

Christian-Muslim Relations in Ghana

The Case of Two Selected Senior High Schools Awoshie and Dansoman

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ABSTRACT

Religious tensions and conflicts in many West African societies is gradually making its way into the High Schools. These phenomenon in many cases are based on perceptions and the absence of certain conditions in a multi-religious school environment. Ghana is a multi-religious society with Christians and Muslims forming the majority of the religious population.

The study was a qualitative case study in a selected two Senior High Schools from Awoshie and Dansoman. Data was collected using face-to-face interviews and observations. Participants were Christians and Muslim students from the selected High Schools. Theoretical framework was built from contact theory, social perception and dialogical pluralism.

The study revealed that there is relative peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims at the High Schools. However, negative perception persists between the two religious' groups towards each other. Christians on one hand perceive Muslims as impatient and violent while Muslims also perceive the Christians as exclusivist who think highly of their religion.

Again, the study also found out that the public schools in this study are not religiously neutral and accommodative in a pluralistic religious environment. Negative perception still exists among Christians and Muslims in the school. The daily religious activities in the school is mainly in favour of Christianity. This condition could become fuel for tensions and conflict in the school.

The significance of this study has been a contribution to the discourse on religious conflict at the macro level and more recently in schools involving the youth. The study draws attention to the fact that religious motivated tensions and conflicts experienced in the mainstream is also a reality in the High School setting.

Additionally, the study also indicated the public schools are not religiously neutral as expected of them by the constitution. A situation which is quite worrying and needs attention to avert future conflict.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

Religious conflict in African schools is gradually increasing (Ushe 2015). In many African countries where more than one religion co-exists peacefully in the mainstream society and in their schools are now experiencing tensions, conflict and in some cases violent clashes (Ngina 2018; Ushe 2015). In January 2018, there was a violent clash between Christians and Muslims students at Jamhuri High School in Kenya where seven students and their school principal were stabbed. This conflict was based on the allegation of religious discrimination by the school administration (Ngina 2018).

The nexus between religion and conflict in schools is not a new phenomenon. It can be traced to the 19th century where it was an intra-religious conflict between the Catholic and the Protestant church over Bible reading and prayer in public schools in America. And close to half a century after the Supreme Court ruled out school-sponsored prayer out of public schools, the school has become a battleground for various religious conflicts not only within one religious group but also between two different groups and in Africa popularly between Christians and Muslims (Wisniewski 2011).

Today religiously motivated conflict is broadening in scope and can occur at any level in society including the schools. At times such conflict starts from the society and spreads to the school, destroying school properties and sometimes lives (Treve 2013). And at other times, it begins with the school and spreads to the larger society (Ushe 2015; Nitho-Nitho and Nieuwenhuis 2010). However, scholarly works on conflict involving religion in Africa focus mainly on the larger society with their aim on challenges, causes and prevention. Others also aimed at exploring its political and economic impact on society (Abdul-Hamid 2011; Ammah 2007; Obeng-Mireku 2017; Treves 2013).

At the micro level such as the school, conflict involving religion has gained not much scholarly attention. Religious conflict on Christian and Muslim relations in school in Africa seem to not be attractive, making the grounds fertile for scholarly works. Meanwhile, Abdul-Hamid (2011) asserted that religious conflicts involving Muslim youth in Ghana is on the rise and called for urgent attention on the phenomena. Similarly, Ushe (2015) noted that conflict involving Christians and Muslims is not limited to the main society but has become rampant in the secondary schools. The present study on Christian-Muslim relations in two selected Ghanaian schools seeks to fill this gap. It seeks to explore within the school's domain the condition for Muslims and Christian students in public senior high schools in Ghana. Such

knowledge may be necessary for preventing religious tension and conflict in schools and their communities in Ghana.

Religious conflict between Christian and Muslims in Africa may be due to attitudinal problems such as wrong perceptions and discrimination against religious groups by state institutions and other faiths groups. These attitudinal problems are mainly from the majority group against the minority which also produces relative response in diverse ways. According to Pew Research in 2012, the pressure on minority religious groups to conform to certain norms is on the rise (Pew Research 2012).

And it has been reported this can be found in 198 countries in the Middle East and North of Africa. In 2012, religious conflicts and violent clashes were rampant in these regions. There was government intervention on religion in many countries where religion provide motivation for such conflicts. As a result, there was a legal imposition on preaching, worship and religious clothing (Reuter 2014; Pew Research 2012; Nitho-Nitho and Nieuwenhuis 2010).

