Students' Perceptions on the Role of Christian Religious Education in Promoting Social Cohesion in Kenya

Lydiah Njoki Wachira

University of Nairobi, Kenya

Abstract: The purpose of this study was to investigate Secondary School Students' perceptions on the role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) in Promoting Social Cohesion in Kenya. The study objective looked at students' characteristics;specifically age and gender in relation to their perspectives on the role of Christian Religious Education on promotion of social cohesion in society.. This objectives was supported by a corresponding hypothesis. Review of related literature based on students' characteristics and social cohesion was carried out. The study used descriptive survey method which employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The study targeted form four secondary school studentswho took CRE as one of their subjects of study in Nairobi County, CRE teachers and education officers in the County. The target population was 5550 CRE students, 160 CRE teachers and 8 education officers. From this population a sample of 550 CRE students, 25 CRE teachers and 4 education officers participated in the study. The questionnaire was the main research instrument used to collect data from the students while interview schedules were used to collect data from teachers and education officers. The study findings were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative data was processed and analysed and summarised into frequency tables and percentages. Qualitative data was subjected to content analysis from which relevant information was extracted. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study established that CRE was perceived as an important tool in the promotion of social cohesion in the society. The study further established that students' age (p=0.030) displayed a significant level of influence on their perspectives and attitude on the role of CRE in social cohesion. However, the students' gender, did not have such a significant influence. The study recommended as follows; enhancing CRE as a tool for promoting social cohesion, strengthening its teaching methods for social cohesion and integrating the teaching of religious values across all the subjects in the secondary school curriculum. For further research, the study recommended replicating the study in other counties and having a comparative study between rural and urban Counties with a view of finding out if the results would remain the same given the fact many rural counties were occupied by people belonging to one ethnic group while Nairobi is cosmopolitan.

Key Words: Social Cohesion, Secondary Schools, Christian Religious Education, Students' Perceptions, Students' perspectives

I. INTRODUCTION

Human beings have natural social tendencies and have throughout history strived to develop cohesion and integration by enhancing various aspects that bind them together in groups, whether big or small (Bruhn,2009). Formation of this common bond leads to evolution of a socially cohesive group with reciprocated influences and interdependence. Some factors that may foster the spirit of togetherness and social cohesion include blood relationship, natural environment and pressure of basic needs especially food, shelter and protection (Davis, 1994; Takayo, 2011) This suggests that for a society to remain cohesive, the basic material needs of people need to be taken care of by including safety and security for all members of the community.

In pre-industrial societies, an individual's community was limited to people who were similar in most ways with respect to language, religion, values and general outlook which made development of social cohesion fairly easy (Akerhed, 2007). However, in modern times, the most universal quality to be found in every country is cultural diversity (Akerhed, 2007). Most modern states have heterogeneous societies in terms of religion, class, language and ethnicity. With this recognition in mind, Akerhed (2007) suggested that it is important to encourage and promote policies and strategies that would ensure human security and sustainable peace by creating a just and empowered equitable society.

Davis (1994) recognized religion as a factor that helped societies in developing cohesiveness. The author attributed this to the perception that religion secured social order by declaring the order sacred or having sacred origin. He further argued that this perception was strengthened by the belief that religion was founded on a "higher being" that gives meaning to life and direction on individual and social behaviour. In recognition of the important role that religion is perceived to play in social cohesion, some countries have included Religious Education (RE) as a subject in their school curriculum.

However, in spite of the efforts made to have cohesive societies, many countries continue to be divided by various diversities leading to intolerance, often translating to untold suffering, loss of life and destruction of property. This has clearly been demonstrated in such notable cases as former

Yugoslavia (Sinha and Khumiri, 2007), Rwanda genocide (Reader, 1998), the Democratic Republic of Congo (Ciano, 2006), Nigeria (Reader, 1998), Sudan (Brown, 2008), Somalia (Farah, 2001) and Kenya (Wamwere, 2008).

As with most African countries, Kenya is made up of different ethnic groups. At independence, Kenya had inherited a polarised society from the colonial policy of divide and rule where various ethnic groups were encouraged to be suspicious of each other for the colonial benefit (Bogonko, 1992). After Kenya attained her political independence in 1963 the new government was keen to develop the country into an independent and united nation.

It was against this background that the Kenya Education Commission, popularly known as the Ominde Commission, was appointed immediately after political independence in 1963 to survey the existing educational resources in Kenya and to advise the government in the formulation and implementation of national policies for education that would lead to development of a united nation. Based on its recommendations, the Commission outlined six educational goals that apart from other things aimed at developing a socially cohesive nation (Republic of Kenya, 1964).

