

Integrating Pauline Ethical Teachings into the Christian Religious Studies Curriculum: Teachers' Views and Implications for Value-Based Education in Nigeria

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Abstract: The curriculum of Christian Religious Studies (CRS) in Nigeria is geared towards promoting moral development, civic responsibility, and the internalization of ethical principles necessary for responsible living. Despite this objective, moral challenges such as dishonesty, indiscipline, sexual immorality, and cyber fraud remain widespread among Nigerian youths, highlighting the need for a reassessment of CRS content and pedagogical approaches. Pauline ethical teachings, encompassing virtues such as honesty, self-discipline, purity, forgiveness, diligence, humility, and love, offer a rich resource for nurturing moral consciousness and holistic character formation. This study examines CRS teachers' perceptions regarding the integration of Pauline ethical teachings into the CRS curriculum in South-Western Nigeria. Adopting a descriptive survey research design, data were collected from CRS teachers across public and private secondary schools in the region using a structured questionnaire. Analysis of the data reveals that teachers recognize the high relevance of Pauline ethics in addressing contemporary moral challenges, yet they perceive that the current CRS curriculum insufficiently incorporates these teachings. Key challenges identified include limited instructional time, predominantly cognitive-focused teaching methods, inadequate teacher preparation in moral pedagogy, and insufficient emphasis on character formation in curricular materials. The study recommends curriculum enhancement, targeted teacher capacity building, and adoption of value-based pedagogical strategies to ensure effective integration of Pauline ethical teachings into CRS instruction. By embedding these moral principles within teaching and learning, the curriculum can better contribute to value-based education and the holistic moral development of students in Nigerian secondary schools.

Keywords: CRS curriculum, Pauline ethics, value-based education, teacher perception, moral education, Nigeria, secondary schools

Introduction

Christian Religious Studies (CRS) occupies a strategic position in the Nigerian educational system as a subject designed not only to transmit religious knowledge but also to foster moral discipline, ethical reasoning, and responsible citizenship among learners. Historically, CRS has been viewed as a vital instrument for character formation, value orientation, and social cohesion, particularly in a pluralistic society like Nigeria where moral instruction is expected to counteract rising social vices (Ogunlade, 2021; Taiwo & Adeyemi, 2022). Through its engagement with biblical narratives, moral injunctions, and faith-based ideals, CRS is expected to shape learners' attitudes, behaviours, and worldview in ways that promote integrity, self-discipline, respect for authority, and love for humanity. In recent decades, however, Nigeria has witnessed a deepening moral crisis among young people, manifesting in cybercrime, examination malpractice, cultism, drug abuse, sexual immorality, violence, and general disrespect for societal norms. Scholars increasingly argue that these challenges reflect a broader decline in value-based education and ineffective moral socialization within both formal and informal institutions (Adebisi & Ukpoju, 2022; Oladipo & George, 2023). Within this context, CRS is expected to function as a corrective platform that provides learners with ethical frameworks capable of resisting negative peer pressure, media influence, and socio-economic pressures. Yet, concerns persist regarding the extent to which the CRS curriculum translates religious knowledge into lived moral practice. A growing body of literature suggests that the CRS curriculum in Nigerian secondary schools tends to overemphasize biblical history, doctrinal content, and rote memorization at the expense of practical ethical application relevant to contemporary social realities (Ogunlade, 2021; Adekunle & Yusuf, 2022). This content-driven approach often limits students' ability to connect biblical teachings with everyday moral decisions, thereby weakening the transformative potential of CRS. Consequently, learners may demonstrate adequate cognitive knowledge of Christian doctrines while exhibiting behaviours that contradict the ethical values such doctrines espouse. This gap between religious instruction and moral conduct raises critical questions about curriculum content, pedagogical strategies, and the ethical frameworks being emphasized within CRS classrooms.

Among the New Testament writings, the epistles of Apostle Paul stand out as a particularly rich and systematic source of ethical instruction. Pauline theology is deeply practical, addressing everyday moral issues within social, economic, political, and communal contexts. Paul's ethical teachings encompass virtues such as honesty and truthfulness (Ephesians 4:25), sexual purity and self-control (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5), humility and servant leadership (Philippians 2:3-5), forgiveness and reconciliation (Colossians 3:13), diligence and commitment to work (2 Timothy 2:15), sacrificial love (1 Corinthians 13), respect for authority (Romans 13:1-7), and the cultivation of moral

character through the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). These values directly address many of the moral challenges confronting Nigerian youths today and provide a robust ethical framework for value-based education (Ayantayo, 2020; Wright, 2021).

