

EFFECT OF STORY-BASED LEARNING ON PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS' ACHIEVEMENT IN CHRISTIAN VALUES IN ILORIN, KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Instilling Christian values in primary school is crucial for shaping young minds and laying a strong foundation for lifelong character development. Therefore, this study investigated the effect of story-based learning (SBL) on primary school pupils' achievement in Christian values in Ilorin, Kwara State. A quasi-experimental design was employed involving 118 primary four pupils from two schools in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. The study employed a pre-test post-test control group design. Two intact classes participated in the study; one class was used for the experimental group, while the second class served as the control group. The experimental group was exposed to the treatment, which was teaching Christian values through story-based learning, and the control group was taught with a conventional method. Data was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics (Mean & ANCOVA), the findings revealed a significant main effect of SBL on pupils' achievement in Christian values. While no significant interaction effect was found between SBL and gender, the effectiveness of SBL depended largely on parents' educational qualifications. The study concludes that SBL significantly enhances pupils' achievement in Christian values. Recommendations include providing comprehensive training for teachers on SBL methodologies and encouraging parental participation in Christian values education.

Key Words: Story-based Learning, Christian Values, Achievement, Gender and Parental Education

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Christian values education is an intentional approach to teaching and learning that promotes the fundamental principles of Christianity through various instructional strategies and school cultures. This approach

utilises Bible stories, parables, prayer, worship, and service-learning projects to help children grasp and embody the virtues demonstrated by Jesus Christ (Berryman, 2002). What sets Christian values education apart from secular character education is its explicit connection of moral virtues to a theological framework,

highlighting the idea that values stem from God's nature and are revealed through Scripture (Greer, 2011). In primary schools, Christian values education includes a range of curricular and extracurricular activities designed to nurture children's moral, spiritual, and social growth through Christian principles. By incorporating biblical teachings and Christian values, such as love, compassion, forgiveness, honesty, and humility, into the school environment, Christian values education shapes character and cultivates a supportive community (Hay and Nye, 2006).

Christian values education in primary schools effectively employs methods like storytelling using biblical parables, role-modeling by teachers, and regular routines such as morning prayers or assemblies. These approaches are developmentally suitable, enabling students to internalize the teachings. According to Adeyemi (2010), children possess an innate capacity for moral development that can be nurtured through narrative, reflection, and example. Early primary education provides a fertile foundation for instilling Christian moral values. Primary schools offer a structured environment where values can be consistently taught and reinforced. As posited by Okonkwo (2015), citing Bandura's social learning theory, children learn by observing and imitating those around them. Teachers serve as moral exemplars, demonstrating Christian values like patience, forgiveness, and humility, making these values tangible and applicable in everyday life.

Christian Religious Studies (CRS) aims to develop and foster in the lives of the students Christian attitudes and values such as respect for life, obedience to constitutional authority, responsible self, selfless service to God and humanity. CRS is seen as an academic discipline that is designed to provide learners with moral and spiritual transformation. Christian Religious Studies is further seen as a

social science subject that teaches students good moral behaviour, fear of God, knowledge, and skills that will enable them to contribute their quota in socio-economic and moral development of the country. The inclusion of sound religious and moral values in the life of students would invariably help in the development of the spiritual and moral well-being of the students (Njoku, 2016).

Story-Based Learning (SBL) involves utilising structured narratives to achieve educational objectives. This approach harnesses the power of storytelling to captivate learners, promote engagement, and facilitate knowledge acquisition. Story-telling has long been a potent tool for cultivating knowledge and values in children, sparking their imagination, and teaching essential life lessons. Faith-based stories, in particular, provide rich moral guidance, encouraging critical thinking and fostering empathy in young minds. By exploring universal moral values through narratives, children develop a deeper understanding of right and wrong, cultivating a strong moral compass (Ashmore, 2023).

SBL is highly effective in teaching Christian values to primary school pupils, as it engages both their imagination and emotions, rendering moral and spiritual lessons more memorable and impactful. Through stories, children are introduced to role models whose actions exemplify Christian virtues such as love, forgiveness, and compassion (Stonehouse and May, 2010). This modelling helps them internalise and imitate positive behaviours. Furthermore, stories provide age-appropriate contexts that enable young learners to comprehend abstract values in concrete, relatable ways (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2004). Story-telling encourages active participation through discussions and reflections, thereby deepening moral understanding and supporting the development of personal faith (Wilhoit, 2008). It also

contributes to broader educational objectives by enhancing literacy, listening skills, and critical thinking. Moreover, story-based learning is inclusive and adaptable, allowing educators to connect biblical values with children's real-world experiences and diverse cultural backgrounds by embedding values into compelling narratives. SLB fosters both cognitive and spiritual growth, making it a powerful tool in Christian education (Lemonidis and Kaiafa, 2019).

