Student C**

"We don't have enough textbooks for everyone. Sometimes, we have to share, and it makes it difficult to study properly." - **Student A**

"There are no computers or projectors in our school. If we had those things, could have been shown on the board to make learning more interesting." - **Student D**

Unqualified teachers. Students expressed concerns regarding the competence of some RME teachers. They noted that certain teachers appeared to lack in-depth subject knowledge, often avoiding or skipping topics they were uncertain about. There was a perception that some teachers were not adequately trained in RME, which affected the quality of instruction. Additionally, some teachers seemed to prioritize their own religious beliefs or personal salvation messages during lessons, further influencing the effectiveness of teaching. These issues were highlighted by students in the following quotations:

"Some of our teachers do not seem to know the subject well. They cannot answer some of our questions, which makes us lose interest." - **Student F**

"When our teacher does not know the answer, they often skip the topic. It feels like we are missing important lessons." - **Student G**

"I think some teachers are not trained for RME. They just teach from the curriculum without understanding the concepts deeply." - **Student H**

Negative attitude of teachers, learners, and parents towards RME. The findings also revealed a widespread perception among teachers, students, and parents that RME is less important than other subjects. This attitude contributes to low motivation and limited engagement in RME classes. Teachers sometimes exhibit frustration or strictness, which discourages active student participation. Students often regard the subject as unimportant or

irrelevant to real-life applications, while parents tend to prioritize subjects such as Science and Mathematics over RME, further reinforcing these negative attitudes.

“Some teachers do not take the teaching of RME seriously. They make it seem less important to other subjects.” - Student K

“Many of my classmates do not see the value of RME. They think it is just an extra subject that does not help us in real life.” - Student L

“My parents think RME is not as important as Science or Mathematics. They often tell me to focus on those subjects instead.” - Student M

“I feel like RME is treated like a punishment. We do not enjoy the classes because the teacher is often strict and does not encourage and engage us.” - Student O

5. Discussion

The findings of the study reveal a multifaceted narrative surrounding the teaching and learning of RME in Ghanaian basic schools. A major concern identified is the inadequate availability of teaching resources, including textbooks and other learning materials. A substantial proportion of respondents (43.3%) strongly agreed that the lack of reference materials constituted a major obstacle. This aligns with prior research by Amponsah et al. (2021) and Quansah et al. (2020), which noted that insufficient teaching resources hinder effective instruction in subjects such as Science, suggesting a similar trend in RME. Moreover, 37.5% of respondents highlighted the limited availability of teaching and learning resources (TLRs), which exacerbates the challenge. The heavy reliance on traditional, teacher-centered methods and restricted access to digital resources underscores the critical role of TLRs in promoting student engagement and comprehension, as supported by Creswell and Plano Clark (2025) and Fetters and Molina-Azorin (2020), who advocate for mixed-method approaches to improve learning outcomes.

The study also underscores the challenge posed by unqualified teachers, with 10% of respondents identifying it as a significant issue. This finding corroborates Bofo et al. (2024) and Owusu-Ansah and Neill (2020), who noted that teachers without proper training in RME compromise instructional quality. Student interviews further confirmed this concern, with several participants expressing frustration over teachers skipping topics due to insufficient subject knowledge. These observations align with Fiorella (2023) and Rittle-Johnson et al. (2021), who stress the importance of teachers being well-versed in their subjects to facilitate deep understanding. Additionally, 13.5% of respondents highlighted the problem of

indoctrination, where teachers focus on personal religious beliefs rather than providing a balanced education. This issue echoes Annobil (2020), who cautioned against the use of RME classrooms as platforms for religious conversion instead of education.

Government policies affecting RME were another area of concern. Respondents noted that attempts to remove RME from the basic school curriculum posed a threat to its sustainability, with 21.2% considering it a challenge. This reflects historical tensions regarding the subject's curricular status, similar to the situation described by Kuponu and Akinsanya (2025) in Nigeria, where the relevance of religious education has been debated. Students' and parents' attitudes toward RME further compound these challenges. Many students, influenced by parents who prioritize subjects such as Science and Mathematics, perceive RME as less important. This undervaluation aligns with Ampem (2024) that certain subjects are often overlooked in favor of those perceived to offer greater career prospects. The strict or disengaged approach of some teachers, as reported by students, further discourages active participation, echoing Njoku and Anyanwu (2020), who emphasized the role of teacher motivation and engagement in creating a conducive learning environment.

Infrastructural deficiencies also significantly impact RME learning. The lack of internet connectivity and poorly resourced or absent libraries restrict students' ability to conduct research and explore diverse religious perspectives. Approximately 57.7% of respondents strongly agreed that the absence of internet facilities posed a major challenge. This limitation contrasts with the findings of Ampem (2024) and Mensah et al. (2025), who emphasized that adequate resources are essential for fostering interactive and dynamic learning environments. The findings highlight that addressing the teaching and learning challenges of RME requires a multifaceted approach, including provision of resources, teacher training, curriculum support, and enhanced parental and institutional engagement.

6. Conclusion

The study's findings demonstrate a strong convergence with existing literature on the challenges of teaching Religious and Moral Education (RME) in basic schools. Issues such as the inadequate availability of qualified teachers, insufficient learning resources, and prevailing societal attitudes toward RME collectively contribute to its diminished status within the education system. At the same time, the study identifies unique contextual factors, particularly government policies and infrastructural limitations, that distinctly shape the teaching and

learning of RME in the Ghanaian context. These findings provide a valuable foundation for future research and policy interventions aimed at improving RME education. Addressing these challenges through inclusive curriculum design, the provision of adequate teaching and learning resources, and the systematic training and professional development of teachers can significantly enhance the effectiveness of RME instruction. Overall, the study presents a detailed narrative of systemic challenges in Ghanaian Junior High Schools, highlighting critical issues related to curriculum relevance, teacher preparedness, socio-cultural perceptions, and assessment methods. While the findings corroborate existing research, they also underscore the urgent need for educational reforms to promote student engagement, foster moral development, and improve learning outcomes in RME.

7. Recommendations

To improve the teaching and learning of Religious and Moral Education (RME), schools should prioritize the availability of textbooks, digital resources, and other relevant educational materials, while encouraging learner-centered teaching methods rather than relying solely on traditional teacher-centered approaches. There is a critical need for ongoing training and professional development for RME teachers to ensure they possess sufficient subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. Investment in teacher education programs will equip educators with the tools to teach RME effectively and objectively, avoiding indoctrination and representing diverse religious perspectives fairly.

Government policy should safeguard the place of RME in the curriculum, recognizing its importance in fostering students' moral and ethical development. Education authorities must ensure that RME is treated as a core subject, reconsidering any efforts to remove it from schools' curricula. Additionally, addressing misconceptions about RME among parents and students is essential. Schools can implement awareness campaigns to highlight the relevance of RME in developing well-rounded individuals, thereby improving perceptions of the subject relative to other disciplines. Finally, improving school infrastructure, particularly libraries, internet facilities, and technological tools, will enhance students' capacity to explore diverse religious perspectives and engage in meaningful research. Providing incentives to teachers, such as funding for internet access or credits to download online resources, could further motivate them to enrich lessons with varied teaching aids, ultimately enhancing the quality and effectiveness of RME instruction.

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AI Declaration

The author declares the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly, Quillbot, in summarizing some key points and in paraphrasing some ideas. The authors take full responsibility in ensuring proper review and editing of contents generated using AI.

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