

Leadership and Academic Excellence in Christian Religious Studies Education: Adeniyi Abodunrin Leadership and Oladega Adebogun's Scholarship at Caleb University

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Abstract

This research examine the significant influence of Christian Religious Studies Education at Caleb University in Nigeria, highlighting its contributions to academic success, ethical leadership, and community engagement. Using a qualitative approach that includes interviews and focus group discussions with students, faculty, and administrative staff, the study reveals a remarkable increase in student enrollment alongside the achievements of exceptional scholars like Soneye Ayomide Joseph. It showcases how the leadership of Adeniyi Oluwafemi Abodunrin and Oladega Adebogun scholarship has been instrumental in fostering a supportive academic atmosphere and developing scholarship programs that help alleviate financial burdens for students. Furthermore, the research emphasizes the importance of community outreach and ethical reasoning in the curriculum, preparing students to tackle pressing societal challenges. Ultimately, this study calls for a greater appreciation of Christian Religious Studies Education as a vital force for personal growth and social responsibility, challenging the common misconceptions about its role. The insights gained aim to inspire educators, policymakers, and students to recognize the valuable potential of this discipline in nurturing informed and responsible citizens.

Keywords: Christian Education, Ethical Leadership, Community Engagement, Scholarship Programs, Academic Excellence, Nigeria.

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Original Research Article

INTRODUCTION

Christian Religious Studies Education plays a vital role in the educational landscape of Nigeria. It is not just about learning facts or memorizing historical dates; rather, it helps shape the cultural and spiritual identity of the nation (Ihedinma, 2004; Adogame, 2013; Owolabi, 2014). This field of study offers students a profound understanding of Christianity, exploring its historical roots, theological insights, and the various ways it influences both individual lives and society as a whole (Ajibola, 2018). By engaging with these topics, students develop essential critical thinking skills that empower them to navigate the complex moral and ethical challenges of our time (Idoko, 2020). This educational journey fosters personal growth while contributing positively to society, promoting essential values such as peace, justice, and responsibility (Yabiliyok, 2019; Blackmer & Akila, 2024). These values are echoed in the biblical account of II Kings 5:20-27, which offers valuable insights into the nature of human corruption and its consequences (Yerokun, Abodunrin, Soneye, & Akinleye, 2025). Despite its

significant contributions, Christian Religious Studies Education is often misunderstood. Many view it merely as a pathway to becoming a pastor or religious leader, which limits its perceived value (Nord, 2010). However, research highlights the crucial role of pastors, religious leaders, guest ministers, and artists in promoting church growth and development (Soneye, Yerokun, Ayodele, & Olorunlana, 2025). This narrow perspective overlooks the discipline's capacity to address pressing societal issues, including national and ethical dilemmas in leadership and community development projects that require thoughtful guidance (Soneye, Abodunrin, & Olorunlana, 2025; Nord, 2014). These misconceptions can be quite pervasive. Students, parents, educators, and even members of the community can sometimes reduce Christian Religious Studies Education to outdated stereotypes, viewing it as irrelevant to contemporary challenges (Marsden, 2024). This misunderstanding can lead to a lack of motivation among prospective students, who might believe that success in this field requires little effort (Dwyer, 2001). As a result, many people assume that graduates in this discipline are fated to work only in religious roles,



overlooking their potential contributions in diverse fields such as education, social work, and community leadership (Gamaleal, 2024). In light of these challenges, this study aims to address and redefine the narrative surrounding Christian Religious Studies Education. It seeks to highlight the significant role this discipline can play in cultivating academic excellence, ethical leadership, and personal integrity (Addai-Mununkum, 2019).

This study also seeks to deepen the understanding of how Christian Religious Studies Education can influence societal advancement. By examining the connections between effective leadership, scholarship programs, and academic success, the findings offers insights that can be beneficial for educators, policymakers, and students alike (Case et al., 2013). This holistic view helps to cultivate a greater appreciation for the role that Christian Religious Studies Education plays in individual and collective well-being (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012). A significant part of the investigation focuses on how leadership can serve as a driving force behind academic excellence within Christian Religious Studies Education. Strong leadership not only inspires students but also creates a nurturing environment that fosters learning and personal development (Mafe, 2023; Dumais & Wolf, 2024; Culduz, 2024; Mastul, 2024; Roberts, 2007; Kouzes & Posner, 2024; Marshall, 2006). By examining Adeniyi Oluwafemi Abodunrin leadership styles and his impacts on student success, this study highlight strategies that can be implemented to improve educational outcomes. Another key element of the research is the role of scholarship programs, particularly those initiated by educational advocates like Oladega Adebogun. These programs are essential for promoting academic achievement while addressing challenges related to access and equity in education. By reducing the financial barriers that many students face, scholarships enable them to concentrate fully on their studies, which enhances their overall learning experience. Furthermore, these initiatives promote a diverse academic community, enriching the educational environment with a variety of perspectives.

To achieve the objectives of this study, a qualitative approach is employed, utilizing case studies and in-depth interviews to collect meaningful data. The research concentrates on the Christian Religious Studies Education department at Caleb University, seeking insights from a diverse group of participants, including students, faculty, and administrative staff. This provides a comprehensive view of the experiences and attitudes within the discipline, while revealing broader trends in the educational landscape. Drawing from researchers experiences as a participant and lecturer in the department, this study analyzed the data thematically, allowing significant themes to emerge. The goal is to provide a rich understanding of Christian Religious Studies Education today, shedding light on how it can contribute to academic excellence and societal development. As stated by Everist (2010), Christian education plays a vital role in shaping the minds and characters of individuals.

