

Considering Christian Religious Education in Countering Moral Decadence Among Secondary School Students in Lesotho: The Case of *manomoro*

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Abstract

This conceptual paper delves into the pivotal role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) in effectively mitigating the pervasive issue of moral decadence that has taken root in Lesotho. By thoroughly examining the multifaceted dimensions of CRE, encompassing its objectives, suggested learning experiences and pedagogical approaches of CRE syllabi, this paper posits that the subject possesses the inherent potential to address this bothering issue of immoral paths associated with gang groups of *manomoro* in Lesotho secondary schools. Through the analysis of CRE grade 9, 10, and 11 syllabi, the paper systematically explores the potential for harnessing the subject's inherent power to counter the moral erosion observed within educational institutions. This paper also evaluates potential factors that might impair the subject's effectiveness in fulfilling its mandate of cultivating virtuous students. It then navigates through the CRE key features and contends that these attributes offer a viable pathway toward achieving sustainable solutions to the moral challenges confronting Lesotho, including the ongoing issue of "*manomoro*." To optimise the transformative potential of CRE in mitigating moral decadence, the paper urges the Ministry of Education and Training to establish comprehensive assessment mechanisms that would facilitate the monitoring of students' character development and the overall impact of CRE moral decadence in Lesotho secondary schools.

Keywords: Christian religious education, Moral decadence, Manomoro

1. Introduction

Lesotho, a small nation enclaved in Southern Africa, witnesses the contemporary global concern of deteriorating moral values among its youth especially in secondary schools. The rapid advancement of technology, along with the wave of information dissemination and societal shifts, has led to detrimental concerns about moral decadence (Ime & Unwanabong, 2014; Ayanwale, Mosia, Molefi & Shata, 2023; Kurata, 2023a). Social theorists such as Neil Postman, Marshall McLuhan and Jean Baudrillard the acknowledge undeniable advantages that technology brings. However, they underscore its contribution to the degradation of public morality, a phenomenon especially pronounced among the younger generation attending secondary schools in Lesotho. This moral decline manifests through concerning outcomes such as substance abuse, lack of respect towards teachers, and declining academic pursuit (Ogueche, Awoshiri, Bibinu & Katuka, 2021; Rakolobe & Tlali, 2022).

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Today, we are no strangers to the fact that communities and schools in Lesotho bear witness to the stark reality of a decline in moral values daily among students who are affiliated with gang groups known as “manomoro”. These gang groups adopt the numeric identification such as 26 and 27, which are linked with the faction designations for detainees within Lesotho’s prisons. Members of these groups are widely known for killings, drug abuse, and robberies, which they normalise and perform as rituals. The escalation of these challenges has triggered schools to institute disciplinary committees and has also led the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) to initiate boot camp programs for youth aged 14 to 22. These efforts are aimed at curbing the surge in moral degradation among the youth (Africa Press, 2022).

Recognising the significance of fostering moral principles in addressing modern complexities, this study delves into the potential of Christian Religious Education (CRE) to counter moral decadence among secondary school students in Lesotho. Ngussa and Makewa (2018) argue that CRE has long been acknowledged as a cornerstone for cultivating moral values. The spiritual and ethical teachings within CRE hold the power to shape responsible citizens, an endeavor that resonates deeply with the aim of Lesotho’s secondary education (Ministry of Education and Training, [MoET], 2019). This research seeks to explore the potential of Lesotho’s CRE in curtailing the prevailing moral decay among students in secondary schools. By examining the relevance of the Religious Education (RE) curriculum, the study aims to contribute to the ongoing debates on youth morality and guest for sustainable development, amid the surge of “manomoro” in schools and communities in Lesotho.