The Ominde Commission as well as other post independence educational commissions and committees further stressed the role of Religious Education towards promotion of social cohesion. Following the recommendations of these Commissions, Religious Education has continued to be one of the main subjects in the school curriculum in Kenya. The curriculum offers three religious education syllabuses namely: Islamic Religious Education (IRE), Hindu Religious Education (HRE), and Christian Religious Education (CRE) to cater for the various religious affiliations of the Kenyan population. In keeping with the idea of cohesion, the main objective of the three syllabuses is the development of harmonious coexistence and recognition of human brotherhood (Republic of Kenya, 2002). In the Kenyan schools, the majority of students study Christian Religious Education (CRE) as a school subject. This is attributed to the fact that about 80 per cent of the Kenyan population claim to be Christians and therefore the majority of the students would be affiliated to a Christian religious background (The Pew Forum, 2010).

Despite introducing Religioue Education (RE) as one of the tools of promoting social cohesion, Kenya has continued to experience inter-ethnic conflicts often leading to violence. These conflicts tend to be manifested more during election periods as illustrated in 1992, 1997, and 2002 (Kubai, 2008). The magnitude of this lack of cohesion was deeply demonstrated by the 2007/2008 post-election violence (PEV) that left over 1200 people dead and over 350,000 homeless (Wamwere, 2008). It was for this reason that this study wished to examine the students' perceptions on the role of CRE in the promotion of social cohesion in Kenya. This was informed by the fact that a person's perspective helps him or her interpret and respond to the environmental stimuli thereby influencing his or her reactions. Therefore a student who has a positive view of CRE would be expected to manifest characteristics that will lead to sound judgement in conflicting social situations. This means that such a student would be likely to use teachings aquired in the subject to interact in a cohesive manner with fellow citizens.

In the teaching of CRE, an attempt is often made to encourage positive attitudes in the learner through use of the existential approach which is the recommended method of teaching CRE. This is a method of teaching CRE which emphasises relating students' daily experiences to the biblical scriptures upon which religion is based. This calls for application of the scriptures on daily human experiences of the students, hence making CRE a practical and living subject. It was against this backdrop that this study was envisaged in order to investigate students'perceptions on the role of CRE in promoting social cohesion in Kenya. The research question for the study is stated here below.

Study Research question

This study sought to investigate secondary school students' perceptions on the role of CRE in promoting social cohesion in Kenya.. The study focused on age and gender of students, since these play a major role in determining students' perceptions

II. STUDY OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study was to investigate the influence of students characteristics (age and gender) on the role of CRE as a tool for promotion of social cohesion. The study therefore specifically sought to establish the extent to which students' age and gender influenced their perceptions on the role of CRE in promotion of social cohesion in Kenya.

III. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to investigate secondary school students' perceptions on the role of CRE in promoting social cohesion in Kenya. Religion has been widely accepted as a prerequisite towards achieving peace among different societies and human beings in the world. Perhaps this is why Religious Education is part of the curriculum in most countries due to its perceived power to promote social cohesion. Many countries including Kenya seem to prescribe to this school of thought.

Nonetheless, Kenya has experienced major political and social upheavals inspite of the fact that CRE is one of the subjects at primary and secondary levels of education. This political and social upheaval has been manifested through ethnic animosity and violence as evidenced during election years; 1992, 1997, 2002 and 2007. In most of these incidences, the youth many of them having gone through the CRE syllabus were seen to be in the forefront in the execution of violent activities like throwing stones, barricading roads and burning properties. These negative activities do not reflect the religious tenets

taught through the CRE syllabus such as tolerance, honesty, peace, co-existence, respect for others and property which are clearly articulated in the CRE syllabus. It is against this background that this study sought to investigate the perception of secondary school students on the role of CRE in the promotion of social cohesion in Kenya. In this regard, the study investigated gender and age of students as characteristics that influenced students' perceptions on the role of CRE in the promotion of social cohesion.

IV. REVIEWED LITERATURE

Under the surface of apparent cohesion, there are student characteristics such as age, religion, culture, race, ethnicity, language, disability and gender which may in the long run generate tensions and raise new challenges to government and local regional decision makers. Boss (2001) in her studies of American youths' social habits found that social cohesion or integrity was mainly a factor of diligent use of social relating skills with which a learner was endowed with in school. These social skills were often related to age and at times to gender. She stated that, the fact that a youth was capable of saying "I am sorry" to an offended friend kept the relationship going even beyond the school and at times carried it to adulthood.

Gender has been found to be one of the characteristics that mould a person's life. Machyo (2002) asserted that learning and general socialization was often connected to the gender roles as determined by significant people in a child's life. The United Nations emphasized the influence of gender by asserting that there are significant differences between men and women when deciding on priorities especially after a disaster (U.N., 2002). This assertion also included the aspect of age when they pointed out that age and gender on the whole influence an individual's perspectives.

This is in keeping with what Rampino and Taylor (2013) found in their study. The two researchers came to the conclusion that girls on the whole had a more positive attitude to education and life in general than boys. They found out that boys'attitudes and aspirations deteriorated at a very young age whereas girls continued to be sensitive to happenings around them. The authors also found out that children on the whole exhibited more positive attitudes at a younger age. They suggested that younger children tended to be more optimistic about things and life in general. As they grew older, reality became apparent and this at times influenced their perspectives.