In an ever-evolving world filled with intricate challenges,

the importance of Christian Religious Studies Education cannot be overstated. Overall this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the discipline's role in fostering academic achievement, ethical leadership, and social responsibility among students. By challenging existing misconceptions and highlighting the discipline's transformative potential, the research seeks to advocate for a more profound appreciation of its contributions to personal and societal growth. Ultimately, the aim is to inspire educators, students, and policymakers to recognize and embrace the rich possibilities that Christian Religious Studies Education has to offer in tackling the pressing issues of our time, all while fostering a more equitable and informed society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Christian Religious Studies Education represents a multifaceted and essential domain of academic inquiry that encompasses a broad spectrum of disciplines, including Christian theology, biblical studies, ethics, philosophy, Islamic studies, comparative religious studies, new testament, old testament, African Traditional Religious Studies, church history, sociology, and educational practices (Asare-Danso & Mensah, 2021; Chukwu et al., 2024; Dupuis, n.d. ; Kesmen & Mellemut, 2022; Mensah & Owusu, 2022; Nwube & Edigbo, n.d.). The interdisciplinary approach to Christian Religious Studies Education fosters critical thinking and ethical reasoning by engaging students in the rigorous analysis of religious texts, traditions, and practices (Geertz, 1973). This approach recognizes the complexity and diversity of religious experiences, encouraging students to consider multiple perspectives and develop a nuanced understanding of the subject matter (Smith, 1991). By examining the relationship between Christ and culture, students can gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which Christian principles can be applied in different contexts (Niebuhr, 1951). Furthermore, this approach can help students develop a sense of community and shared values, which is essential for Christian ethics and practice (Hauerwas, 1981). Within this educational framework, the integration of faith and scholarship is paramount, cultivating both intellectual rigor and spiritual development among students (Groome, 1980; Marthen Mau et al., 2024). The synergy between academic excellence and religious understanding positions Christian Religious Studies Education as a transformative instrument for personal, communal, and societal engagement with pressing contemporary issues (Mawikere et al., 2024). By integrating faith and scholarship, Christian education can foster critical thinking, spiritual growth, and a deeper understanding of the world (Shahjahan, 2005; Lase et al., 2021).

Leadership is increasingly recognized as a crucial factor in promoting academic excellence within educational environments. Effective leadership, characterized by a clear vision and a steadfast commitment to fostering an atmosphere of integrity and high academic standards, significantly influences the motivation and engagement of both faculty and students. Numerous studies have consistently shown that leaders who embody the principles



of servant leadership rooted in humility, service, and a community-oriented ethos create conducive conditions for cultivating an academic climate marked by excellence (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2010; Ferch & Spears, 2011). Such leadership not only inspires faculty and students alike but also enhances overall educational outcomes, illustrating the profound interconnectedness of leadership practices and academic success in institutions grounded in Christian values (Hancock, 2019).

Scholarship programs occupy a crucial role in enhancing academic excellence by providing essential financial support to academically deserving students, thus facilitating their access to higher education (Cagasan & Belonias, 2020). These financial resources alleviate the burdens associated with tuition and associated costs, thereby empowering individuals from diverse socio-economic backgrounds to pursue their scholarly aspirations. Such initiatives not only reduce barriers to entry but also contribute to improved retention rates among scholars (Ramadhianti & Soegoto, 2024). The availability of scholarship opportunities often serves as a significant motivator for academic achievement, inspiring recipients to engage deeply with their academic pursuits and participate in leadership initiatives that promote both personal and institutional success (Ramadhianti & Soegoto, 2024; Cagasan & Belonias, 2020).

Empirical studies have demonstrated that scholarship recipients frequently exhibit higher academic performance and are more likely to complete their degrees, further underscoring the crucial role of such programs in cultivating a culture of excellence and responsibility within educational institutions (Cagasan & Belonias, 2020). The theoretical framework underpinning this literature review synthesizes multiple educational theories that inform the dynamic interplay among Christian Religious Studies Education, leadership, and scholarship initiatives. Transformative learning theory is particularly salient, as it emphasizes the necessity of critical reflection in the learning process and aligns seamlessly with the holistic aims of Christian education (Mezirow, 1991).

Furthermore, educational leadership theory provides valuable insights into effective practices that foster a positive educational environment, while social capital theory elucidates the significance of relationships and networks in facilitating access to resources, including scholarships (Putnam, 2000; Lin, 2001). By weaving together these theoretical perspectives, this review aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationships among leadership, scholarship programs, and academic excellence within the context of Christian education, thereby contributing to an enriched discourse on the significance of these elements in fostering the overall development of students and institutions alike.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research approach to investigate the dynamics of Christian Religious Studies Education at Caleb University. A case study design is utilized to gain an in-depth understanding of the Christian Religious Studies Education Department.

Purposive sampling is employed to select participants, comprising of past-current undergraduate and postgraduate students, faculty members, and administrative staff involved in the department. Data collection involves semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to gather rich and detailed insights into participants' experiences and perspectives. Institutional documents, such as departmental reports, program curricula, and student performance records, are also analyzed to provide context and insights into the effectiveness of Christian Religious Studies Education.