The pursuit of responsible and virtuous youth aligns with global aspirations for sustainable development, notably embodied in the United Nations (UN) Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Among 17 goals, goal 4 in particular, underscores the significance of “Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education” (UNESCO, 2017). The essence of quality education, as explained by Stabback (2016), encompasses developing vital life skills, attitudes, and moral values included. Similarly, Africa’s Agenda 2063 and the Southern African Development Community’s (SADC) Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020–2030 advocate for nurturing virtuous and responsible youth as strongholds of sustainable development (African Union, 2015; SADC, 2020). Furthermore, Lesotho responds to these frameworks with its Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2016–2026, aiming to provide quality learning opportunities while emphasizing fostering moral values (MoET, 2016). These efforts made by Lesotho align with the principal role that education plays in shaping the characters of students who are Lesotho’s leaders of tomorrow. It is important to highlight that within Lesotho’s educational framework, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy of 2009 (CAP 2009) is central to addressing learners’ development of holistic competencies including morality (Manka, 2022). It is for this aim of CAP that the “Personal, Spiritual, and Social” learning area within CAP 2009, housing Religious Education, specifically aims to inculcate moral values to mitigate contemporary issues such as *manomoro* (MoET, 2009).

This paper posits that the CRE in Lesotho holds the potential to counteract the deteriorating moral values among students. It is important to note that within CRE, there is an emphasis on imparting ethical principles, values, and teachings. These teachings can function as a moral navigator, steering students away from delinquent paths and towards morally acceptable behaviours. The study delves into this issue of moral decadence and recognises the need for effective implementation of CRE to unveil sustainable solutions for the country's socioeconomic development. In this paper, we highlight the potential of CRE and focus on harnessing its strength to counter the pervasive challenge of declining moral values among secondary school students in Lesotho.

The paper will explore the theoretical framework that underpins the argument for the potential of CRE in fostering moral development. Following that, it will review the literature on the concepts of morality and moral decadence. Furthermore, the paper delves into the nexus between moral decadence among youths and

the role of CRE in addressing such issues. Next, we will then delve into the context of Lesotho's secondary CRE system and its role in mitigating moral decadence. Another important section of this paper will be to discuss the challenges and opportunities in implementing effective CRE to combat moral decadence among students.

2. Underpinning theory

Cognitive Dissonance Theory (CDT), initially formulated by Leon Festinger in 1957, delves into the interplay of perceptions, motivations, and thoughts within an individual. In the context of this theory, 'cognition' refers to an individual's knowledge about themselves or their environment, as described by Yahya and Sukmayadi (2020). The theory posits that two cognitions can either be relevant or irrelevant to each other. When relevant, they create consonance, while dissonance arises when there is an incongruity between cognitive elements like beliefs and behaviours (Tueanrat and Alamanos, 2023). As a result of the dissonance, psychological discomfort is inevitable, prompting individuals to resolve it by avoiding situations or information that exacerbate the dissonance.

The relevance of CDT becomes apparent when examining the impact of CRE on mitigating moral decadence among students in Lesotho secondary schools. This theory sheds light on the psychological processes that may unfold when students encounter moral teachings in CRE that challenge their existing beliefs and actions linked to moral decadence. To delve deeper into this theory's significance, consider the scenario where CRE students confront moral and ethical teachings that conflict with their personal beliefs. In such instances, Tueanrat and Alamanos (2023) concur with Cooper and Carlsmith's (2015) viewpoint, suggesting that individuals seek to alleviate dissonance by eliminating factors that contribute to it and moral decadence included. This implies that students might strive for coherence between their beliefs and actions by reassessing their attitudes and behaviours and aligning them with the moral lessons presented by CRE.

3. The concepts of morality and moral decadence

The concepts of morality and moral decadence have earned diverse interpretations from scholars in fields like philosophy and psychology. Morality involves the assessment of what is right or wrong by individuals or societies (Nucci, 2001). This notion is distilled further by Khanam (2008), who explains that morality hinges on principles that distinguish 'good' actions from those deemed 'wrong'. These principles align with Aristotle's eudaimonia, which is the 'highest good' and summarises human happiness, as emphasised by Carr (1991). Carr (1991) further underscores that Aristotle's moral inquiry revolves around the question, "What kind of person should I be?" This inquiry highlights the significance of virtues and positive character traits that yield positive outcomes while denouncing negative ones. In essence, these scholars collectively explore the connections between moral judgment, principles, human happiness, and virtuous behaviour.