Scholars argue that integrating Pauline ethical teachings into CRS pedagogy could significantly enhance the subject's relevance and moral impact. Pauline ethics emphasizes character transformation, communal responsibility, and moral consistency between belief and practice principles that align closely with the goals of value-based education (Bird, 2020; Nwankwo, 2022). When effectively contextualized, these teachings can help learners internalize values such as integrity, perseverance, respect, and compassion, thereby contributing to national development and social stability. However, the successful integration of Pauline ethics into the CRS curriculum depends largely on teachers, who serve as the primary agents of curriculum interpretation and classroom implementation.

Despite the acknowledged importance of teachers in translating curriculum objectives into meaningful learning experiences, there is limited empirical research examining CRS teachers' perceptions of the integration of Pauline ethical teachings into the Nigerian curriculum. Teachers' beliefs, competence, and attitudes significantly influence what is taught, how it is taught, and the extent to which ethical content is emphasized in classroom practice (Ajayi & Olatunji, 2021). Exploring teachers' views is therefore crucial for identifying curricular gaps, pedagogical challenges, and opportunities for strengthening the ethical dimension of CRS. Without understanding teachers' perspectives, efforts at curriculum reform and value-based education risk remaining theoretical and ineffective.

This study focuses on CRS teachers in South-Western Nigeria, a region characterized by high educational advancement, denominational diversity, and a dense student population. Despite these advantages, reports of student indiscipline and moral lapses remain prevalent in the region (Ogunyemi & Fasasi, 2023). By examining CRS teachers' perceptions of integrating Pauline ethical teachings into the CRS curriculum, this study seeks to illuminate the implications of such integration for value-based education in Nigeria. The findings are expected to contribute to curriculum development, teacher training, and policy formulation aimed at revitalizing moral education and promoting ethical transformation among Nigerian learners.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the inclusion of value-oriented subjects such as Christian Religious Studies (CRS) in the Nigerian secondary school curriculum, moral decadence among students continues to intensify. Incidents of cultism, dishonesty, examination malpractice, cybercrime, sexual irresponsibility, drug abuse, and disrespect for constituted authority are

increasingly reported within and outside the school environment. These trends raise serious concerns about the effectiveness of moral and religious education in shaping learners' character and ethical behaviour. Scholars have therefore questioned why students who are exposed to CRS still engage in behaviours that contradict the moral values the subject seeks to promote (Ojo & Adekunle, 2022; Nwodo & Ogbuefi, 2024).

A major concern identified in the literature is that the CRS curriculum places disproportionate emphasis on religious knowledge acquisition—such as biblical history, doctrinal understanding, and memory work while giving limited attention to practical moral formation and ethical application. This content-oriented approach often fails to translate biblical teachings into concrete life skills that can guide students' daily moral decisions. As a result, students may demonstrate cognitive understanding of Christian concepts without internalizing the ethical values required for responsible living (Gana & Samuel, 2020; Ezeani, 2023). This disconnect between knowledge and behaviour suggests a fundamental weakness in how moral values are taught, interpreted, and applied within CRS classrooms.

Although the New Testament writings of Apostle Paul contain rich and context-sensitive ethical teachings capable of addressing contemporary moral challenges, these teachings remain inadequately emphasized within the CRS curriculum. Pauline ethics offer practical guidance on issues such as self-discipline, honesty, sexual purity, diligence, respect for authority, forgiveness, communal responsibility, and love values that directly respond to the moral realities confronting Nigerian youths. However, existing curricular frameworks often treat Pauline texts descriptively rather than ethically, limiting their transformative potential. Furthermore, CRS teachers may lack sufficient training, pedagogical orientation, or instructional resources to effectively integrate Pauline ethical teachings into classroom practice (Okafor & Ayuba, 2021).

Teachers play a pivotal role in curriculum implementation, as their perceptions, competencies, and instructional choices significantly influence what students learn and how values are internalized. If teachers perceive the integration of Pauline ethics as irrelevant, impractical, or overly abstract, such teachings are unlikely to be emphasized in classroom instruction. Conversely, even when teachers recognize their importance, the absence of deliberate pedagogical strategies and supportive curriculum guidelines may hinder effective integration. Yet, empirical studies examining CRS teachers' perceptions of Pauline ethical integration remain limited, particularly within the Nigerian context.