Thematic analysis is used to identify key themes and patterns in participants' responses. The researcher immerses in the data, developing initial codes based on recurring topics and concepts related to leadership, scholarship support, academic success, and community involvement. These codes are organized into broader themes that reflect the study's primary findings. To ensure the credibility of the findings, member checking is employed, allowing key participants to review the findings and interpretations. Ethical considerations are prioritized, with participants providing informed consent and maintaining confidentiality through data anonymization.

This qualitative approach yields rich and meaningful insights into the dynamics of Christian Religious Studies Education at Caleb University. While the study's limitations include a small sample size and the subjective nature of qualitative data, the findings provide a nuanced understanding of the complex relationships among stakeholders in the Christian Religious Studies Education Department. The research design and methods employed in this study aim to contribute to the understanding of Christian Religious Studies Education and its implications for academic and societal development in Nigeria. By analyzing the experiences and perspectives of stakeholders, this study provides valuable insights into the dynamics of Christian Religious Studies Education at Caleb University.

The Christian Religious Studies Education Department at Caleb University: Historical Background, Mission, Objectives, Academic Programs, and Achievements

Caleb University, at Imota, Lagos State, Nigeria, a distinguished institution of higher learning in Nigeria, was envisioned by Prince Dr.Oladega Adebogun in 2008, reflecting a commitment to providing quality education informed by Christian moral values (Adebogun, 2023). This vision emerged from a foundation built upon the successes of earlier educational initiatives, notably Caleb Nursery and Primary School established in 1986, and Caleb International College founded in 1995 (Adebogun, 2023). These initial establishments consistently demonstrated a dedication to academic excellence and ethical integrity, setting a precedent for the educational aspirations of Caleb University (Adebogun, 2023). The journey towards establishing Caleb University reached a significant milestone in May 2007 when the institution received its provisional license from the Federal Government of Nigeria. It officially commenced its



academic activities in January 2008, welcoming its inaugural cohort of 141 students (Caleb University, n.d.). Since that crucial moment, Caleb University has undergone substantial growth, expanding its academic offerings, increasing its student population, and enhancing its infrastructure. According to Edugist, 2024, this dynamic evolution is aimed at creating a conducive learning environment that fosters intellectual curiosity, moral development, and professional readiness among its students. Caleb University's mission is to cultivate a community of scholars and professionals who are not only proficient in their respective fields but also firmly grounded in ethical principles (Edugist, 2024). The university seeks to produce graduates equipped with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to contribute positively to society (Caleb University, n.d.). This overarching goal is achieved through a commitment to academic rigor, interdisciplinary learning, and community engagement.

Within this framework, the Department of Christian Religious Studies Education was established in 2018 as an essential facet of the College of Education (Caleb University, n.d.). The department began with a modest enrollment of twelve students, yet it has experienced remarkable growth in both enrollment and faculty composition (Caleb University, 2021-2026). Pioneered by a dedicated group consisting of Dr. Adeniyi Oluwafemi Abodunrin - The Hod of the department, Olayinka Adedokun Samuel, and Mrs. F.F. Jemniwa, the department has evolved into a vibrant academic unit characterized by a commitment to excellence in religious education (Caleb University, 2021-2026). The past and current faculty of the Department of Christian Religious Studies Education is composed of esteemed scholars and practitioners who bring a wealth of experience and expertise. Among them are Prof. Falako Francis, Dr. Okunoye Job, Dr. Shogunle Seyi, Dr. Alaka Ambali, Dr. Ogundegi Abel, Dr. OluBukola Oluwagbemiga, Dr. Bimbo Shode, Dr. Femi Ajibola, Mr. Etimedok Victor, Mr. Tajudeen Ajibade, Dr. Yerokun Timothy, Dr. Ogunewu Michael Adeleke, Prof. Dairo Afolorunsho, Miss Obele Sandra Tomisin, Mrs. Kolawole Iyanu, and Dr. Samuel Olupinyo. Notably, Mr. Agunloye Elijah Olawale, a past student, and Mr. Soneye Ayomide Joseph, who holds the distinction of being the first graduate of the department with an impressive CGPA of 4.76, exemplify the high academic standards upheld by this esteemed department (Caleb University, 2021-2026).

The curriculum within the Department of Christian Religious Studies Education is meticulously designed to provide students with a comprehensive foundation across multiple disciplines pertinent to the religious sector and broader societal contexts (Caleb University, 2021-2026). The courses offered encompass a wide array of subjects, including philosophy, computer science, Islamic studies, comparative religious studies, church history, biblical studies, old testament, new testament, African traditional Studies, ethics, sociology, and education. This diverse academic framework not only encourages students to critically engage with pressing religious and social issues but also prepares them for impactful roles as educators and leaders (Caleb University, 2021-2026). The primary

objectives of the Christian Religious Studies Education program are multifaceted. They include the production of skilled educators and professionals capable of addressing the complex challenges presented by an increasingly dynamic global environment (Caleb University, 2021-2026). The program emphasizes the development of essential analytical and conceptual thinking skills, equipping students to understand, navigate, and positively influence their surroundings.