The primary school level is an ideal time for teaching Christian values, given the unique developmental, social, and educational characteristics of children at this stage. During these formative years, children are in a critical phase of moral and spiritual growth. According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, children aged 7-11 are in the concrete operational stage, where they begin to understand rules, consequences, and moral reasoning tangibly (Piaget, 1932). This makes them particularly receptive to value-based instruction, as they can grasp moral concepts like honesty, kindness, and fairness when taught through relatable stories and real-life examples.

Gender can shape pupils' achievement in Christian values through various sociocultural and educational dynamics. In many Christian educational settings, traditional gender-specific expectations prevail, often associating girls with virtues like obedience, humility, and compassion, while encouraging boys to embody leadership, assertiveness, and moral fortitude. These implicit or explicit expectations can influence how pupils internalize and express Christian values. For instance, girls may be more likely to participate in nurturing or service-oriented activities that align with Christian virtues, potentially leading to higher achievement in these areas (Francis and Penny, 2014). In contrast, boys may be less engaged in such

activities if they conflict with dominant masculine norms, which could hinder their development in certain Christian moral domains.

Gender differences in religious socialization can impact pupils' engagement and moral development. Research suggests that girls tend to report higher levels of religious commitment and moral reasoning within Christian frameworks compared to boys (Collett and Lizardo, 2009). This disparity may be due to family and school environments that reinforce gendered approaches to faith expression. In Christian education, which emphasizes values like forgiveness, charity, and empathy, girls may excel due to their socialization toward emotional expressiveness and relational thinking. However, without equally affirming models for boys to engage with these values, their achievement in internalising and practicing Christian values might be lower.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the evolving educational strategies that aim to reduce gender bias and promote equal engagement with Christian values for all pupils. Many faith-based schools are adopting inclusive curricula that challenge traditional gender roles, encouraging all students to embody a wide range of Christian virtues (Robinson & Nason-Clark, 2010). By creating environments that support diverse expressions of faith and morality, educators can help bridge the gender gap in pupils' achievement in Christian values. Ultimately, while gender can influence how pupils experience and demonstrate Christian values, intentional teaching approaches and inclusive school cultures can ensure equal opportunities for every pupil to grow spiritually and morally.

Parental education plays a significant role in shaping pupils' academic achievement and values acquisition, laying the foundation for

children's cognitive and moral development. Educated parents are better equipped to create enriching home environments that support academic learning and foster a culture valuing education and ethics. They tend to be more involved in their children's education, monitoring progress, assisting with homework, and communicating with teachers (Davis-Kean, 2005). This engagement reinforces the importance of education, boosting pupils' academic motivation and performance. Additionally, the language and literacy practices in educated households contribute to stronger reading and comprehension skills in early childhood, a key predictor of long-term academic success.

Beyond academics, parental education plays a vital role in transmitting values to children. Educated parents tend to have a deeper understanding of moral reasoning, religious instruction, and social expectations, emphasizing values like responsibility, honesty, and empathy. They model these values through daily interactions and explicitly teach them during conversations about school, friendships, and personal challenges. Research suggests that more educated parents are likely to use reasoning-based discipline rather than punitive measures, encouraging children to internalise values through understanding rather than fear (Bornstein and Bradley, 2014). This approach fosters critical thinking and ethical decision-making, enabling pupils to apply moral principles in diverse contexts.

Moreover, the socioeconomic advantages associated with higher parental education, such as access to quality schools, extracurricular activities, and educational resources, further support academic and moral development. Pupils from educated families are more likely to be exposed to diverse viewpoints, cultural experiences, and structured routines, contributing to a balanced worldview and stronger character formation. These children

often grow up with clear expectations and aspirations, both academically and morally, providing a framework for goal-setting and ethical behaviour. As Eccles (2005) notes, parental expectations are a powerful influence on children's academic and behavioural outcomes, shaping their development and future prospects.