Consequently, there exists a critical gap between the moral objectives of CRS, the ethical richness of Pauline teachings, and the actual classroom experiences of students. Without understanding how CRS teachers perceive the necessity, feasibility, and benefits of integrating Pauline ethical teachings into the curriculum, efforts aimed at strengthening value-based education may remain ineffective. This gap underscores the need for

systematic inquiry into teachers' views as a basis for curriculum reform, teacher professional development, and policy intervention. Therefore, the problem addressed in this study is the persistent moral decline among secondary school students in Nigeria despite the presence of CRS, coupled with the inadequate integration of Pauline ethical teachings into CRS instruction. Specifically, the study seeks to examine CRS teachers' perceptions of integrating Pauline ethical teachings into the curriculum and the implications of such integration for enhancing value-based education in Nigerian secondary schools.

Purpose of the Study

The study seeks to:

1. Assess CRS teachers' perceptions of the importance of Pauline ethical teachings for value-based education.
2. Determine the extent to which Pauline ethics are currently integrated into the CRS curriculum.
3. Identify curricular, pedagogical, and institutional barriers affecting the incorporation of Pauline teachings.
4. Propose strategies for strengthening CRS curriculum design and implementation using Pauline ethical principles.

Literature Review

The CRS Curriculum in Nigeria

Christian Religious Studies (CRS) is a core subject within the Nigerian secondary school curriculum, designed to promote spiritual development, moral uprightness, responsible citizenship, and respect for human dignity. According to the National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC, 2013), the CRS curriculum seeks to inculcate values such as honesty, discipline, tolerance, love, obedience, and peaceful coexistence through the study of biblical texts and Christian doctrines. As a value-oriented subject, CRS is expected to contribute significantly to character formation and ethical development among learners, thereby supporting national goals of social harmony and sustainable development. Despite these lofty objectives, several scholars contend that the practical implementation of the CRS curriculum falls short of its moral and ethical mandate. Studies reveal that CRS teaching in many Nigerian secondary schools remains largely cognitive and examination-driven, with emphasis placed on rote memorization of biblical facts, teacher-centered instruction, and recall of doctrinal information (Afolayan, 2023; Ogunlade, 2021). This pedagogical orientation often neglects reflective discussion, moral reasoning, and application of biblical values to real-life situations, thereby limiting the subject's transformative potential.

Furthermore, a persistent gap exists between curriculum objectives and classroom practice. Alade and Aderibigbe (2020) observe that many CRS teachers lack adequate professional training in value-based pedagogy, resulting in superficial treatment of ethical content. Similarly, Ude and Emenike (2021) identify inadequate instructional materials, large class sizes, and limited opportunities for continuous professional development as major constraints affecting effective CRS delivery. These challenges weaken the capacity of the CRS curriculum to address pressing moral issues such as dishonesty, indiscipline, sexual misconduct, and youth restiveness. Consequently, CRS often fails to achieve its intended role as a tool for moral regeneration within the Nigerian education system.

Pauline Ethical Teachings as a Resource for Moral Education

Pauline ethical teachings constitute a robust moral framework that emphasizes both inner transformation of character and outward expression of ethical behaviour, making them highly relevant for moral education within the Christian Religious Studies (CRS) curriculum. Unlike moral instruction that focuses solely on external compliance, Pauline ethics stress the renewal of the mind and the formation of virtuous character as the foundation for moral living (Romans 12:1–2). This dual focus aligns with the objectives of value-based education, which seeks to nurture morally responsible individuals capable of ethical reasoning, self-control, and positive social engagement.

One of the central themes in Pauline ethical instruction is honesty and truthfulness, most clearly articulated in Ephesians 4:25, where Paul exhorts believers to "put away falsehood and speak truthfully to one another" (New Revised Standard Version, 1989). This directive emphasizes both the personal and social dimensions of honesty: believers are called to cultivate integrity within themselves and to foster trust and transparency in their relationships with others. By framing honesty as an internalized moral principle rather than merely a set of external rules, Pauline ethics promote a transformative approach to moral formation, encouraging individuals to act ethically even in the absence of oversight.

In the Nigerian context, the emphasis on honesty is particularly salient. Contemporary studies indicate that dishonesty, examination malpractice, and cyber fraud remain pervasive challenges among secondary school students and youths (Ojo & Adekunle, 2022; Nwodo & Ogbuefi, 2024). These behaviors not only compromise academic integrity but also erode trust in social institutions and hinder ethical development. By integrating Pauline teachings on truthfulness into CRS instruction, educators can provide students with a biblically grounded ethical framework that links moral principles with everyday decision-making. Such integration transforms honesty from an abstract concept into a practical value applicable to personal, academic, and social contexts. In educational settings, promoting honesty has been linked to improved academic performance,

character development, and responsible citizenship (Ugba, 2022; Imam & Lawal, 2020). For example, Ugba (2022) emphasizes that ethical content in CRS, when taught through reflective and participatory pedagogies, enhances learners' moral reasoning and internalization of virtues such as truthfulness. Similarly, Imam and Lawal (2020) argue that teacher perceptions of moral relevance directly influence how values like honesty are emphasized in classroom instruction. This underscores the importance of equipping teachers not only with adequate content knowledge of Pauline ethics but also with pedagogical strategies that encourage students to actively reflect on and practice truthfulness.