Religious conflict and state interference in religion is not only recorded in Africa but also in some Western countries Britain, Russia and France (Abdool et al 2007). For instance, in France, harassments against women dressing because of the killing of the rabbi and the three Jewish children by Islamic radicals. These religious tensions, conflict and in some instances violence in societies at large does not only have negative economic implication, but also erode the beauty of peaceful co-existence of humans

Yet, in some countries including Ghana in the West Africa Sub-Sahara region, Christians and Muslims have co-exist in relative peace (Sarbah 2010; Abdul Hamid 2011). Many scholarly works on Ghana in religion and sociology agrees that Ghana as a country is multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious (Ammah 2007). This relation between Christian and Muslims is because Ghana has always been multi-religious with the African traditional religion welcoming other religion from near and far (Ammah 2007; Sarbah 2010; Obeng-Mireku).

The nation is regarded as one of the peaceful countries with stable democracy for over two decades in the sub-region and has been and ranked 46th globally (Institute of Economics and Peace 2016), This peaceful co-existence between Muslims and Christians have in recent times experienced tensions and conflicts. The missionary activities of Christians and Muslims have always presented them as rivals. These evangelistic nature of the two traditions at times leads to tensions and violent clashes between the group (Ammah 2007). It has been argued that the offensive evangelism activities of Christians and Muslims that often leads to tension and

sometimes conflicts are due to the way these two groups interpret scriptures (Acquah 2011:14). There has been various protest staged by Muslim youth from Zongo communities against Christians, accusing them of discrimination against Islamic values at workplaces and in schools (Abdul-Hamid 2011). The focus in this thesis is to explore and investigate Muslims and Christians relations in the Senior High Schools in Ghana.

1.2 Research Problem

There exists enough evidence from academic literature that religion can serve as a tool for peace and a source of conflict. Cnaan, Gelles and Sinha (2004:197) confirmed that indeed religion can “serve as a tool for social cohesion and reduce anomie”. However, Abdool, Walter and Wolhuter (2007) on the hand also contended that religion also serve as a tool for conflict and recounting on the destruction of the world trade centre write “religion, in this case of fundamental-extremist form can affect social cohesion and civic peace” (p.543). Today, religious conflict constitutes an increasing share of violent conflict in many societies in the world. For many individuals and groups, religious beliefs provide moral tools to justify and carry out violence.

We live in a religiously pluralistic world with billions of the world’s populations affiliated to a religious tradition. According to Pew Research Centre’s Forum on Religion and Public Life, about 84% of the worlds over six billion people belong to one of the world religions. Christianity and Islam are noted to have the largest number of adherents out of the numbers who adhere to religion (Pew Research 2010). Religious conflict therefore between these two groups in any society can threaten the peace and survival of that society. The destruction of the world trade centre did not only affect property but also led to the loss of thousands of lives and consequently had negative impact on American’s economy and that of other nations. After this awful event, religiously motivated conflict has been on the rise in many regions of the world including Africa.

The conflicts in Northern Ireland, Darfur in Sudan and the Northern parts of Nigeria are example of this phenomenon. It has been documented that in the British Capital London, religiously motivated crimes increased to about 600% in 2005 than in the previous year (SAPA-AFP 2005 cited in Abdool et al 2007). This fast spreading incident experienced in the new millennium is not only limited to the larger society but making its way into schools in the global north and south. In Europe and specifically London, the move to increase the number of

religion-based schools for the Jewish, Christians and Muslims was welcomed by different views. One group believed that the provision of state-funded religious schools will somewhat widen the existing inequality gap in the community while the other group were in favour of the creation of more of such schools for the Abrahamic traditions (Abdool et al 2007).

In France, the opening of the first private Muslim school in 2003 in a catholic dominated community generated debates and tension. The Muslims on the other hand could not understand the tension from the Christians because there are Christians schools in the community (Blilgnaut 2003:10). And on the grounds of religious clothing in France, Kelland (2005:10) stated that a girl petition to wear religious cloth with the school authorities was turned down as her right was denied. Also, in Britain, a Bangladeshi Muslim girl could not win her legal battle demanding her right to wear her full Islamic dress to school. These two incidents in France and Britain on religious clothing generated hot debate in British newspapers (Abdool et al,2007).

In Africa, Christians and Muslims relations have not been stable and some scholars describe their relation as a fluctuating relation from one of tolerance to tension, conflict and sometimes violent clashes (Obeng- Mireku 2017; Fredricks 2016; Treve 2013). This kind of relations experience in the larger society also find it way in the schools. In South Africa, Jewish students are worried about anti-semitic feelings among their Christian and Muslim colleagues (Du Toit 2005:5). In Northern Nigeria, Christians face daily harassment in schools with their Muslim colleagues and a teenager who got pregnant was sentenced to death (Abdool et al 2007). These occurrences of religious conflict are not exclusive to these settings but sometimes even locals where Christians and Muslims are believed to co-exist in relative peace experience tensions and conflict. Christian -Muslims relations in Ghana over the years is seen as peaceful and the nation is named among the peaceful.