Aristotle's perspective underscores that morality is rooted in cultural and societal values, indicating that moral principles are acquired rather than self-constructed. This viewpoint is supported by Andy-Philip and Zhiya (2017), who highlight that morality encompasses attitudes and behaviours such as respect, honesty, responsibility, and fairness. These values assume a pivotal role in shaping the definition of morality, guiding interactions to ensure harmonious coexistence within societies. This sentiment aligns with Nucci's (2001) perspective, which emphasises the differentiation between morality, etiquette, law, and religion. Nucci elaborates that social psychologists emphasise the place of etiquette within morality and the integration of religion as central to moral conduct. This perspective underscores that a morally upright person upholds etiquette, obeys the law, and adheres to religious principles, revealing the intricate interplay between cultural values, moral behaviour, and societal cohesion.

Considering the collaborative nature of morality, Dewey (1934) emphasises the role of education in instilling ethical and moral values, especially among the youth, a context applicable in Lesotho. In a distinct context, Dick, Ede, and Chiaghanam (2020) elucidate moral decadence as the erosion or weakening of

established moral standards. This translates to a decline of the principles and values steering virtuous behaviour within communities in Lesotho. Along similar lines, the research by Muraino and Ugwumba (2014) focused on the realm of moral decadence, describing it as the emergence of diminished moral values among individuals or societal groups. Notably, this declining moral landscape finds a notable context within the education sector, particularly concerning instances of misconduct within secondary schools in Lesotho (Moea, 2023). Conclusively, the prevalence of moral decadence illustrates a societal shift towards weakened morals, cultivating an atmosphere characterised by violence, bullying, and hostility in secondary schools within the specific context of Lesotho (De Wet, 2007; Mosia, 2019).

4. Causes of Moral Decadence among Students in Lesotho

4.1 The Implications of Urbanisation in Lesotho

Urbanisation may be defined as the physical growth of urban areas as a result of immigration and suburban concentrations into cities particularly the large ones (Ogueche et al., 2021). The growth of urban areas in Lesotho is particularly due to the influx of rural migrants who move to cities in search of better standards of living (Lukman, 2021). It has been argued that due to the struggle for limited resources in urban areas, youth often indulge in immoral deeds (Andy-Philip & Zhiya, 2017). There is now a consensus among researchers including Ezeh (2015) and Nurina (2022) that urbanisation negatively impacts human morality. Indeed, this is agreeable that some social problems including gangsterism, human exploitation, alcohol and substance abuse, prostitution, and drug abuse most manifest in urban areas. These also apply in the context of urban areas in Lesotho, where schools situated in urban areas grapple with the issues of *manomoro*, widely famous for habitual committing of crimes, disrespect for teachers, and drug abuse. It is noteworthy that the challenges of survival in urban areas impact even students in church-owned schools in Lesotho. Faced with these harsh realities, these students have no other alternative than to engage in despicable activities in a desperate bid for survival.

4.2 The Implications of Poverty in Lesotho

It is disheartening to realise that it is now 57 years of independence of Lesotho yet, there has been little improvement in the overall living standards of Basotho. It is indisputable that poverty looms and hit hard on Basotho who find themselves caught in dire destitution. Recent data reveals that approximately 67.1 percent of the population in Lesotho live below the poverty line and survive on about US\$1.25 per day (Dhemba, 2020; Kali, 2020). To put it the other way, out of the total population of 2 million, 25000 are ensnared beneath this poverty demarcation. These findings resonate with the World Bank's Economic Report on Lesotho in May 2013, where criticism was directed at the administration's inability to effectively curb the rampant predicaments of poverty and unemployment (Ramosebudi, 2013). Moreover, the United Nations Human Development (UNDP) Index ranks Lesotho at 153 out of 188 nations, laying bare the practical struggles faced by its people (UNDP, 2013). Kali (2020) also expresses a similar assertion that the proliferation of poverty in Lesotho has worsened over time.