Furthermore, integrating honesty and truthfulness into CRS aligns with broader character education objectives, which advocate deliberate cultivation of virtues necessary for personal and societal well-being (Lickona, 2019). By consistently embedding lessons on honesty within curricular content, classroom activities, and school culture, students can develop a habitual commitment to truthfulness, thereby countering the moral and social challenges prevalent in Nigerian schools. In this way, Pauline ethical teachings serve not merely as theological instruction but as a practical resource for holistic moral education.

Another central aspect of Pauline ethical teachings is self-discipline and personal responsibility, prominently highlighted in Galatians 5:22–23, where Paul identifies self-control as a vital component of the fruit of the Spirit. Self-discipline involves the ability to regulate one's impulses, make deliberate ethical choices, and persist in morally responsible actions, while personal responsibility emphasizes accountability for one's behavior and its consequences. Together, these virtues constitute a cornerstone for both individual moral development and socially responsible behavior.

In the Nigerian context, self-discipline is increasingly critical, given the prevalence of substance abuse, sexual recklessness, internet fraud, and general indiscipline among secondary school students (Ojo & Adekunle, 2022; Nwodo & Ogbuefi, 2024). These challenges not only compromise academic achievement but also undermine moral and civic development. Integrating Pauline teachings on self-control and responsibility into the CRS curriculum provides students with a biblically grounded framework for regulating behavior, resisting negative peer pressure, and making morally sound decisions in diverse real-life situations.

From a moral education perspective, self-discipline supports goal-oriented behavior, persistence in academic tasks, and resilience in the face of social and environmental pressures (Ugba, 2022). When students internalize these principles, they are better equipped to manage their emotions, delay gratification, and adhere to ethical standards, both within the school environment and in broader society. Moreover, teaching self-discipline through CRS encourages students to see moral conduct not as externally imposed rules but as an internalized personal commitment, consistent with the

constructivist approach to learning that emphasizes reflection and self-directed development (Vygotsky, 1978).

Educational scholars have emphasized the importance of deliberate instruction in virtues such as self-discipline to mitigate behavioral challenges and foster holistic character development (Lickona, 2019; Imam & Lawal, 2020). In CRS classrooms, activities such as reflective journals, goal-setting exercises, role play scenarios, and ethical case studies can help students practice self-regulation and assume personal responsibility, translating Pauline ethical principles into actionable habits. Thus, self-discipline, as a key Pauline virtue, provides both a practical and ethical compass for guiding youth toward responsible and morally upright living in contemporary Nigerian society.

Another foundational element of Pauline ethical teachings is love, which Paul presents as the highest and most enduring virtue in 1 Corinthians 13. In this passage, love is portrayed not merely as an emotional response or sentiment but as a deliberate moral and relational practice encompassing patience, kindness, humility, selflessness, forgiveness, and moral consistency. Paul emphasizes that without love, all other virtues, knowledge, or accomplishments are incomplete, highlighting its primacy in ethical formation and personal conduct (Bird, 2020; Wright, 2021). In the context of moral education, love functions as a core guiding principle for cultivating ethical behavior and interpersonal harmony. It promotes empathy, compassion, and tolerance, enabling individuals to recognize the dignity and worth of others irrespective of differences. This is particularly significant in Nigeria, a society marked by religious plurality, ethnic diversity, and frequent social tensions. Teaching love as a central virtue helps students develop the moral and social competencies required for peaceful coexistence and cooperative engagement within heterogeneous communities (Ugba, 2022).

Moreover, integrating Pauline love into the CRS curriculum encourages learners to move beyond self-centered moral reasoning toward prosocial behaviors that benefit both individuals and society. For example, emphasizing patience and kindness fosters respectful dialogue and conflict resolution in classrooms, while teaching humility and selflessness motivates students to engage in community service and collaborative projects. Such practical applications align with contemporary educational goals, including character formation, emotional intelligence, and social responsibility (Lickona, 2019; Imam & Lawal, 2020).