Moreover, the department is committed to fostering personal and professional growth among its students, instilling a sense of self-reliance and ethical responsibility that extends beyond academic achievement (Caleb University, 2021-2026). To ensure that incoming students are well-prepared for the rigors of academic life in the Department of Christian Religious Studies Education, the admission criteria are structured meticulously to attract qualified candidates. Prospective students are required to possess a Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSCE) with credit passes in relevant subjects. They must also sit for the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) examination, with Christian Religious Studies, English, Government, and Literature as required subject combinations. Students meeting the department's requirements, including a competitive JAMB score, may be admitted into the program. For direct entry into the 200 level, candidates must hold a relevant diploma or certificate in Christian Religious Studies or Education, such as a National Certificate in Education (NCE) or a related field Diploma (Caleb University, 2021-2026). This approach reflects the department's commitment to academic excellence and cultivating a diverse, intellectually vibrant student body.

Since its inception in 2018, the Department of Christian Religious Studies Education at Caleb University has made remarkable strides in academic and community engagement. This growth is evidenced by several notable achievements that underscore the department's commitment to cultivating scholars and transforming lives. One of the most significant indicators of the department's success is the increase in student enrollment. The department has witnessed a steady rise in its student population, growing from (12) twelve in its founding year to (15) fifteen in 2019, (18) eighteen in 2020, and (17) seventeen in the following year (Caleb University, 2021-2026). This upward trend in enrollment reflects the department's burgeoning reputation within the field of Christian Religious Studies Education. Anticipation surrounds the future, with projections indicating that the department is poised not only to excel among private universities but also to rival state and federal universities throughout Nigeria.

In addition to increasing enrollment, the department has distinguished itself through the production of notable scholars. Among them is Mr. Soneye Ayomide Joseph, who achieved an impressive CGPA of 4.76 in Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education in Christian Religious Studies Education, in the year 2022/2023 academic session (Caleb University, 2024; Caleb University, Christian Religious Studies Education Department File, n.d.). His academic excellence has paved the way for further studies,

as he has completed his master's degree at Caleb University and has returned to contribute as a lecturer (Caleb University, 2024; Caleb University, Christian Religious Studies Education Department File, n.d.). The department is excited to announce that the upcoming 2024/2025 graduation set is expected to showcase a record of four first-class graduates, further enhancing its academic reputation (Yerokun Timothy, Personal Interview, and June 13, 2025). The impact of the Department of Christian Religious Studies Education extends well beyond the academic sphere into community transformation, particularly through its evangelistic outreach programs conducted on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. These initiatives have resulted in significant spiritual growth among participants. For instance, Sis Esther from Agboyi Alapere has shared a personal testimony about facing difficulties in her examinations, attributing her academic success to the prayers offered during these outreach events. Similarly, Mr. and Mrs. Omotoro from the same community have expressed how their involvement with the department evangelistic activities has facilitated progress in various aspects of their lives, demonstrating a tangible commitment to spiritual development (Based on interactions with students from the Department of Christian Religious Studies Education at Caleb University, including insights shared by Abu Oluwaseyi Tosin).

In addition to its notable undergraduate achievements, the Department of Christian Religious Studies Education at Caleb University has established a robust array of postgraduate programs. These include a Master of Arts in Christian Religious Studies, a Doctor of Philosophy in Christian Religious Studies, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Courses (PGDE), the latter of which was launched in the 2023/2024 academic session (Caleb University, n.d.). The inaugural cohort began with approximately sixty students across the PGDE, Master's, and PhD programs (Caleb University, n.d.). A pivotal figure in this development is Professor Dairo Afolorunsho, who served as the first Dean of the College Of Education, Caleb University. Joining from Redeemer University for a sabbatical leave, his leadership has been instrumental in shaping the program's direction and attracting esteemed faculty members to join the College and the department. Prof. Afolorunsho's commitment to excellence has set a strong foundation for the ongoing success and growth of the postgraduate programs at Caleb University (Caleb University, n.d.). However, the enrollment numbers have increased significantly, with over one hundred students admitted in the 2024/2025 academic session (Base on Caleb University, Christian Religious Studies Education, department Report). The Department of Christian Religious Studies Education at Caleb University also made profound impact on the personal growth and development of its students, as evident in the testimonials of students such as Soneye Adebawale Joshua, Victor Obaji, and Seyi Abu Tosin. These individuals attribute significant changes in their life attitudes and behaviors to their academic experience in the department. Specifically, Soneye Adebawale Joshua, a third-year student, credits the department with shaping his personal development, stating that his life trajectory would have been different without

its influence. Similarly, Victor Obaji and Seyi Abu Tosin report positive transformations, highlighting increased wisdom, knowledge, and expertise as direct outcomes of their academic journey in the department (Based on interactions with students from the Department of Christian Religious Studies Education at Caleb University).

Furthermore, the Department of Christian Religious Studies Education at Caleb University significantly contributes to the academic community through various initiatives. One notable contribution is the upcoming publication of postgraduate research articles in its dedicated JOCRED journal, providing a platform for scholars to share their research findings. Additionally, the department hosted an impactful academic conference in July 2025, in collaboration with the National Association for the Study of Religions and Education (NASRED). The conference theme, "Religion, Education, and Cultural Identity in the Age of Globalization," brought together scholars to present their research and engage in intellectual discourse (Caleb University, 2025; NASRED, 2025). This event highlights the department's commitment to fostering a vibrant academic environment and promoting interdisciplinary discussions on religion, education, and cultural identity (Caleb University, 2025; NASRED, 2025). Through critical examination of the intersections between these themes, the department aims to contribute meaningfully to ongoing debates in the field. The conference featured keynote speakers, including Professor Olalekan Asikhia, Vice-Chancellor of Caleb University, and lead paper presenters such as Professor Khadijah Olaniyan-Sobowale and Dr. Adeniyi Oluwafemi Abodunrin, Ag. Dean, college Of Education, Caleb University, who discussed topics like Islam, Christianity, education, and cultural identity in Nigeria.