While parental education level is a significant influence, it is not the sole determinant of a child's academic and value-oriented outcomes. Other factors like peer influence, school environment, religious instruction, and personal temperament also play crucial roles. Nevertheless, educated parents provide a strong foundation through communication, role modeling, and structured support, giving pupils a distinct advantage in academic achievement and value acquisition. Investing in parental education can have a ripple effect, positively impacting not only individual pupils but also the broader educational and moral landscape of society.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The primary school system in Nigeria, particularly in Kwara State, Ilorin, is confronted with substantial challenges in effectively imparting Christian values to pupils. Despite the crucial role these values play in molding the moral fabric of society, the current educational framework appears to be falling short (Adeyemi, 2010). The significance of Christian values in shaping the character and moral compass of young minds cannot be overstated. However, studies have consistently shown that many primary school pupils in Nigeria lack a comprehensive understanding of these values, which has contributed to a noticeable decline in moral standards and a corresponding rise in social vices (Okonkwo, 2015).

One of the primary factors exacerbating this issue is the preponderance of traditional teaching methods in primary schools. These methods, which often prioritize rote learning and memorization over critical thinking and engagement, have been widely criticized for their ineffectiveness in promoting meaningful learning and value internalization (Afolabi, 2017). The conventional approach to teaching Christian values tends to focus on imparting knowledge in a didactic manner, without adequately considering the pupils' emotional and spiritual development. This pedagogical approach can lead to a superficial understanding of Christian values, rather than a deep-seated commitment to living out these principles.

Moreover, the dearth of engaging and interactive teaching approaches has resulted in pupils' disinterest and disengagement from learning Christian values (Ojo, 2019). When pupils are not actively involved in the learning process, they are less likely to develop a genuine appreciation for the values being taught. The lack of interactivity and engagement can also lead to a disconnect between the values taught in school and the pupils' everyday experiences, making it challenging for them to see the relevance and applicability of these values in real-life situations.

In light of these challenges, this study seeks to investigate the effect of Story-Based Learning (SBL) on primary school pupils' achievement in Christian values in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. By exploring the potential of SBL as a more effective and engaging approach to teaching Christian values, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing efforts to improve the moral education of primary school pupils in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of story-based learning on primary school pupils' achievement in Christian values in Kwara State, Nigeria. Other specific purposes were to determine the:

1. General achievement level of primary school pupils in Christian Values in Ilorin, Kwara State;
2. Effect of story-based learning on primary school pupils' achievement in Christian values in Ilorin, Kwara State, based on gender; and
3. Effect of story-based learning on primary school pupils' achievement in Christian values in Ilorin, Kwara State, based on parents' educational qualification.

Research Questions

1. What is the general achievement level of primary school pupils in Christian Values in Ilorin, Kwara State?
2. Is there any significant difference in the achievement of male and female pupils taught with story-based learning in Christian values in Ilorin, Kwara State?
3. Is there any significant difference in the achievement of pupils taught with story-based learning in Christian values in Ilorin, Kwara State, based on parents' educational qualifications?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study:

- H₀₁:** There is no significant effect of story-based learning on primary school pupils' achievement in Christian values in Ilorin, Kwara State, based on gender.
- H₀₂:** There is no significant effect of story-based learning on primary school pupils' achievement in Christian values in Ilorin, Kwara State, based on parents' educational qualifications.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quasi-experimental pre-test post-test control group design to investigate the effectiveness of Story-based learning on primary school pupils' achievement in Christian values in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. The choice of this design is based on its suitability for educational research, where random assignment of participants may not be feasible. The study involves two groups: the experimental group, which was taught with SBL, and the control group, which was exposed to a conventional teaching method. A pre-test was administered to both groups before the instructional intervention to establish baseline knowledge in Christian Values, and a post-test was conducted after the

intervention to assess the pupils' learning outcomes.

The population of the study consisted of all primary school pupils in Ilorin South Local Government Area of Kwara State. The study sample consisted of all primary four pupils. Two schools were Purposively selected out of 105 schools. A total number of 118 students (54 males and 64 females) and 2 Christian Religious Studies teachers participated in this study. Two intact classes participated in the study from two schools; one class was used for the experimental class, while the second class stood for the control group. The experimental group was exposed to the treatment, which was teaching Christian values through story-based learning, and the control group was taught Christian values with a conventional method.

Table 1: Factorial Matrix (2X2X4)

Group	Pretest	Treatment	Posttest	Gender	Parent Education Level
Experimental	O1	X	O3	Male	Below SSCE
				Female	NCE/OND or its Equivalent
					HND/First Degree or its Equivalent
Control	O2	_____	O4	Male	Higher Degree
				Female	Below SSCE
					NCE/OND or its Equivalent
					HND/First Degree or its Equivalent
					Higher Degree

O1 = Pretest for Experimental Group

O2 = Pretest for Control Group

O3 = Posttest for Experimental Group

O4 = Posttest for Control Group

X = Treatment for Experimental Group (SBL)

_____ = No Treatment (Conventional Method)

The instruments for this study include pre-test, post-test, and teaching packages. The Christian Values Achievement Test (CVAT) was developed as an instrument for data collection. The CVAT consists of 30 multiple-choice items, each designed to measure pupils' achievement in Christian values. The pre-test was administered to both groups at the beginning of the study to establish baseline scores, while the post-test was conducted after the instructional intervention to evaluate pupils' achievement. The content validity of the instrument was established through expert review by Religious Studies educators and curriculum specialists to ensure that the test items align with the objectives of the Christian Religious Studies curriculum. A pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability of the instrument using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.78, indicating a high level of internal consistency.