In addition, love as a moral virtue provides a framework for ethical decision-making, particularly in situations where personal interests conflict with societal or communal needs. By consistently reinforcing love as an actionable principle, CRS educators can help students internalize ethical norms and cultivate moral habits that extend beyond the classroom. This aligns with the broader objective of value-based education: producing morally competent, socially responsible, and civically engaged citizens capable of

contributing positively to Nigerian society. Thus, Pauline ethics elevates love from a passive feeling to a practical, transformative virtue, guiding moral reasoning, shaping character, and fostering social cohesion. In educational practice, it equips learners not only to navigate interpersonal relationships ethically but also to participate meaningfully in the moral life of their communities, making it an indispensable component of CRS pedagogy.

Also, purity and integrity are central pillars of Pauline ethical instruction, emphasized notably in 1 Thessalonians 4:3–5, where Paul exhorts believers to "abstain from sexual immorality; each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable" (New Revised Standard Version, 1989). In this passage, Paul links moral restraint with self-respect and ethical responsibility, highlighting that virtuous living is both an internal disposition and an outward practice. Purity, in Paul's ethical framework, is not limited to sexual conduct but encompasses holistic self-control, disciplined living, and moral consistency in all areas of life (Bird, 2020; Wright, 2021).

In contemporary Nigerian society, these teachings hold particular relevance. Adolescents and youths frequently face challenges such as sexual immorality, online exploitation, cyberbullying, and erosion of personal dignity through social media misuse (Ojo & Adekunle, 2022; Nwodo & Ogbuefi, 2024). These behaviors undermine personal development, academic engagement, and social cohesion. Integrating Pauline teachings on purity and integrity into the CRS curriculum provides learners with a biblically grounded ethical framework that fosters self-discipline, responsible sexual behavior, and respect for oneself and others.

Thus, from a moral education perspective, purity and integrity serve as foundational values for ethical decision-making and personal accountability. Ugba (2022) highlights that ethical content in CRS, when coupled with reflective pedagogical strategies, can strengthen learners' capacity to evaluate choices, anticipate consequences, and adopt responsible behaviors. Likewise, Imam and Lawal (2020) emphasize that teacher perception and instructional approach significantly influence the internalization of moral virtues, including integrity and purity, underscoring the importance of teacher preparation and moral modeling.

Practical classroom strategies for teaching purity and integrity in CRS might include ethical dilemma discussions, role-playing scenarios, reflective journaling, and group debates, all aimed at helping learners apply principles to real-life contexts. These approaches align with Constructivist Learning Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which advocates learner-centered engagement, reflection, and internalization of moral knowledge. Moreover, the explicit teaching of integrity and self-respect through Pauline ethics supports the broader objectives of character education, fostering virtues such as responsibility, honesty, self-control, and respect for others (Lickona, 2019).

Another fundamental aspect of Pauline ethical teachings is forgiveness and reconciliation, prominently highlighted in Colossians 3:13, where Paul exhorts believers to “bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive” (New Revised Standard Version, 1989). This teaching underscores the moral, relational, and social dimensions of forgiveness, emphasizing that ethical conduct involves not only personal restraint but also the active restoration of relationships. Reconciliation, as an extension of forgiveness, seeks to restore trust, unity, and social harmony among individuals and communities, reflecting a holistic understanding of ethical living. In the Nigerian educational context, teaching forgiveness is particularly relevant due to the prevalence of interpersonal conflicts, bullying, peer disputes, and student–teacher disagreements in schools (Ojo & Adekunle, 2022; Nwodo & Ogbuefi, 2024).

Unresolved conflicts and grudges can negatively impact students’ academic performance, emotional well-being, and social integration. Integrating Pauline teachings on forgiveness into the CRS curriculum provides learners with a biblically grounded ethical framework to manage interpersonal tensions, cultivate empathy, and restore broken relationships, thereby promoting emotional resilience and social cohesion. From a moral education perspective, forgiveness is closely linked with emotional intelligence, self-regulation, and prosocial behavior (Ugba, 2022). Teaching students to forgive encourages them to manage anger, overcome resentment, and respond to wrongdoing with ethical and constructive strategies rather than retaliation. Imam and Lawal (2020) note that when teachers emphasize moral virtues such as forgiveness in classroom interactions, students are more likely to internalize these values and apply them in daily life, contributing to positive peer relationships and a supportive school climate. Practical pedagogical strategies for teaching forgiveness in CRS include role-playing exercises, conflict resolution simulations, reflective journaling, and guided discussions on moral dilemmas. Such approaches align with Constructivist Learning Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which encourages learners to actively engage with ethical content, reflect on personal experiences, and construct moral understanding through interaction and dialogue. Furthermore, embedding forgiveness and reconciliation into CRS instruction aligns with Character Education Theory (Lickona, 2019), reinforcing deliberate cultivation of virtues that contribute to both individual character development and societal well-being.