The Department of Christian Religious Studies Education at Caleb University is committed to nurturing future leaders through various student leadership development opportunities, notably the Christian Religious Studies Students Association (CRESSA). This initiative provides students with a platform to develop their leadership skills, preparing them for future endeavors. As Kamajalodun Adewale, a current 400-level student, reflects, "My leadership potential has been honed through the positions I have held within the department" (Kamajalodun Adewale, personal communication). Similarly, Soneye Ayomide Joseph, a former Vice President of the department, attributes his leadership development to his experiences within CRESSA (Soneye Ayomide Joseph, public charge, 2024). The impact of CRESSA on students' leadership development is evident in the success of its alumni. Anointing Darasimi, the first President of the department, has gone on to successfully lead his own ministry, exemplifying the department's ability to nurture future leaders. These examples illustrate the department's commitment to empowering students and equipping them with the skills and confidence needed to excel in their future endeavors. The emphasis on leadership development within the department is consistent with the university's mission to produce graduates who are not only academically sound but also leaders in their respective

fields (Caleb University, n.d.). By providing students with opportunities to develop their leadership skills, the department is fulfilling its mandate to produce well-rounded graduates.

The Scholarship Program Offered by Oladega Adebogun: An Analysis of Its Overview, Eligibility Criteria, Benefits, and Impact

Oladega Adebogun is a notable Christian leader and educator in Nigeria, serving as the founder of the World Revival Faith Ministry (WRFM) and the visionary behind Caleb University (Soneye, 2023; Soneye et al., 2025; Soneye, 2025). His life story kick started from a troubled early upbringing to a committed minister and educationist serves as a powerful illustration of how faith and education can transform lives (Soneye, 2023; Soneye et al., 2025; soneye, 2025). Adebogun's early life experiences, including interactions with traditional practices in Imota, Lagos State, led to a profound spiritual awakening when he joined the Deeper Life Bible Church in 1985 (Adebogun, 2023; Soneye et al., 2025). Under the mentorship of Pastor W.F. Kumuyi, he found a new direction that combined his commitment to God with leadership, which has become a cornerstone of his work. In establishing Caleb University in 2008, Adebogun aimed to create an institution that would provide quality education rooted in Christian moral values (Adebogun, 2023). This vision was built upon a well-established foundation laid by previous educational endeavors, such as Caleb Nursery and Primary School, established in 1986, and Caleb International College, founded in 1995. Both institutions demonstrated a commitment to academic excellence and ethical integrity, which set a high standard for the educational aspirations of Caleb University (Adebogun, 2023).

The establishment of Caleb University was a significant milestone in Nigeria's educational landscape. In May 2007, the university received provisional licensing from the Federal Government, marking a transformative step forward. The institution commenced academic activities in January 2008, welcoming its first cohort of 141 students (Adebogun, 2023). Since its inception, Caleb University has experienced significant growth, not only expanding its academic offerings but also increasing its student population and enhancing its infrastructure (Caleb University, n.d). This evolution aims to create a conducive learning environment that nurtures intellectual curiosity, moral development, and professional preparedness among students (Adebogun, 2023). Adebogun's academic pursuits have been extensive, culminating in multiple degrees. He earned a Bachelor's degree in Educational Administration from the University of Port Harcourt, a Master's in Educational Management from Lagos State University, and a Ph.D. in Educational Administration and Planning from Bayero University, Kano (Adebogun, n.d.).

This academic background equips him with the necessary tools to influence positive change within the educational sector. Prior to founding WRFM and Caleb University, Adebogun held significant roles in education, including

serving as Principal Inspector of Education in Lagos State. His multifaceted experiences have fueled his passion for improving educational outcomes, particularly for underprivileged students.

One of Oladega Adebogun's most impactful initiatives is his scholarship program, which provides financial assistance to deserving students, particularly within the Christian Religious Studies Education Department at Caleb University. This program was inspired by Adebogun's own childhood experiences with financial hardship, which hindered his access to secondary education (Vanguard News, 2018; Business Day NG, 2024). In recognizing these challenges faced by many young Nigerians today, he has committed significant resources to ensure that financial limitations do not obstruct students' educational pursuits (THISDAYLIVE, 2024). This scholarship initiative covers essential expenses such as tuition fees, accommodation, and study materials, allowing students to concentrate on their academic goals without the burden of financial stress. The scholarship program has made a significant impact, with Adebogun spending close to N19 million on scholarships for 75 students in the 2016/2017 academic session (Vanguard News, 2018). His commitment to education development has earned him recognition, including the Pan-African Leadership Award for spending over N19 million annually on scholarships for African youths and providing quality leadership. Additionally, he has been appointed as a member of the International Youth Fellowship Advisory Committee for demonstrated passion, zeal, and ability to enhance and better the lives of youths globally. The scholarship program has specific eligibility criteria that reflect Adebogun's focus on integrating academic merit with spiritual commitment. Candidates must be born-again Christians, a requirement that underscores the program's alignment with Christian values. Additionally, active participation in local church activities is essential, as students are expected to serve their communities through church involvement. A pastoral attestation is also required, verifying the applicant's dedication to faith and service. Finally, candidates must demonstrate a commitment to academic excellence, showcasing the program's aim to nurture individuals who can excel in both their studies and spiritual journeys (Adebogun, personal Interview, and Sept. 2023).