The study was carried out over a period of six weeks, following a structured procedure for data collection. In Week 1, the pre-test was administered to both the experimental and control groups to assess their knowledge of Christian values. The instructional phase spans four weeks, during which pupils in the experimental group are exposed to Story-based learning, while those in the control group

receive conventional instruction based on rote memorization and direct teaching methods. In the final week, a post-test was administered to both groups to measure their knowledge of Christian values.

Ethical considerations were rigorously upheld throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from school administrators, teachers, and students, ensuring that participation was entirely voluntary. Given that the participants were teenagers, parental consent was also sought. The confidentiality of students' responses was guaranteed, and all collected data was used exclusively for research purposes. To maintain the integrity of the learning process, efforts were made to ensure that both the experimental and control groups received equal instructional hours, thereby eliminating potential biases. For data analysis, both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed. Specifically, the mean and standard deviation were utilized to assess the overall achievement levels of students in Christian values before and after the intervention. Additionally, the two proposed hypotheses were tested using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at a significance level of 0.05. The results are presented in the table below.

RESULTS

Research Question One: What is the general achievement level of primary school pupils in Christian values in Ilorin, Kwara State?

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on the general achievement level of primary school pupils in Christian values in Ilorin, Kwara State, before and after the treatment

Groups	Test	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max	Remark
Experimental (Story-based Learning)	Pre-test	33.64	7.38	22.00	48.00	Low
	Post-test	59.69	10.37	42.00	78.00	High
Control Group (Conventional Method)	Pre-test	32.43	9.71	20.00	50.00	Low
	Post-test	45.67	6.12	34.00	56.00	Low

As revealed in Table 2, the pre-test scores of the general achievement level of primary school pupils in Christian values in both experimental and control groups were 33.64 and 32.43, respectively while the post-test scores of the general achievement level of primary school pupils in Christian values in both experimental and control groups were 59.69 and 45.67, respectively. However, from the post-test scores, pupils taught with story-based learning had the highest mean score of 59.69, while those taught with the conventional method had a relatively low 45.67.

Hypotheses Testing

Research Hypothesis One: There is no significant interaction effect of story-based learning and gender on primary school pupils' achievement in Christian values in Kwara State, Nigeria

Table 3: Summary of ANCOVA on the significant interaction effect of story-based learning and gender on primary school pupils' achievement in Christian values in Kwara State, Nigeria

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Corrected Model	110.838 ^a	4	27.709	8.495	.000	
Intercept	72.913	1	72.913	22.353	.000	
PRETEST	7.647	1	7.647	2.344	.134	
Group	59.259	1	59.259	18.167	.000	
Gender	2.382	1	2.382	.730	.398	
Group * Gender	1.060	1	1.060	.325	.572	*Not Significant
Error	123.953	115	3.262			
Total	1280.000	118				
Corrected Total	234.791	117				
a. R Squared = .625 (Adjusted R Squared = .598)						

The table above reveals a summary of ANCOVA on the significant interaction effect of story-based learning and gender on primary school pupils' achievement in Christian values in Kwara State, Nigeria. From the table above, the F-value of .325 indicates the interaction effect of story-based learning and gender is not significant at the 0.05 alpha level ($p > 0.05$). This shows that there is no significant interaction effect of story-based learning and gender on primary school pupils' achievement in Christian values in Kwara State, Nigeria. Hence, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant interaction effect of story-based learning and gender on primary school pupils' achievement in Christian values in Kwara State, Nigeria, is retained.