In regard to age, gender and cohesion, Jeruto (2015) found a positive correlation between age and group cohesion. This concured with what Demarck, S.; Fowler, D.; Robinson, B.; Stevens, A. and Wilson, I. (2010 had found. In a longitudinal study carried out in England, they came to the conclusion that a young person's perception of cohesion was a product of his or her characteristics. They found out that 81 per cent of

factors contributing towards cohesion was determined by the individual's characteristics such as age and gender.

Coming closer home, it was interesting to note that the Kenyan National Cohesion and Integration Policy included age and gender among the forms of diversity that influenced cohesion (Republic of Kenya, 2012). Omondi (2004) seemed to have had the same notion when he pointed out that the future of a cohesive society was likely to be determined by strengthening gender parity and integration of the youth in social and political affairs.

Literature reviewed therefore, gave a strong case of an individual's characteristics being key to his or her outlook in general. This study therefore identified age and gender as basic characteristics that influenced students perception towards certain issues in life including social cohesion. The study therefore sought to establish how the two characteristics (gender and age) were siginficant in determining students' perceptions on the role of Christian Religious Education in promotion of social cohesion in Kenya.

V. STUDY METHODOLOGY

The study used the descriptive survey research design which utilized both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The qualitative aspects involved drawing inferences from the research data while the quantitative aspects mainly involved use of descriptive statistics in presentation of the findings. The reason why the design was deemed relevant for this study was because it provided an effective means to contextualize, interpret and understand the students' perceptions on the role of CRE in the promotion of social cohesion. Additionally, the method was suitable in assessing students' perspectives on the role of CRE on social cohesion in a large population. The study involved 550 Form 4 CRE students and 25 CRE teachers spread over 25 public schools in Nairobi.

VI. STUDY FINDINGS

The results of the study findings were based on data analysis as contained in the following sections.

6.1. Data Analysis on Students' Gender

The study sought to investigate the influence of students' characteristics; gender and age on their perceptions on the role of CRE towards promotion of social cohesion.

The first characteristic to be examined was gender. In order to establish the relationship between gender and the students' views on the role of CRE in promotion of social cohesion, an analysis of specific values perceived to be related to such views and attitude were analysed. The study findings in terms of female and male responses on the influence of students' gender perspectives on the role of CRE in promotiom of social cohesion are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Female students' responses on CREvalues perceived to enhance social cohesion

Statement on Values	N	Strongly Agree %	Moderately Agree %	Slightly Agree %	Not at all %	Total %
CRE has helped me to be tolerant of people different from me	314	58.0	26.4	9.9	5.7	100
CRE makes students more patriotic compared to other subjects	314	40.1	32.5	17.2	10.2	100
CRE has made me honest	314	47.5	22.9	18.8	10.8	100
CRE has promoted my respect for others and their property	314	58.9	28.3	9.2	3.5	100
CRE has enhanced my cooperation with different people	314	62.1	26.4	6.4	5.1	100
CRE has made me more courteous towards other people	314	48.1	32.8	14.0	5.1	100
CRE has helped me think more nationally	314	44.9	30.3	14.6	10.2	100
CRE has encouraged me to be humble	314	59.2	24.8	11.5	4.5	100
CRE has encouraged me to be fair to all in spite of their ethnicity	314	63.1	23.6	10.8	2.5	100

Table 2: Male Students' responses on values perceived to enhance social cohesion

Statement on Values	N	Strongly Agree %	Moderately Agree %	Slightly Agree %	Not at all %	Total %
CRE has helped me to be tolerant of people different from me	201	49.8	34.8	11.4	4.0	100
CRE makes students more patriotic compared to other subjects	201	32.8	44.8	14.4	8.0	100
CRE has made me honest	201	34.8	34.3	20.9	10.0	100
CRE has promoted my respect for others and their property	201	52.2	31.3	12.9	3.5	100
CRE has enhanced my cooperation with different people	201	44.8	38.3	12.4	4.5	100
CRE has made me more courteous towards other people	201	43.8	37.8	13.9	4.5	100
CRE has helped me think more nationally	201	38.3	30.3	18.9	12.4	100
CRE has encouraged me to be humble	201	49.8	28.4	14.4	7.5	100
CRE has encouraged me to be fair to all in spite of their ethnicity	201	57.7	31.3	7.5	3.5	100

The first CRE value statement that the students were presented with was, "CRE has helped me to be tolerant of people different from me". The results in Tables 1 and 2 show that on average a total of 94.3 per cent of females and 96 per cent of males were in agreement that CRE has helped them to be tolerant of people who are different from them though at different levels. However, 5.7 per cent of the females and 4.0 per cent of the males disagreed with this view. In response to the same statement 58 per cent of the females strongly agreed while 49.8 per cent of the male strongly agreed.