The benefits of this scholarship program are multifaceted and substantial. Financial support helps alleviate the burdens associated with tuition and other educational expenses, allowing students to focus on their studies more intently. Given the financial challenges many families face in Nigeria, this relief is particularly significant. Moreover, the scholarship fosters a vibrant community among recipients, creating opportunities for mentorship and collaboration, essential for both academic success and personal development. The impact of the scholarship program on students' academic performance and career trajectories is notable. With financial constraints lifted, students can dedicate themselves fully to their academic work, often experiencing dramatic improvements in their performance and motivation. Recipients frequently report a renewed sense of purpose, allowing them to engage



deeply with their educational goals (Soneye, 2023; Soneye, 2025). In addition to academic success, the program emphasizes the importance of leadership and community service. By requiring students to be involved in their local churches, the scholarship instills a strong sense of responsibility and purpose in its recipients (Soneye, 2023; Soneye, 2025). This focus equips them to become future leaders and advocates for social change, influenced by Adebogun's example of service integrated with personal development.

Adeniyi Oluwafemi Abodunrin: A Pioneer in Christian Religious Studies Education, Caleb University

Adeniyi Oluwafemi Abodunrin has emerged as a prominent figure in the academic landscape, serving as a Senior Lecturer and Head Of the department of Christian Religious Studies Education at Caleb University. He is especially recognized for his vital role in founding the Christian Religious Studies (CRS) Education department, responding to a need for quality religious education in Nigeria (A. O. Abodunrin, personal communication, March 15, 2025). His efforts have laid a strong foundation for the growth of religious studies within higher education, making a significant impact not only on the lives of his students but also on the broader community. Born on October 10, 1971, Adeniyi Oluwafemi comes from the esteemed Abodunrin dynasty in Ikotun-Ile, located in the Oyun Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria (A. O. Abodunrin, personal communication, March 15, 2025). His background instilled in him a value for education and service, guiding his academic pursuits throughout his life. He began his educational journey by earning an Honors degree in Christian Religious Studies from the University of Ilorin, where his passion for the subject began to flourish. After completing his undergraduate studies, he continued to explore this field and earned a Master's degree in Christian Religious Studies, again at the University of Ilorin. Fueled by an insatiable thirst for knowledge and a desire to elevate his understanding of religious topics, he pursued a PhD at Kogi State University, which is now known as Prince Abubakar Audu University (PAAU), (A. O. Abodunrin, personal communication, March 15, 2025).

These academic achievements not only emphasize his dedication to Christian Religious Studies Education but also prepare him for a profound and impactful career in academia. Abodunrin's teaching career took off at the Kwara State College of Education, Oro, where he began as an Assistant Lecturer. From there, he transitioned to Joseph Ayo Babalola University, which provided him with additional experience and exposure in the field of education. He also had a brief position at Redeemer's University, where he continued to hone his teaching skills and academic insights. A notable milestone in his career occurred in 2018 when he was instrumental in launching the (CRS) Education department at Caleb University (Caleb University, 2021-2026; A. O. Abodunrin, personal communication, March 15, 2025; Caleb University. n.d). This critical role demonstrated his transformative vision

for religious education and his capacity for leadership. His leadership qualities were quickly recognized within the institution, leading to his promotion first to Senior Lecturer, then to Head Of the Christian Religious Studies Education department and subsequently to Acting Dean of the College of Education (Caleb University. n.d.). This career progression highlights his significant influence and contributions within the academic community, showcasing his commitment to advancing education in Nigeria. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Abodunrin has built a robust research profile that informs his academic practice, with scholarly interests primarily focusing on Islamic studies and the Orthodox caliphate (Abodunrin, n.d.). His research has significantly enhanced the body of knowledge within Christian Religious Studies Education, contributing valuable insights that help others navigate the intersections of faith and society (Abodunrin, n.d.). Abodunrin has authored over 50 publications in reputable academic journals and contributed to various academic chapters, including *Leadership Perspectives on Church Development Dynamics in Nigeria* (Soneye et al., 2025).

As the Head Of department, Acting Dean and Senior Lecturer, Abodunrin emphasizes several key principles that are essential to his leadership. Foremost among these is his unwavering commitment to academic excellence. He actively advocates for high academic standards within the Christian Religious studies education department, embodying the principles of integrity and rigor in education. His commitment to these ideals has led to a flourishing academic environment that supports student success. He has inspired numerous students, such as Soneye Ayomide Joseph, who graduated with first-class honors and later returned to contribute as a dedicated lecturer, after his master's program (Caleb University. n.d). Abodunrin's focus on high academic standards has led to increased enrollment and administrative strength, enabling the department to attract talented students and esteemed scholars who enrich the educational experience (Caleb University, 2021-2026). Beyond academics, Abodunrin's commitment to fostering spiritual growth in his students is evident. This approach aligns with the importance of mentorship in Christian leadership development, as highlighted in the study on Josiah Akindayomi and Enoch Adeboye (Soneye, Agunloye, & Sanyaolu, 2025). By recognizing that education encompasses not only intellectual development but also moral and spiritual growth, Abodunrin creates a holistic educational environment. This is reflected in community-focused evangelism initiatives that engage students and encourage them to cultivate their faith alongside their academic studies, as shared by various students (interviews, June 13, 2025).