Closely related to forgiveness is the Pauline emphasis on humility and service, vividly portrayed in Philippians 2:3–5, where believers are encouraged to consider others above themselves and adopt the humble mindset of Christ. This teaching challenges pride, selfish ambition, and abuse of power, which often undermine ethical leadership and social responsibility. In educational settings, humility and service foster cooperation, respect for authority, and a sense of communal responsibility. These virtues are

particularly important for nurturing future leaders who prioritize service over self-interest. Collectively, these Pauline ethical teachings align strongly with modern educational goals such as character formation, emotional intelligence, self-management, moral reasoning, and social responsibility. Ugba (2022) argues that when ethical content is deliberately integrated into curriculum and pedagogy, it enhances learners' capacity for ethical reflection and responsible action. Therefore, incorporating Pauline ethics into CRS provides not only theological instruction but also a practical moral framework capable of addressing contemporary ethical challenges and strengthening value-based education in Nigeria.

Teacher Perception and Curriculum Implementation

Teachers play a central role in translating curriculum intentions into meaningful learning experiences. According to Fullan (2016), curriculum implementation is not merely a technical process but a deeply human one shaped by teachers' beliefs, values, and perceptions. Teachers determine what content is emphasized, how it is taught, and the degree to which learners engage with moral and ethical issues in the classroom.

Research indicates that when teachers perceive certain aspects of the curriculum as relevant, practical, and aligned with learners' needs, they are more likely to integrate such content intentionally and creatively into instruction. Conversely, when teachers view curriculum content as abstract, irrelevant, or impractical, they may minimize or omit it altogether (Imam & Lawal, 2020). In the context of CRS, teachers' perceptions of Pauline ethical teachings significantly influence whether such teachings are treated merely as biblical texts or as living moral principles applicable to students' daily lives. Despite the recognized importance of teachers' perceptions, empirical studies focusing specifically on CRS teachers' views regarding the integration of Pauline ethics remain limited. This gap underscores the need to explore teachers' perspectives as a basis for curriculum reform, teacher training, and pedagogical innovation aimed at strengthening value-based education in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Constructivist Learning Theory and Character Education Theory, both of which provide a strong conceptual foundation for understanding how Pauline ethical teachings can be effectively integrated into the Christian Religious Studies (CRS) curriculum to promote value-based education. These theories explain how moral knowledge is acquired, internalized, and translated into ethical behaviour within educational settings.

Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist Learning Theory posits that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction, reflection, and engagement with their social, cultural, and educational environment rather than passively receiving information from the teacher (Vygotsky, 1978). Learning, from this perspective, is a meaning-making process in which students interpret new information in light of prior experiences, beliefs, and social interactions. The theory emphasizes learner-centered pedagogy, collaborative learning, dialogue, critical thinking, and contextual application of knowledge. In the context of moral and religious education, constructivism highlights the importance of reflective engagement with ethical content. Moral values are not effectively internalized through memorization alone but through opportunities that allow learners to discuss moral dilemmas, examine consequences of actions, reflect on personal experiences, and apply ethical principles to real-life situations. This approach is particularly relevant to CRS, where the goal extends beyond cognitive understanding of biblical texts to the transformation of attitudes, values, and behaviour.

Pauline ethical teachings align closely with constructivist principles because they emphasize personal reflection, moral reasoning, and conscious ethical choice. Paul consistently calls believers to examine their conduct, renew their minds, and align their actions with their transformed identity (Romans 12:1–2; Galatians 2:20). His letters often address practical moral issues within specific social contexts, encouraging readers to reflect on their behaviour and make deliberate ethical decisions. When Pauline ethics are taught through learner-centered strategies such as group discussions, case studies, role-playing, moral debates, and reflective journaling, students are more likely to internalize these values and construct personal meaning from the teachings. Thus, Constructivist Learning Theory provides a pedagogical justification for integrating Pauline ethical teachings into CRS in ways that promote active engagement, critical reflection, and deep moral understanding rather than passive knowledge acquisition.

Character Education Theory

Character Education Theory emphasizes the intentional development of moral virtues, ethical habits, and social responsibility as central goals of education (Lickona, 2019). The theory argues that schools have a moral responsibility to deliberately teach values that support personal integrity and societal well-being. Character education involves not only explicit instruction in moral values but also modeling by teachers, reinforcement through school culture, and opportunities for learners to practice ethical behaviour. Within this framework, moral education is viewed as a systematic and purposeful process rather than an incidental outcome of schooling. Core virtues commonly emphasized include honesty, respect, responsibility, fairness, compassion, self-discipline, and civic responsibility.