These tribulations highlighted here lead to economic push factors in which many people resort to nefarious measures such as illicit mining commonly known among Basotho as *litotomeng* in the Republic of South Africa (RSA). It is well-known that illegal mining sectors are associated with a vast number of arrests, mining accidents, and killings among themselves or rival groups who associate themselves with groups of Basotho music known as *famo* music (Africa News, 2022). Similarly, Botea et. al. (2018) raises a similar view that, due to poverty, there is also a vast number of females who travel to RSA to work as maids, also known as *makichining*, where a large number of them are impacted by HIV/AIDS and others becoming victims of human trafficking. As a result of the desperate emigration of Basotho to RSA, those who stay behind in communities and schools resort to disreputable practices evident in secondary schools. This view is corroborated by Pae

(2001) and Kali (2020) who assert that parents' absence due to the migrant labour system between Lesotho and South Africa triggers youth to indulge in heinous acts as they face poverty. What we have to acknowledge here is that one other factor contributing to poverty is this common situation where migrant labours abandon their families and are entrapped in heedless living at RSA. This standpoint underlines how the profound issue of poverty in Lesotho fuels a surge in moral decadence among students in secondary schools.

4.3 The influence of the family system

The family needs some mechanisms of social control to enable its members to follow some guidelines of the culture (Uche, Uche & Ngozi, 2017). This conveys the crucial role of a family in shaping the characters of students to align with the basic norms and values of societies in Lesotho. These sentiments support Basotho's proverb that *ngoana ke seipone sa lapa labo*, implying that how the family raised the child, would be reflected in the child's character. These views concur with those of Adebisi (2018) that a child's character is woven from how parents nurture them. As a result of this correlation, parents ensure that a child is adequately nurtured. The most interesting reality among Basotho is that raising a child is the collective work of all members of society.

Nevertheless, in Lesotho, the family's traditional role of nurturing children seems to be indecisive. That is, parents nowadays avoid their responsibility of guiding their children's morals (Odeh, 2013). This situation is real in the context of Lesotho's secondary schools where parents shift the responsibility of character modeling of their children to teachers. Rampai (2022) affirms this sentiment and cited some cases of disciplinary hearings which conveys that parents have forfeited their responsibility in nurturing their children. This situation is exemplified by scenarios wherein students would fail to comport themselves during disciplinary hearings. What is surprising is that while the conventional expectation dictates that parents would express their admonitory role to a student, you find parents unconcerned. This truly reflects how some parents have evaded their responsibilities of modeling children's character. Furthermore, Ezeh (2015) highlighted that some cases of moral decadence are exacerbated by economic issues that force parents to work far from home for some months and hinder them from their adequate parental role. This is agreeable as a sizable number of students live in hired houses while some are left to head families. This situation has engendered a crisis of moral decadence among students who find themselves lacking the internal fortitude to be resilient to temptations of joining groups of *manomoro*.

5. The impact of moral decadence Lesotho

5.1 Socio-economic life

The ramifications of moral decadence are far-reaching, hampering the development of any country. Omali (2016) asserts that such decay impedes the nation's progress since youth are embracing decadent life in schools. Adetayo (2022) supports that today, incidents of criminality, often involving youth, have become alarmingly common, with reports from police stations. This situation is relevant in Lesotho and, Mosia (2019) and Moea (2023) agree that the rate at which moral decadence is prevalent among youth in Lesotho schools and communities is alarming. Consequently, Badmus (2014) asserts that the prevalence of this moral decay often results in a scarcity of foreign investors, thrust by the prevailing unethical climate. This situation resonates with the context of Lesotho where the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) initiated a boot camp for youth to reinstate security in Lesotho. This view is solidified by Melato (2023) who reiterates that their fear as LDF is that the situation of moral decadence evident by the high rate of robberies of businesses will strikingly threaten the peace and scares away investors and these will badly affect the economy of Lesotho (South African Broadcasting Services [SABC], 2023).

5.2 Lesotho's integrity among the international community

The loss of integrity of Lesotho within the international community is a serious issue and could be attributable to the alarming rate of moral decay in the country. According to Boletse (2019) Lesotho's ranking is scary as it is the 99 least corrupt nation out of 180 countries, according to the 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). Similarly, the murder records from Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS) were alarming with 898 murders in the country, according to the latest crime statistics report published by Transparency International (2022). For emphasis, there is an average of 2.5 murders each day in Lesotho based on the 2016 population census. According to this disheartening ranking, Lesotho is ranked among the most dangerous countries in the world. These results cast a shadow over Lesotho's integrity within the global community. As underscored by Ituma (2008), the nation's bad image globally often inflicts a burning ache upon citizens that in the present moment, every Mosotho walks with shame across the world and is now approached with caution similar to one afflicted with COVID-19.