The students were also asked to respond to the statement that "CRE made them more patriotic compared to other subjects". The results showed that, given the different levels of agreement, a total of 89.1 per cent females and 92 per cent males agreed whereas 10.2 per cent and 8.0 per cent disagreed respectively. "Honesty" was another value that was tested. The study established that a total of 89.2 per cent of the

females and 90 per cent of the males across the different levels of agreement agreed that CRE made them honest whereas 10.8 per cent females and 10per cent males disagreed respectively.

Another CRE value that students were asked to rate was "Respect for other people is important in developing social cohesion". The students were therefore asked to respond to the following CRE value statement, " CRE has promoted my respect for others and their property." The students' response to this value indicated that the number of students who agreed whether strongly, moderately or slightly was quite high. The study found that both females and males agreed at a total of 96.5per cent each while both had only 3.5 per cent in total disagreement with the statement. In regard to "cooperation", students responded to how CRE had enhanced their cooperation with different people. Their responses showed that a total of 94.9 per cent of the females and and a total of

95.5 per cent of the males agreed while 9.1per cent of the females and 4.5 per cent of the males disagreed respectively. Another value that was rated was "courtesy". The students were asked to respond as to whether CRE made them more courteous towards other people. In response, a total of 94.9 per cent of the females and 95.5 per cent of the males were in agreement as 5.1 per cent females and 4.5 per cent males disagreed.

In a country such as Kenya with many different ethnic groups, "thinking nationally" is a big step towards development of social cohesion. Students were therefore asked if CRE helped them think more nationally. The study found out that the total number of those students who agreed at whatever level comprised 89.8 per cent of the females and 87.6 per cent of the males. Those who disagreed with the statement comprised 10.2 per cent of the females and 12.4 per cent of the males. With respect to "humility", students were asked if CRE did encourage them to be humble. The response showed a total of 95.5 per cent of the females and 92.5per cent of the males agreed whereas 4.5 per cent of the females and 7.5 per cent of the males disagreed. Finally, students were asked to respond to the following statement, "CRE has encouraged me to be fair to all in spite of their ethnicity". When the responses of those who strongly, moderately or slightly agreed was computed a total of 97.5 per cent of the females and 96.5 per cent of the males were found to be in agreement whereas 2.5 per cent of the females and 3.5 per cent of the males disagreed respectively.

According to data analyzed, it was clear that the majority of the students both male and female agreed that CRE had helped them to develop various values that were deemed to be important in development of social cohesion. It is important to note however that the females had higher percentages on the whole to the response on ''strongly agreeing'' than the males with the rating of 63.1 per cent to 40.1per cent for the female in comparison to 57.7 per cent to 32.8 per cent for the males across the various values tested. Overall therefore, study findings imply that according to the students' perceptions, CRE is an important tool towards development of social cohesion.

This analysis concurs with what was found through interviews with the teachers and education officers. Both were in agreement that CRE inculcated various values to the students such as honesty, respect for others and their property, cooperation and courtesy. This is what one education officer reported:

> "*It is certain that if CRE is taught as it should be, students will definitely develop good virtues for the wellbeing of the school and the community as a whole.*"

Going by this response , it could be concluded that CRE is a strong tool in development of social cohesion. This concurs with Kamau (2014) who argued that using the right methods

of teaching CRE would encourage development of moral values that could enhance social relationships.

Having analyzed students' perceptions in terms of gender, the following hypothesis on gender was further tested.

6.2. Testing of Hypothesis on Students' Gender

The study hypothesis stated as follows: "Learners' charateristics do not significantly influence their perceptions on the role of CRE in promoting social cohesion". In reference to gender, each of the nine statements contained in Table 1 and 2 was scored against students' responses with the highest score being (4*9=36) and the lowest score being (1*9=9). The summation of the responses were then categorised into a likert scale of 4 as illustrated by Table 3 below. The purpose of this categorisation was to establish the number of respondents in each category. This summation was used to test the hypothesis for both gender and age as learner characteristics.

Table 3: Summation of students' responses on the role of CRE

Scale	Categories	Range of Perception and Attitude Score
4	Strongly Agree	30-36
3	Moderately Agree	23-29
2	Slightly Agree	16-22
1	Not At All	9-15

Data contained in Table 3 was used to classify the total students' responses according to their categories. The results of this analysis is tabulated in Table 4.

Table 4: Categorization of students' responses according to gender

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Slightly Agree	Not At All	Total
Females	180	101	23	10	314
Males	104	70	21	6	201
Total	284	171	44	16	515

Using the data in Table 4., the hypothesis "Learner characteristics do not significantly influence their perspectives on the role of CRE in promoting social cohesion" was tested in relationship to gender. The results are captured in Table 5.