Character Education Theory stresses that values must be consistently reinforced across curriculum content, teaching methods, and teacher–student relationships for meaningful character formation to occur. Pauline ethical teachings provide a rich and structured moral content base that aligns strongly with the principles of character education. Paul repeatedly emphasizes virtues such as love (1 Corinthians 13), humility (Philippians 2:3–5), self-control (Galatians 5:22–23), forgiveness (Colossians 3:13), diligence (2 Timothy 2:15), and service to others. These virtues are not presented as abstract ideals but as practical habits to be cultivated through consistent practice and moral discipline.

Integrating Pauline ethics into CRS through a character education framework enables teachers to deliberately connect biblical teachings with moral habits and social responsibility. For instance, lessons on love and forgiveness can be reinforced through cooperative learning, conflict resolution activities, and community service projects. In this way, Pauline ethics move beyond theoretical instruction to lived moral practice, contributing to the holistic development of learners.

Relevance of the Theoretical Framework to the Study

Together, Constructivist Learning Theory and Character Education Theory provide a complementary framework for this study. Constructivism explains how students internalize ethical values through active engagement and reflection, while Character Education Theory explains what values should be intentionally taught and reinforced. Anchoring the study on these theories helps to clarify how Pauline ethical teachings can be pedagogically integrated into CRS and how teachers' perceptions influence the effectiveness of value-based education.

By grounding the study in these theories, this research offers a coherent explanation of how Pauline ethical teachings can contribute to moral transformation among secondary school students when delivered through appropriate pedagogical strategies and supported by intentional character formation practices.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive survey research design, which is appropriate for exploring the perceptions, experiences, and recommendations of participants regarding the integration of Pauline ethical teachings into the CRS curriculum. A descriptive survey allows for systematic collection of information from a large population to describe current trends, attitudes, and practices without manipulating variables (Babbie, 2020). This design was selected to provide empirical insights into teachers' perceptions and to identify practical challenges and improvement strategies.

Population and Sample

The population comprised Christian Religious Studies teachers in public and private secondary schools across South-Western Nigeria. This region was selected due to its educational significance, high student enrolment, denominational diversity, and reported challenges with student moral behavior. Stratified sampling was first used to ensure representation across public and private schools and urban and rural settings, followed by simple random sampling within each stratum to select participants. A total of 550 teachers participated, providing a robust sample size suitable for generalizing the findings to the broader CRS teaching population in the region.

Instrumentation

Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire titled the Pauline Curriculum Integration Scale (PCIS). The PCIS was designed to measure:

1. Perceived relevance of Pauline ethical teachings to CRS and moral education.
2. Current level of integration of Pauline ethics in CRS teaching.
3. Challenges and barriers to integrating Pauline ethics.
4. Recommended strategies for enhancing integration.

Items were structured using a Likert-scale format (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) for perception-based questions, and multiple-choice or open-ended items for challenges and recommendations. The instrument's reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a coefficient of $\alpha = 0.82$, indicating high internal consistency and reliability suitable for survey research.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, to summarize teachers' perceptions, reported challenges, and recommendations. Mean scores were interpreted based on predetermined benchmarks to identify areas of high, moderate, or low perception. Qualitative responses from open-ended questions were categorized and thematically analyzed to enrich the quantitative findings.

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of CRS Teachers Perception of the Value of Paul’s Teaching for secondary school students in South-west Nigeria

Values of Paul teachings	Stima Deviation	Frequenc y	Percentag e	Mean	Std. Deviation
Very Low Extend	-1	0	0.0	.0000	.0000
Low Extend	0	15	2.5	.0157	.12428
Moderate Extend	+1	94	15.7	.1339	.34079
High Extend	+2	235	38.2	.3348	.47224
Very High Extend	+3	256	42.6	.3647	.48158