5.3 Academic life

Moral decadence has flooded the educational sector and defiled the very schools which are intended to nurture students morally. Hagan (2010) indicates that there is a rising tide of violence and drug abuse within school environments. As a result of the prevalence of moral decadence, schools are no longer safe in ensuring the well-being of both students and teachers. Similarly, Nnadi, Uzoekwe, Ofojebe and Chigbu's (2022) study reveals that moral decadence among students leads to a decline in academic performance. This situation is relevant in Lesotho where Mohlouoa (2014) highlights that there is an alarming drop rate of students in Lesotho as a result of moral decadence. This contention is agreeable given the observation that students affiliated with *manomoro* groups are often characterized by apathy toward academic work. They seem unwilling to be submissive to any form of authority in school and in their communities beyond that exercised within their gang groups. This dynamic consequently affects students' performance due to continual absenteeism and sometimes dropping out of school.

6. The Context of Lesotho's Christian Religious Education

The historical trajectory of Lesotho's secondary RE system has been significantly influenced by the arrival of missionaries in the 1830s. Initially, RE in Lesotho aimed to foster Christian values within students, emphasising Christian beliefs and practices (Mokotso, 2017). This approach to Religious Education in Lesotho, aligned with broader evangelisation efforts, sought to instill Christian values contributing to the moral development of students in Lesotho. As a result of this endeavour of RE to foster Christian values, the teaching of Religious Education could therefore be equated to Christian Religious Education (CRE). However, Raselimo and Mahao (2015) and Kurata, Mokhets'engoane, and Selia-lia (2022) highlight that the evolution of Lesotho's curriculum encountered challenges in addressing the nation's socioeconomic needs. CRE which became part of the curriculum from the onset and made compulsory in church-owned schools was also challenged to adequately address social changes including moral decay most likely. Despite the apparent need for CRE to address societal issues, Mokotso (2017) highlights that as a result of the dynamics between the church being the proprietor of 90 percent of schools and Lesotho's government on a doctrinal approach to RE, the struggle between moral values and a broader educational goal prevailed within the religious education domain.

In recent years, the curriculum landscape shifted significantly with the 2009 reform, marking a departure from content-based pedagogy to learner-centred pedagogy (Raselimo & Mahao, 2015). Equally important, the RE curriculum was impacted by this overhauling of the curriculum. Mokotso (2020) highlighted some of the palpable features that solidify that RE in Lesotho underwent a paradigm shift. To exemplify, Mokotso notes that the RE curriculum has shifted from teacher-centredness to learner-centredness. Furthermore, the curriculum is no more imposed as a finished product but it encourages learners to reflect on their experiences and also utilise Biblical lessons to solve life issues and moral issues included.

7. The role of Christian Religious Education in addressing moral decadence

7.1 Aims of the syllabus

In the specific context of Lesotho, a country where the cultivation of moral values holds principal significance, a thorough examination of the existing CRE curriculum becomes imperative due to its potential impact on addressing the surging moral erosion extending to schools. It is important to highlight that research suggests that the absence of moral emphasis within school curricula contributes to moral degradation in societies and schools (Lukman, 2021). Such perception is corroborated by Mosia (2009) who underlines moral education as a remedy for moral decay evident in Lesotho. In this regard, CRE is a subject intended to cultivate morality across secondary schools in Lesotho. It is crucial to underscore that considering CRE in counteracting moral deterioration necessitates a closer examination of syllabus objectives, suggested learning experiences and the pedagogy which are integral components of any curriculum designed to address the educational requirements and moral development included (Makumane & Ngcobo, 2021; Lekhanya & Raselimo, 2022).

It is worth noting that the grade 9,10 and 11 RE syllabi, by their very nature, explicitly express their aim to nurture learners not only in their spiritual and social growth but also in their moral development (National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC, 2020a, 2020b). This shared general aim of the syllabi underscores the significant and multifaceted approach of RE to focus not only on religious tenets but also on morality. This shared aim of CRE undeniably aligns with the broader Lesotho's societal aspiration of fostering morally grounded students who would not follow wicked paths such as *manomoro* on any account. Furthermore, the three syllabi also aim to encourage students "to reflect on religious responses to contemporary issues" (NCDC, 2020a, 2020b). The syllabi encourage students to develop a nuanced perspective on how they can develop skills, attitudes, and values from religion and utilise them to address contemporary issues including environmental issues, social injustice, and more importantly moral decadence which is indeed bothering Basotho nation. Overall, by engaging with these religious responses, students can develop the necessary competencies and denounce any form of immorality.