Table 5: Chi-Square Test on Gender and students' perceptions

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.369a	3	.499
Likelihood Ratio	2.344	3	.504
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.411	1	.235
N of Valid Cases	515		

The analysis in Table 5 shows that gender was not statistically significant on the perceptions of students on the role of CRE in the promotion of Social Cohesion ($X^2 = 2.369^a$, p=0.499). This finding was similar to what Kamau (2015) found when

studying factors influencing implementation of Life Skills Education in schools. Kamau (2015) found out that gender did not seem to affect students' response and attitude to the subject. The findings also concurred with what was found during the interview with the teachers. In a response to a related question,one of the respondents said :

> "*CRE should impart values in the same way to both boys and girls.*"

6.3 Data Analysis on Students' Age

The second students' characteristic that was tested was age. More than 50 per cent of the students were found to be below 18 years. This was in keeping with the fact that the majority of students reach their 18th year towards the end of their fourth year in secondary school. In analyzing the influence of age on students'perspectives on the role CRE played towards promotions of social cohesion, students' responses towards CRE various values listed earlier in Table 2 were rated against the students' age groups. The first value that was tested was tolerance towards other people. Table 6 showed an analysis of the students' responses towards this value.

Table 6: Age of students and their perception on the role of CRE in promotion of tolerance as a value

Age of Respondent	N=515	Strongly Agree %	Moderately Agree %	Slightly Agree %	Not at all %	Total %
Below 18 Years	284	52.1	29.9	12.3	5.6	100
18-20 Years	222	58.6	28.8	8.6	4.1	100
Over 20 Years	9	44.4	44.4	0	11.1	100

The results in Table 6 show that the students who were below 18 years responded in the following way; 52.1 per cent strongly agreed, 29.9 per cent moderately agreed, 12.3 per cent slightly agreed while 5.6 per cent did not agree with the statement. In the 18-20 years category 58.6 per cent strongly agreed, 28.8 per cent moderately agreed, 8.6 per cent slightly agreed while 4.1per cent did not agree at all. The analysis of the responses from students who were over 20 years showed that 44.4 per cent strongly agreed, 44.4 per cent moderately agreed and 11.1 per cent did not agree at all. The results indicated that over 80 per cent of the students across the different age groups either moderately or strongly agreed that CRE had helped them to develop tolerance as a CRE value that promotes social cohesion.

The students were also asked to comment as to whether CRE helped them to become "more patriotic" than other subjects. Their responses are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7: Age of students and their perception on the role of CRE in promotion of patriotism

Age of Respondent	N=515	Strongly Agree %	Moderately Agree %	Slightly Agree %	Not at all %	Total %
Below 18 Years	284	35.2	36.6	18.3	9.9	100
18-20 Years	222	40.1	38.7	13.5	7.7	100
Over 20 Years	9	33.3	22.2	11.1	33.3	100

The findings in Table 7 revealed that over 70 per cent of those students below 20 years either moderately or strongly agreed that this statement was true. However the results from the older students who were over 20 years were clearly different with just slightly over 55 per cent moderately and strongly agreeing while 33.3 per cent did not agree with the statement at all. Perhaps this rate of response was influenced by the fact the older students were more exposed to real life situations and may have been more critical of religious teachings. The fact that 33.3 per cent of this age group did not agree with the statement may indicate older students' disillusionment with religious and moral issues which was in keeping with one of the teachers comments who alluded to the difficulties of dealing with the older students. On being asked to comment on whether CRE does promote social cohesion on the students, the teacher had the following to say:

> "*CRE as a subject for sure does help students develop various moral values that would lead to social cohesion. However, the impact is noticed more in younger students, for example Form One students are more likely to apply issues learned in CRE in their daily lives than Form Four students.*''

When this teacher was asked to clarify this statement, he said that this was probably because the older students were on the whole more exposed and therefore not likely to accept everything as absolute truth.

The study also sought students views on whether "Honesty" was a value that was important in promoting social cohesion. The students were therefore asked to comment on whether CRE had made them "honest". The data in Table 8 summarizes their responses.

Table 8: Age of students and their perception on the role of CRE in promotion of honesty

Age of Respondent	N=515	Strongly Agree per cent	Moderately Agree per cent	Slightly Agree per cent	Not at all per cent	Total per cent
Below 18 Years	284	43.3	27.5	18.7	10.6	100
18-20 Years	222	41.9	27.5	19.8	10.8	100
Over 20 Years	9	33.3	22.2	44.4	0	100

The results in Table 8, indicate that the students below 20 years were generally in agreement with the statement as shown by 70.8 per cent of those below 18 years either moderately or strongly agreed whereas those between 18-20 years had 69.4 per cent either moderately or strongly agreed with the statement. However, in the category of those above 20 years only 55.5 per cent moderately or strongly agreed with 44.4 per cent only slightly agreeing with the statement. This was in agreement with what was established earlier by students' responses towards tolerance and patriotism where the older students seemed to be negative on the influence of CRE towards development of values related to social cohesion.