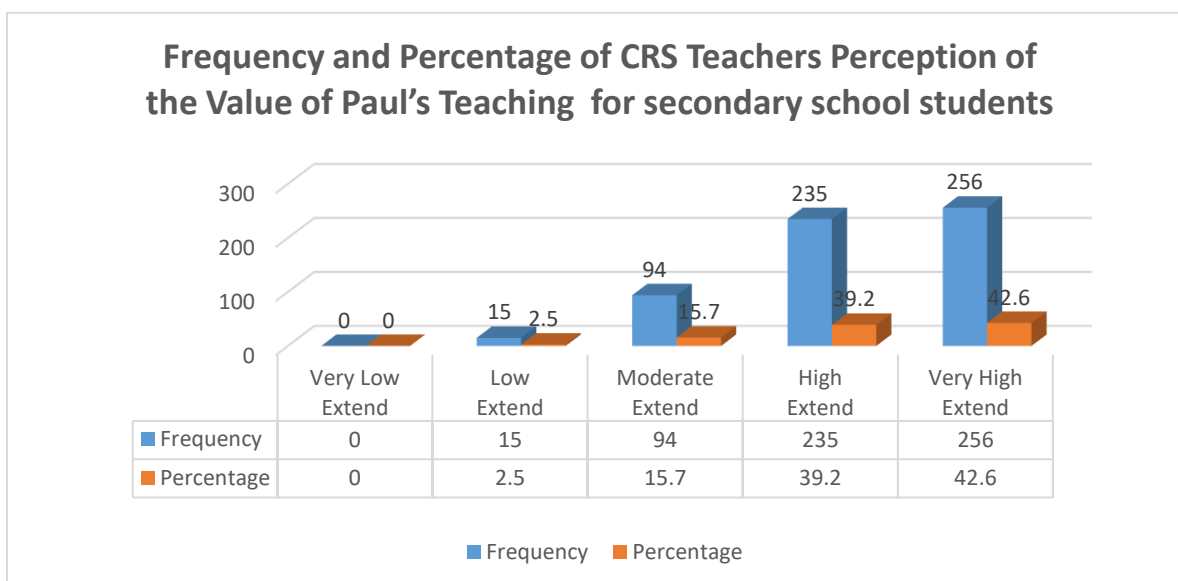


Figure 1: CRS Teachers Perception of the Value of Paul’s Teaching for secondary school students

Discussion

The study’s findings confirm prior research indicating that the CRS curriculum in Nigeria is insufficiently equipped to address contemporary moral crises (Alade & Aderibigbe, 2020; Ogunlade, 2021). Teachers’ recognition of the relevance of Pauline ethics demonstrates their awareness that biblical moral principles can serve as effective tools for addressing student misconduct, dishonesty, sexual immorality, and indiscipline.

The findings support Constructivist Learning Theory, which emphasizes active engagement, personal reflection, and transformative learning. Pauline ethical teachings inherently encourage learners to examine their conduct, make conscious moral choices, and internalize ethical principles through reflection and application (Romans 12:1-2).

Thus, when appropriately taught using learner-centered and reflective pedagogical strategies, these teachings can facilitate deep moral understanding and personal transformation among students.

Additionally, the study aligns with Character Education Theory (Lickona, 2019), which underscores the importance of deliberate instruction, modeling, and reinforcement of virtues. Pauline teachings provide clear and practical content for character formation, including love, humility, self-control, forgiveness, diligence, and service. Integrating these teachings systematically into CRS instruction can promote holistic development and moral competence, going beyond mere knowledge acquisition.

However, the study also highlights significant systemic and pedagogical barriers. Limited curriculum time, teacher-centered instruction, inadequate training, resource constraints, and exam-driven pedagogy undermine efforts to integrate Pauline ethics effectively. These findings indicate that without structural and pedagogical reforms, the integration of biblical ethics into CRS may remain largely theoretical and fail to achieve meaningful moral outcomes.

Overall, the results emphasize the critical role of teachers as mediators of ethical education. Teachers' perceptions, training, and instructional strategies directly influence whether Pauline ethical teachings are effectively translated into students' moral consciousness. Therefore, policy reforms, curriculum redesign, and teacher professional development initiatives are necessary to ensure that CRS can fulfill its intended role in promoting value-based education and addressing the moral challenges facing Nigerian youth.

Summary of Findings

1. Perceived Importance of Pauline Ethics:

CRS teachers overwhelmingly perceive **Pauline ethical teachings as highly essential** for strengthening moral education and addressing contemporary student moral challenges such as dishonesty, sexual immorality, and indiscipline.

2. Current Integration Status:

Teachers reported that **current CRS curriculum content inadequately integrates Pauline ethics**, particularly in areas such as sexual purity, forgiveness, humility, and self-discipline. Most teachers observed that these ethical dimensions were either briefly mentioned or entirely absent in classroom instruction.

3. Barriers to Integration:

Major constraints identified by teachers include:

- Limited curriculum time allocated to CRS.
- Predominant teacher-centered pedagogical approaches.
- Inadequate teacher training in moral pedagogy.
- Limited availability of textbooks and instructional resources that emphasize applied ethics.
- Overemphasis on examination-oriented teaching, which prioritizes content recall over value formation.

4. Recommended Curriculum Improvements:

Teachers advocated for:

- Incorporation of **dedicated units on Pauline ethics** within the CRS syllabus at all secondary school levels.
- Integration of **practical activities, value-based projects, and character-building exercises** to reinforce moral lessons.
- Continuous **professional development and training workshops** focusing on applied biblical ethics and moral pedagogy.

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