Research Hypothesis Two: There is no significant interaction effect of story-based learning and parents' educational qualifications on primary school pupils' achievement in Christian values in Kwara State, Nigeria

Table 4: Summary of ANCOVA on the significant interaction effect of story-based learning and parent educational qualifications on primary school pupils' achievement in Christian values in Kwara State, Nigeria

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Corrected Model	129.603 ^a	4	32.401	11.705	.000	
Intercept	83.428	1	83.428	30.139	.000	
PRETEST	5.948	1	5.948	2.149	.151	
Group	38.813	1	38.813	14.021	.001	
Gender	2.717	1	2.717	.982	.328	
Group * Education	16.549	1	16.549	5.978	.019	Significant
Error	105.188	115	2.768			
Total	1280.000	118				
Corrected Total	234.791	117				

a. R Squared = .552 (Adjusted R Squared = .505)

From the table above, the F-value of 5.978 indicates that the interaction effect of story-based learning and parents' education level is significant at the 0.05 alpha level ($p < 0.05$). This shows that there is a significant interaction effect of story-based learning and parent educational qualifications on primary school pupils' achievement in Christian values in Kwara State, Nigeria. Hence, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant interaction effect of story-based learning and parent educational qualifications on primary school pupils' achievement in Christian values in Kwara State, Nigeria, is rejected. This implies that the effect of story-based learning on primary school pupils' achievement in Christian values in Kwara State, Nigeria, depends on parents' educational qualifications.

DISCUSSION

The finding shows that there is a significant main effect of story-based learning on primary school pupils' achievement in Christian values in Kwara State, Nigeria. This implies that the pupils in the experimental group who were taught with story-based learning performed better than pupils who were taught using the conventional method. This finding corroborates that of Lemonidis & Kaiafa (2019), who submitted that the use of storytelling had a positive effect on students, as students of the experimental group performed significantly better than those of the control group. This finding also aligns with that of Demirci, & Okur (2021), who investigated the effect of teaching through storytelling on students' academic

achievement, story writing skills, and opinions about practice and found that teaching with stories caused a significant difference in favor of the experimental group, between the academic achievement posttest scores of the experimental and control groups. Adeyemi (2010) also submitted that using stories, parables, and anecdotes, educators can convey complex moral and spiritual concepts in a way that is relatable and accessible to students. SBL provides a contextual framework for learning, allowing students to see the relevance of Christian values to real-life situations. This approach can help students develop a deeper understanding of Christian values and their application in everyday life.

The finding is also consistent with the submission of David, Josephine and Etori

(2024) who investigated the effect of gender deviants on students' academic performance in WASSCE in both public and private secondary school in Cross River State, Nigeria and submitted that students' performance is not determined by gender in terms of the interaction of gender and treatment on students' academic achievement.

And lastly, based on parents' educational qualifications. The finding showed that the effect of story-based learning on primary school pupils' achievement in Christian values largely depends on parents' educational qualifications. This finding corroborates the submission of Liu & Chiang (2019), who submitted that the role of parents' educational background also influences students' perceptions of the importance of education. Children with highly educated parents often have a stronger intrinsic motivation to learn because they grow up in an environment that values education. Moreover, educated parents tend to create more intellectually stimulating home environments and model behaviors that support their children's academic success, fostering their desire to learn independently.

CONCLUSIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The following conclusions were drawn based on the findings of the study:

Story-based learning significantly improves pupils' achievement in Christian values, with the experimental group outperforming the control group. Notably, the study found no significant interaction effect between story-based learning and gender, suggesting that this approach benefits both male and female pupils equally. However, parental educational qualifications emerged as a significant predictor of pupils' academic achievement in Christian values, underscoring the importance

of parental involvement in shaping young minds.

Recommendations

Teacher training institutes should provide educators with comprehensive training on story-based learning methodologies to enhance their teaching skills and confidence in using narratives to convey Christian values. Provision of resources and facilities that cater to diverse learning needs and styles should be provided to facilitate teaching and learning in schools. Moreover, parents should participate in their children's Christian values education, leveraging their influence to reinforce the values learned in school to create a cohesive learning environment that supports the development of Christian values in pupils.

Implication for Practice

The findings of this study have significant implications for practice in primary school settings, particularly in the teaching of Christian values. The effectiveness of Story-Based Learning (SBL) in enhancing pupils' achievement in Christian values suggests that teachers should incorporate narrative-based approaches into their instructional strategies. This can be achieved by:

1. Integrating SBL into the curriculum: Teachers can design lesson plans that incorporate stories and narratives to convey Christian values, making learning more engaging and effective.
2. Providing teacher training: Educational institutions and policymakers should provide teachers with training and resources to develop their skills in using SBL to teach Christian values.
3. Encouraging parental involvement: Parents should be encouraged to participate in their children's Christian values education, leveraging their influence to reinforce the values learned in school.

4. Developing contextualized story-based materials: Teachers and curriculum developers can create story-based materials that are contextualized to the pupils' environment, making the learning experience more relevant and impactful.

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