One of the key factors that is basic to social cohesion is "respect to other people and their property". The students were therefore asked to rate how CRE promoted their respect for other people and their property. The results are shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Age of students and their perceptions on the role of CRE in promotion of respect for other people

Age of Respondent	N=515	Strongly Agree %	Moderately Agree %	Slightly Agree %	Not at all %	Total %
Below 18 Years	284	53.9	30.6	11.3	4.2	100
18-20 Years	222	59.9	27.5	10.4	2.3	100
Over 20 Years	9	44.4	44.4	0	11.1	100

The results in Table 9, show that over 85 per cent of the students in each of the age categories either moderately or strongly agreed with the statement. However, it was again noted that the older students, that is, those over 20 years had lower percentage of those who strongly agreed at 44.4 per cent in comparison to 59.9 per cent of those between 18-20 years and 53.9 per cent of those below 18 years.

Students were also requested to rate the way CRE has enhanced their "cooperation" with different people and their responses are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10: Age of students and their perceptions on the role of CRE in promotion of cooperation

Age of Respondent	N=515	Strongly Agree %	Moderately Agree %	Slightly Agree %	Not at all %	Total %
Below 18 Years	284	54.6	31.0	9.2	5.3	100.
18-20 Years	222	56.8	32.4	7.2	3.6	100
Over 20 Years	9	44.4	0	33.3	22.2	100

The results in Table 10, indicated that over 85 per cent of students in both below 18 and 18-20 year categories strongly or moderately agreed with the statement whereas only 44.4 per cent of the above 20 years did agree. Of this last group,

that is, above 20 years, over 55 per cent slightly agreed or did not agree with the statement at all. This is in comparison to 14.3 per cent and 10.8 per cent of those who slightly agreed or did not agree in the first two categories respectively. These results imply that the older students had a less positive attitude regarding the use of CRE in development of this particular value.

Taking into account that another important value in social relations was "courtesy", students were therefore asked to rate the extent to which CRE had helped them to become more courteous towards other people. In response to this statement, the students' comments are shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Age of students and their perspectives on the role of CRE in promotion of courtesy

Age of Respondent	N=515	Strongly Agree %	Moderately Agree %	Slightly Agree %	Not at all %	Total %
Below 18 Years	284	46.1	35.2	12.7	6.0	100
18-20 Years	222	47.7	33.3	15.3	3.6	100
Over 20 Years	9	22.2	55.6	22.2	0	100

The results captured in Table 11, indicate that about 80 per cent and above in each of the different age categories either moderately or strongly agreed with the statement. However, in regard to those who strongly agreed with the statement there was a marked difference between the older and the younger students. It was noted that 46.1 per cent of those below 18years of age strongly agreed, 47.7 per cent of those between 18-20 years did the same whereas only 22.2 per cent of the over 20 years were in strong agreement. The implication was that as people get older they become more independent and may not relate their behavior to laid out virtues in the society.

Social cohesion may encourage "nationalism" and therefore students were asked to rate how CRE may have helped them to think more nationally. Their responses are as shown in Table 12.

Table 12: Age of students and their perspectives on the role of CRE in promotion of nationalism

Age of Respondent	N=515	Strongly Agree %	Moderately Agree %	Slightly Agree %	Not at all %	Total %
Below 18 Years	284	37.0	31.3	16.9	14.8	100
18-20 Years	222	47.7	29.3	16.2	6.8	100
Over 20 Years	9	77.8	22.2	0	0	100

A close analysis of the results shown in Table 12 suggested an interesting trend where the percentages of those who moderately or strongly agree seemed to increase with age. This was shown by the fact that 68.3 per cent of those below 18 years either moderately or strongly agreed with the statement, 77 per cent of those between 18 and 20 and 100 per

cent of those above 20 years concurred in the same way. In regard to those who did not agree with the statement at all, the reverse was true where the percentage decreased as the age increased. It was established that 14.8 per cent of the below 18 years category were in disagreement, followed by 6.8 per cent of the between 18-20 years and none at all in over 20years category. The results probably pointed out the fact that the older students had a better understanding of what nationalism was; a concept that is highly encouraged in Kenya through various media as a way of promoting cohesiveness in the society. These older students were therefore more likely to avoid being perceived as people who were not supportive to the efforts the country was making towards nationalism.

Another value that was tested was "humility". Students were therefore asked to rate the extent to which CRE had encouraged them to be "humble". Their responses were summarized in Table 13.

Table 13: Age of students and their perspectives on the role of CRE in promotion of humility

Age of Respondent	N=515	Strongly Agree %	Moderately Agree %	Slightly Agree %	Not at all %	Total %
Below 18 Years	284	50.7	30.3	14.1	4.9	100
18-20 Years	222	61.7	20.3	11.3	6.8	100
Over 20 Years	9	55.6	44.4	0	0	100

The results in Table 13, indicate that over 80 per cent of the first two categories below 18 years and 18-20 years either moderately or strongly agreed with the statement. The total number of students in the above 20 years category, that is 100 per cent did the same. There was minimal response regarding total disagreement with this statement with 4.9 per cent coming from the below 18 years and 6.8 per cent from the category of between 18-20 years. In this response the students across the different age categories were generally in agreement that CRE did encourage them to be humble. This was in concurrence with the fact that humility is one of the most important virtues that is encouraged in Christianity and hence emphasized in CRE. The last value to be tested and which was deemed important in social cohesion was "fairness" to all people inspite of their ethnicity. The students were therefore asked to rate the extent to which CRE had encouraged them towards this value. Their responses are captured in Table 14.