Furthermore, he actively promotes community engagement, through secondary school outreach, believing that a strong connection with the community enhances students' learning experiences. His mentoring style encourages students and colleagues alike to strive for both academic achievements and personal spiritual enrichment (Various students' interviews, June 13, 2025). Additionally, Abodunrin is deeply committed to mentorship. He recognizes the importance of guiding the



next generation of scholars and leaders in religious education. By providing support and encouragement, he fosters a culture of personal growth and academic rigor within the department (Various students' interviews, June 13, 2025). His mentorship not only enriches the academic experiences of his students but also prepares them for future roles as educators and community leaders (Various students' interviews, June 13, 2025).

Findings and Discussion

The study conducted on the Christian Religious Studies Education Department at Caleb University has yielded several insightful findings, reflecting the profound influence of leadership, scholarship programs, and the overall perception of Christian Religious Studies Education in fostering both academic excellence and societal contributions. One of the most striking outcomes of this research was the significant growth in enrollment in department of Christian Religious Studies at Caleb University, since its inception in 2018. Initially, the department started with a modest cohort of 12 students. However, over the years, it has witnessed a substantial increase in enrollment. As of the 2024/2025 session, the department has expanded to approximately 60 undergraduate students (Caleb University. n.d.). The postgraduate program has also seen a remarkable surge, with over 100 students currently pursuing advanced degrees, including Master of Arts, Doctor of Philosophy, and Postgraduate Diploma Education (PGDE) in Christian Religious Studies Education (Agunloye Elijah Olawale, Personal Communication, August 18, 2025; Caleb University. n.d.). This growth showcase the department's commitment to academic excellence and its reputation as a leading institution for Christian Religious Studies Education in Nigeria.

The sharp increase in enrollment not only illustrates the rising interest in religious education but also highlights the department's effectiveness in appealing to contemporary students seeking a comprehensive understanding of faith and its relevance in today's world. One notable outcome of this growth is the production of exceptional scholars. For instance, Soneye Ayomide Joseph, the first (1st class) graduate in the department and in the College of Education in 2023, has set a high standard for academic excellence with the CGPA of 4.76 (Caleb University. 2024). After completing his Master of Arts in Christian Religious Studies at the same institution, he returned as a lecturer, inspiring other students to strive for similar achievements (Various students' interviews, June 13, 2025). Equally notable is the impact of leadership within the Christian Religious Studies Education department, particularly the influence of key figures such as Adeniyi Oluwafemi Abodunrin and Oladega Adebogun. Their leadership has been identified as a critical driving force behind the department's successes. Both leaders have demonstrated unwavering commitment to upholding high academic standards while fostering community engagement. Their approach has not only contributed to improved academic outcomes but has also cultivated a nurturing environment that encourages personal development among students. This nurturing climate is essential for fostering not just

intellect, but also the moral and ethical foundations that are crucial for future leaders.

The scholarship program initiated by Oladega Adebogun stands as another hallmark of the department's commitment to excellence. This program has proven to be effective in alleviating the financial burdens that often hinder students from pursuing their educational aspirations. Many recipients of the scholarship reported significant improvements in their academic performance, heightened levels of motivation, and increased engagement in community service activities (Various students' interviews, June 13, 2025). Such outcomes align seamlessly with the Caleb University objectives, which emphasize not only academic achievement but also the development of leadership qualities among students. By reducing financial barriers, the scholarship program ensures that all students, regardless of their economic background, have the opportunity to excel in their studies (Vanguard News. 2018).

The transformational experiences reported by students within the Christian Religious Studies Education department further emphasize the efficacy of this educational approach. Many students articulated profound changes in their ethical reasoning, leadership skills, and commitment to serving their communities (Various students' interviews, June 13, 2025). These testimonials reflect a holistic educational experience that integrates faith with learning, fostering a profound personal development journey (St. Paul Lutheran School Northville, n.d.). This approach is consistent with the prophetic role of shaping societal values and norms, as exemplified in the biblical account of II Samuel 12:1-12, which highlights the importance of moral guidance in shaping individual and collective behavior (Yerokun & Soneye, 2025). This transformation is indicative of the department's philosophy, which prioritizes not only academic excellence but also the moral and spiritual growth of its students (Caleb University. 2021-2026). Moreover, the active engagement of the Christian Religious Studies Education students department in community outreach and evangelism initiatives illustrates the practical application of students' learning. These programs serve as vital platforms for reinforcing theological education while simultaneously promoting spiritual growth and moral responsibility among students. The integration of community engagement within the curriculum not only enhances the student experience but also reinforces the ideals of service and leadership that are central to the mission of Christian education.