7.2 The suggested learning experiences

The CRE plays a crucial role in mitigating moral decadence among students by fostering ethical values (Dick, Ede & Chiaghanam, 2020). The CRE curriculum in secondary education encourages learner-centred pedagogies that offer a range of learning experiences that contribute to the development of student's character and moral awareness. For instance, in the grade 9 RE syllabus, the suggested learning for Learning Outcome (LO) 10 is that students should "volunteer to do works of charity in their communities" (NCDC, 2020a). The suggested learning experience engages students to delve into exploring the foundation principles of Christianity, and examine Biblical texts including Proverbs 22:9; Isaiah 55:1, 58:10; Matthew 14: 15-21, 25:35-36; Luke 3:11, 9:12- 17, to instill compassion, generosity and respect. By discussing contemporary ethical issues in classrooms through the lens of these highlighted Biblical texts, students begin to form a solid understanding of how their faith can guide their actions and choices, thereby, mitigating the pervasive moral erosion in schools.

The Christian Religious Education (CRE) curriculum serves a crucial role in addressing the decline in moral values among students by promoting ethical principles (Dick, Ede & Chiaghanam, 2020). Within secondary education, the CRE curriculum embraces learner-centred teaching approaches that provide a range of learning opportunities, contributing to the cultivation of students' character and moral awareness. In validating this view, an example can be found in the grade 9 RE syllabus, wherein Learning Outcome (LO) 10 encourages students to actively engage in charitable activities within their communities (NCDC, 2020a). In other words, this learning experience encourages students to critically study the Biblical texts and utilise them to address contemporary issues such as poverty which is another causal factor for moral decadence among students. Interestingly, these Biblical texts are in nature reservoirs of moral values including compassion,

generosity, and respect are instilled and capable of countering moral decadence. These Biblical texts include Proverbs 22:9, Isaiah 55:1, 58:10, Matthew 14:15-21, 25:35-36, Luke 3:11, and 9:12-17.

7.3 The pedagogy

The suggested learning activities in RE syllabi convey a learner-centred approach to teaching the subject. This view is validated by multiple instances where RE syllabi foster classroom discussions centred on contemporary moral quandaries. A case in point can be observed in the suggested learning activity for LO 18 in the grade 11 syllabus which states that “learners share their experiences where they were forgiven and where they forgave others” (NCDC, 2020b). Pedagogical approaches such as the one emphasised by CRE in Lesotho encourage students to explore ethical dilemmas through personal narratives and reflections, thereby instilling a deeper understanding of moral values and their application in real-life situations. Another instance solidifying the potential of RE to mitigate moral decay could be cited in the grade 11 syllabus where it provides ethical dilemmas that prompt students to analyse situations and make ethical decisions. For instance, the grade 11 syllabus categorises parables into themes that engage students in discussions and analysis of justifiable actions. Some of these themes are (a) Parables about repentance and forgiveness, the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32 (b) Parables about Good works, the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. Parables about wealth and possession, the parable of the rich fool in Luke 12:16-21. (c) Parables about the kingdom of God, the parable of the sower in Luke 8:14-16. These parables foster a strong foundation of moral awareness as they engage students in identifying virtues and vices and reflecting on their experiences. The likely benefit of this approach is that students are empowered with moral competencies that enable students to take part in community service projects that are aimed to mitigate moral decadence.