Table 14: Age of students and their perceptions on the role of CRE in promotion of fairness

Age of Respondent	N=515	Strongly Agree %	Moderately Agree %	Slightly Agree %	Not at all %	Total %
Below 18 Years	284	58.5	28.9	9.9	2.8	100
18-20 Years	222	63.5	24.8	8.6	3.2	100
Over 20 Years	9	77.8	0	22.2	0	100

The results in Table 14, show that there was a general agreement that CRE did encourage people to be fair to others inspite of their ethnicity. This was shown by the fact that 87.4 per cent of those below 18 years either moderately or strongly agreed, 98.0 per cent of the category between 18-20 years either moderately or strongly agreed, whereas 77.8 per cent of those above 20 years category were in the same agreement. It was interesting to note that those above 20 years category had the highest percentage of those who strongly agreed. This was probably a reflection of the general national campaign where citizens in Kenya are encouraged to be mindful of members from different ethnic groups in order to develop national cohesion and therefore the older students were probably more conscious of this expectation. They would also not want to be perceived as if they are not supportive of that national cohesion campaign.

Following the analysis relating to students age and various values related to social cohesion, Hypothesis 1 was again tested against the second students' characteristic which was age. The summation table used to classify students responses according to gender was again used to do the same for students' responses according to age (see Table 3). The results of that analysis are summarized in Table 15.

Table 15: Categorization of students' responses according to age

Age of Respondent	Strongly Agree (N)	Moderately Agree (N)	Slightly Agree (N)	Not at all (N)	Total (N)
Below 18 Years	142	106	25	11	284
18-20 Years	139	59	19	5	222
Over 20 Years	3	6	0	0	9
TOTAL	284	171	44	16	515

Using information presented in Table 15, the hypothesis "Learner characteristics do not significantly influence their perspectives on the role of CRE in promoting social cohesion" was tested in relationship to age. The results are captured in Table 16.

Table 16: Chi-Square Tests on Age and students' perceptions

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.938[a]	6	.030
Likelihood Ratio	14.548	6	.024
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.152	1	.042
N of Valid Cases	515		

Data analyzed and results obtained in Table 16, revelaed that age was statistically significant in relation to perception of students on the role of CRE in the promotion of social cohesion; (X^2 =13.938[a], p=.030). This statistic seemed to agree with the analysis of the students' responses as to how CRE helped them in developing values deemed neccesary in

the promotion of social cohesion. The analysis seemed to suggest that older students viewed the role played by CRE in social cohesion in a more negative manner. In order to establish the strength and direction of the variables, the following regression model (equation1) was used to show the effect of age on social cohesion:

$$Y = a + bX$$

Equation 1: Regression Model

where:

- Y = Perception on Social Cohesion (Dependent Variable)

- X = Age (Independent Variable)

- b = The slope of the regression line. It is the average change in the dependent variable (Y) for a 1-unit change in the independent variable (X). It is the average change in the attitude on social cohesion for a 1-unit change in the age of the student

- a = The intercept of the regression line

Equation 2 was thus computed for the study:
$$Y = a - 0.90X$$

Equation 1 Form used for study

A unit change in age leads to a decrease of perception by 0.9. This implied that as the student gets older, the level of positive perception on the role of CRE on social cohesion decreased. These results supported what Hudson, M.; Phillips, J.; Ray, K. and Barnes, H. (2007) found in their study on Social Cohesion in Diverse Communities in the United Kingdom. In this study, it was found out that younger people were more likely to have ethnically mixed friendships. The researchers also concluded that these cross ethnic interactions were most likely associated with more positive perceptions and attitudes towards diversity. Dandy and Pe Pua (2013) came up with similar results when they carried out a study on Social cohesion, Social division and Conflict in Multi-cultural Australia. Their findings pointed out to the fact that older immigrants found it more difficult to develop a sense of belonging in their new community than younger ones. They concluded that this was because the older the people, the stronger the attachment to the places they migrated from. These results pointed to the fact that the younger the student, the more receptive they were likely to be in internalizing CRE messages towards social cohesion. The implication here was that those who teach younger learners needed to make extra effort to help them develop the right attitudes when they are still young.