In discussing these findings in light of existing literatures, it is clear that the insights gathered resonate with and support various scholars' studies on Christian Religious Studies Education. The interdisciplinary nature of Christian Religious Studies Education, as articulated by scholars like Kgatle (2024) and Freiburger, (2018), is clearly reflected in the diverse curriculum offered at Caleb University, which seeks to merge intellectual rigor with spiritual enrichment. This curriculum not only engages students in critical analysis of religious texts and practices but also prepares them to confront and address complex societal issues. Furthermore, the leadership styles



demonstrated by Abodunrin and Adebogun embody the principles of servant leadership highlighted by Greenleaf (1977) and Hancock (2019). Their focus on creating a supportive and service-oriented environment has facilitated a culture that encourages students to thrive both academically and personally. This aligns with research that links effective leadership to enhanced educational outcomes, underscoring the importance of visionary leadership in educational institutions (Wahyuningtyas et al., 2024).

The findings also corroborate the positive impact of scholarship programs on student success, as noted by Mutevere et al. (2024) and Qi et al. (2022). The relief provided by these scholarships not only boosts academic performance but also enhances retention rates among students, illustrating that well-structured financial support can significantly uplift educational outcomes. Additionally, the study's insights align with Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory, which underscores the importance of critical reflection in the learning process. The narrative of student experiences collected during the research underscores how the Christian Religious Studies Education curriculum encourages deeper understandings of ethical dilemmas, preparing graduates to navigate the complexities of modern society with confidence and compassion. Lastly, the emphasis on community engagement aligns with Putnam's (2000) social capital theory, which highlights the importance of relationships and networks in facilitating access to resources. The outreach initiatives not only serve the community but also foster relationships that enhance students' educational experiences and commitment to service.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of this research underscore the critical role that Christian Religious Studies Education plays within the academic framework of Caleb University and its profound influence on shaping the ethical and spiritual development of students. The remarkable growth in enrollment, alongside the emergence of outstanding scholars such as Soneye Ayomide Joseph, exemplifies the department's commitment to achieving academic excellence while attracting students in search of a comprehensive and relevant religious education. The visionary leadership demonstrated by figures such as Adeniyi Oluwafemi Abodunrin and Oladega Adebogun has been instrumental in cultivating an enriching learning environment, characterized by the integration of community engagement and ethical reasoning. Additionally, Adebogun's scholarship program signifies a critical advancement in addressing financial barriers, thus providing essential support for students to excel academically while fostering a robust sense of social responsibility. Overall, this research illustrates that Christian Religious Studies Education transcends mere preparation for religious leadership; it serves as a transformative process that equips students with vital critical thinking skills, ethical frameworks, and a profound commitment to service applicable across various societal sectors. By meticulously merging rigorous academic inquiry with practical application, the department not only

facilitates the personal growth of its students but also extends its influence beyond academic achievements, preparing them to become informed and responsible citizens who actively contribute to the betterment of society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are proposed for the Christian Religious Studies Education department at Caleb University, educators, policymakers, and students:

1. Enhance Community Outreach Programs: The Christian Religious Studies Education Department at Caleb University, should expand its community outreach initiatives to forge more robust partnerships with local organizations. This expansion would deepen the students' learning experiences while further embedding the institution within its community, thereby amplifying its social impact.
2. Develop Tailored Mentorship Programs: Establish structured mentorship programs that effectively pair undergraduate students with postgraduate mentors. This initiative would provide crucial guidance for younger students and foster a culture of academic excellence and personal development within the department, which could significantly enhance student retention and satisfaction.
3. Increase Scholarship Opportunities: The department should actively pursue additional funding sources and forge partnerships with local businesses, non-governmental organizations, and religious institutions to broaden the scholarship program. Expanding financial aid options will significantly benefit underprivileged students, enhancing equity in access to education.
4. Implement Continuous Curriculum Review: Establish a systematic approach to regularly assess and update the curriculum to ensure its relevance to contemporary societal challenges. This process should include the integration of courses that address current ethical dilemmas, social justice, and leadership in a complex world, thereby enriching the educational experience.
5. Promote Interdisciplinary Learning: Strengthen interdisciplinary approaches by integrating courses and facilitating collaborative projects with other university departments. This strategy would cultivate a holistic educational environment, better preparing students to address the multifaceted issues facing society.
6. Focus on Student Feedback: Create a systematic feedback mechanism that allows students to share their experiences and suggestions regarding the curriculum, instructional methodologies, and community engagement activities. Such feedback should guide ongoing improvements within the department and contribute to a dynamic learning environment.
7. Prepare Students for Diverse Career Paths: Actively highlight and promote alternative career pathways for graduates that extend beyond traditional religious roles. Implement initiatives such as comprehensive career counseling and disseminate alumni success stories to



inspire students to explore varied opportunities in fields such as education, social work, and community development.

8. Enhance Faculty Development Opportunities: Invest strategically in faculty development programs that focus on innovative teaching strategies, effective research methodologies, and engagement practices within the community. Empowering faculty with these advanced skills will significantly elevate the overall educational quality provided to students.

By implementing these recommendations, the Christian Religious Studies Education Department at Caleb University can further solidify its reputation as a leader in religious education, optimize its societal contributions, and continue to promote both personal and academic growth among its diverse student population. The enhancements proposed not only aim to strengthen the educational framework of the department but also to, ultimately, position it as a vital catalyst for societal transformation in the broader context of Nigeria's educational landscape.

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