8. Challenges of using CRE for effectively mitigating moral decadence

The Christian Religious Education (CRE) in Lesotho faces unique challenges in its endeavour to effectively mitigate moral decadence. It is the paramount aim of the subject to foster competencies that address contemporary issues including moral decadence among students (NCDC, 2020b). While the curriculum aims to instill moral values derived from Christian teachings, it encounters obstacles to religious pluralism. It is widely acknowledged that Lesotho is a pluralistic country with an array of diverse religions including Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and indigenous religions. This situation poses a challenge in teaching RE for inclusivity. As argued by Mokotso (2021) and Kurata (2023c), the current RE is not inclusive because moral values are drawn exclusively from Biblical texts. This disparity, therefore, calls for a delicate approach to teaching this subject to cater also for non-Christian students. This limitation is one of the challenges that have the potential to impede the effective implementation of CRE for moral growth.

Another challenge lies in the changing dynamics of the contemporary world of technological advancements that have led to shifts in societal norms. The CRE curriculum may struggle to effectively address emerging moral dilemmas such as cyberbullying and *manomoro* in schools. The possibility might be that the RE syllabus may not adequately address these challenges as this is posited by Ayanwale, Sanusi, Molefi & Otunla (2023) that there are discrepancies in the curriculum in addressing some newly emerging issues. Being fact, it might be a challenging task for teachers to adapt the curriculum to address these contemporary challenges such as *manomoro*, and prepare authentic assessments that will monitor the moral growth of students, a task that Kurata (2023b) accentuates that it demands constant revision and innovation.

Furthermore, the perception of CRE as a mandatory subject rather than a heartfelt pursuit of spiritual growth and moral growth can also hinder its effectiveness. One of the concerns facing the effective enactment of many subject curricula is the disparities between theory and practice (Raselimo & Mahao, 2015). In the case of CRE, when students consider this subject as merely an academic requirement, the potential for genuine moral transformation may be limited. Truly, we can have cases of *manomoro* who

obtain excellent marks in CRE if the subject is only learned for good marks not for the authentic transformation of students' characters. Overall, while CRE holds promise in mitigating moral decadence in Lesotho, addressing challenges related to religious diversity, evolving societal dynamics, and wrong perceptions of the subject remains vital to the success of CRE in mitigating moral decadence among students in secondary schools in Lesotho.

9. Conclusion

Christian Religious Education in Lesotho could be perceived as a cornerstone in mitigating moral decadence by instilling Christian moral values. The CRE curriculum is designed to foster compassion and respect, and responsibility among students. The paramount aim of the subject is to guide students toward making ethical decisions and being valuable members of their communities. However, the role of CRE in mitigating moral decadence among students in Lesotho is both vital and complex. It is vital in the sense that CRE offers valuable moral guidance among students. On the other hand, teaching CRE for moral development is complex in a manner that it faces several challenges such as religious plurality, modern dynamics, and lack of personal engagement.

However, it is vital to underline that the primary goal of this study centres around optimising the impact of CRE as a remedy in alleviating the pervasive concern of moral decadence. It is worth noting that, within the context of Lesotho secondary schools, CRE emerges as a promising avenue to counteract *manomoro* in Lesotho secondary schools. This potential stems from the inherent objectives of CRE, which align with the suggested learning activities and the learner-centered teaching approaches advocated by the subject. The unique nature of CRE with its objectives, recommended learning activities, and learner-centred pedagogies methodologies remarkably align with the urgent need to address moral decadence among students. By leveraging the strength of the subject, harnessing its potential to shape ethical individuals who contribute positively to their communities, and ultimately, foster a positive shift towards genuine combating moral decadence, we can confidently consider CRE as a panacea to the ethical erosion among students. Without a doubt, this assertion echoes Mokotso's (2022) perception that even though there are missed opportunities in Lesotho's CRE, such opportunities are not lost, we can redeem CRE and reconsider it to be a navigator towards redeeming Lesotho's education which is threatened by the rising wave of *manomoro* in secondary schools.

In the present moment, the study recommends the inculturation of relevant cultural values, addressing evolving societal dynamics such as this one of *manomoro* in the present case. Such initiative will ensure a culture of moral awareness that extends beyond the classroom to involve families, communities, and religious institutions. Furthermore, the teaching of CRE should encourage personal reflection that fosters character transformation. In addition, there should be an establishment of mechanisms to assess the moral transformation of students and the effectiveness of RE in reducing moral decadence. By doing so, Lesotho can proudly use CRE to shape ethical individuals who counteract moral decadence in a diverse and ever-changing world.

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