VII. STUDY CONCLUSIONS

From data analysis, findings and discussions of the study, the following conclusion emerged;

i. Social cohesion is a major prerequisite for nationalism and therefore should be enhanced and developed in the society. Responses from both teachers and students supported this point of view by agreeing that CRE as a subject could enhance social cohesion leading to nationalism.

ii. Age as a students' characteristic was strongly related to the students' perspectives on the role of CRE in the promotion of social cohesion. By observing the age of the respondents, students' perceptions towards the role of CRE in the promotion of social cohesion varied across the different age groups. However, it was noted that the younger the student was, the more positive their perception towards the role of CRE in promotion of social cohesion was. The reverse was true where the older a student was the less positive their perception on the role of CRE in social cohesion was.

VIII. STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study established that CRE was an important tool for promotion of social cohesion in society especially if it was studied by people who chose it for the right reasons and if relevant methodologies were used. In many cases, students were almost forced to take CRE as a way of encouraging them to do well because of the perception that CRE was easy to pass in the examination. while others took it because it was automatically grouped with subjects that they wanted to take. As a result of CRE being a religion based subject, it is recommended that it should only be taken by people who are willing and happy to do it. In this way, the expected impact of the subject would be reflected in the students' perceptions and attitude to the subject and its application to daily living, hence promote and enhance social cohesion in Kenya and beyond.

REFERENCES

[1] Akerhed, A. (2007). *Transforming conflicts and building peace*. Stockholm: Sida Studies.
[2] Bogonko, S.N. (1992). *A History of modern education in Kenya*. Nairobi: Evans Brothers Kenya Limited.
[3] Boss, J.A. (2001). *Analyzing moral issues*. Toronto: Mayfield Publishing Company.
[4] Bruhn, J. G. (2009). *The group effect: Social cohesion and health outcomes.* Dordrecht: Springer.
[5] Brown, E. (2008). *The road to Peace: The role of the Sothern Sudanese Church in Communal stabilization and national resolution.* Unpublished PhD thesis: University of Edinburgh.
[6] Ciano, J.N. (2006). *The role played by American foreign policy in the democratic republic of Congo.* Unpublished M.A thesis. University of Nairobi.
[7] Dandy, H. and Pe-Pua, R (2013). Research into current and emerging drivers for social cohesion and conflict in multicultural Australia. Research Report. Edith Cowan University and the Universty of New South Wales
[8] Davis, C. (1994). *Religion and the making of society.* New York: Cambridge University Press.
[9] Demarck, S.; Fowler, D.; Robinson, B.; Stevens; A. and Wilson, I. (2010). Young people and community cohesion: Reseach Report DFE-PR033. United Kingdom.
[10] Farah, A.H. (2001). *The role of Religion in Somali disputes*. Unpublished M.A. thesis: University of Nairobi.

[11] Hudson, M.;Phillips, J; Ray, K. and Barnes, H. (2007) Social cohesion in diverse communities, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

[12] Jeruto, J. (2015). Determinants of cohesion among youth groups: The case of selected youth groups in Kikuyu sub County, Kiambu County, Kenya. Unpublished M.A. project. University of Nairobi.

[13] Kamau, M.W. (2014) The role of CRE in transmitting moral values among secondary students in Mathioya district, Murang'a county, Kenya. Unpublished M.ed :Kenyatta University

[14] Kamau, H.W. (2015) Factors influencing implementation of Life Skills Educationin primary schools in Starehe sub-county,Nairobi County Kenya. Unpublished M.ed thesis Universty of Nairobi

[15] Kubai, K. (2008). *Role of good governance in conflict prevention*: A case of Kenya from 1992-2007.

[16] Machyo, C.N. (1995). *Social and cultural factors in the career and educational plans of young Kenyan women.* Unpublished M.ED thesisi. University of New Brunswick.

[17] Omondi, S. (2004). *The role of civil society in conflict management: A case of the Catholic Church in the Rwandan Genocide*. Unpublished M.A thesis. University of Nairobi.

[18] Rampino, T. and Taylor, M. (2013*). Gender differences in educational aspirations and attitudes.* Institute for Social and Economic Research. No. 2013 - 15

[19] Reader, J. (1998). *African biography of a continent*. London: Penguin Books Limited.

[20] Republic of Kenya (1964). The Kenya Education Commission Report Part 1 and 11. Nairobi, Government Press.

[21] Republic of Kenya (2002). Secondary of education syllabus Vol.3. Nairobi: Kenya.Institute of Education.

[22] Republic of Kenya (2012). Road to cohesion. National Cohesion and Integration. Commission: Nairobi. Available at http://www.cohesion.or.ke/

[23] Sinha, S. and Khumiri, T (2007). *Asassination that altered course of the world history*. Mumbai. Magua Publishing Company limited.

[24] Takayo, M. (2011). *History Education and Identity Formation: A Case of Uganda.* Unpublished PhD thesis. Clarement Mc Kenna University.

[25] The Pew Forum (2010). *Tolerance and tension: Islam and Christianity in sub- Saharan Africa*. Washington: Pew Research Centre.

[26] United Nations (2002). *Gender mainstreaming: An overview.* New York

[27] Wamwere, K. (2008). *Negative ethnicity: From bias to genocide*. Nairobi: Seven Stories Press.