However, these picture of beautiful co-existence relations between Christian and Muslims is not without conflict. There has been conflict between these two groups at some of the capital towns of the countries involving the Muslim youth in recent times. Abdul- Hamid (2011) confirmed that there is an increase in religiously motivated conflict involving Muslim youth in the Ghanaian society. Ammah (2008) also posited that though Christian and Muslim relation in Ghana has been peaceful for decades, recently their relations have been marred with tensions and conflicts. It is worth mentioning that this religiously inspired conflict is not confined to the larger society but also in the schools.

Similarly, Treves (2013) wrote on religious conflict between two Christian denomination where school properties were destroyed. Unfortunately, there is limited scholarly works on religious conflict in schools and as mentioned earlier most works focus on the society. However, in the year 2015, there were media reports from major media houses in Ghana on how religious conflict is gradually influencing Ghanaian schools.

“We are deeply saddened by the uncompromising position taken by the Christian Council of Ghana and the Catholic Bishops’ Conference in the statement issued on the 3rd of March 2015 and earlier statement coming from certain individuals like the public relation officer of Ghana Education Service(GES) and the Deputy General Secretary of Ghana National Association of Teachers(GNAT) regarding the Muslim community’s demand for freedom of worship in educational institution and workplace in Ghana.....(Ghana news 2015; Myjoyonline 2015).

This statement was made by the National Chief Imam of Ghana in reaction to a report on how Muslims students were forced in schools to attend Christian activities. The tension was created in some of the key regions in including the capital of Ghana when it was reported that a group of Muslim youth have staged a demonstration in the Western region of Ghana. The purpose of the demonstration was to draw attention to the plight of how some Muslim students were forced to participate in Christian activities in schools and how female Muslims students were asked to put off their Hijabs in mission public schools in the country (Citifmonline 2015).

This drew the attention of the President of Ghana at the time and in his State of the nation address to parliament, sternly warned educational institutions to be mindful of the constitutional demands of students’ religious liberty. He stressed that school authorities should be careful not to impose one religion’s activities on students of other religions. He reminded the heads of institutions to protect the constitutional rights of every student irrespective of their religious affiliations. The president further, warned heads not to restrict student in their religious practices in the schools.

The situation attracted the key leaders in Islam and Christianity into battle of words amidst tension. For instance, one of the largest denominations, the catholic church with a population of 13.1% at their bishops’ conference asked heads of catholic educational institutions not to waiver but be firm and continue their duties as defined by the catholic church without fear or intimidation from any quarters. The Christian Council of Ghana also in their response asked the Muslims to seek redress in court (Citifmonline 2015).

This conflict prevailed for some time and most people were worried such situation could plunge the nation into violent clashes between the two religions as tempers kept rising. News of

religious conflict and violent clashes have become rampant in recent years, and across the world, religious fanatics specifically Christian and Muslims is on the rise recently. Many studies on religion peace and conflict in the Africa have focused on the larger society. For instance, Obeng-Mireku work on Christian and Muslim relation in Ghana and Nigeria dwelled on the two societies at the macro level. Again, other studies on Christian -Muslim relations was in relation with African traditional value. Abdul Hamid (2011) work was on youth and religious conflict. Unfortunately, not much is known on how Christians and Muslims relate with each other in the school environment in Ghana.

It is in the light of this that the present study explored Christians and Muslims relations in two selected Senior High Schools in Ghana. The focus was to investigate and find out how the schools have created enabling environment to promote Christians and Muslims relations in the Senior High Schools in Ghana.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To explore relationship between Christian and Muslim in the senior high schools
2. To find out the perceptions of Christians and Muslims towards each other in the school environment.
3. To examine how the schools, create conducive environment for Christians and Muslims students

1.4 Research question

The main research questions in this study is to find out the *conditions for Muslims and Christians students in the Ghanaian High Schools*. From the main research question, the following sub questions has been addressed

1. *What are the perceptions of students and teachers towards Christians and Muslims in the schools?*
2. *In which ways have the schools created conducive environment for Christians and Muslims?*

1.5 Purpose and Significance of the study

The school as a miniature society reflects the beliefs, values and norms of the wider society. In addition to the academic programs drawn to prepare students for various roles in the society, it is the place of transmission of society's cultural values and norms including religious beliefs

and values (Abdool et al 2007). The Ghanaian society is religiously pluralistic in nature where alongside African Traditional Religion, Christianity, Islam and other religions thrive and co-exist peacefully. Religion therefore dominates every fibre of the society including the school. The religious atmosphere in the society also plays out in the school setting. Many of the public schools are co-established by the government and religious organizations and managed by the government. Therefore, the beliefs and practices influence the culture of the schools.

Abdul-Hamid (2011) contended that religious conflict involving Ghanaian youth and specifically Muslim youth is alarming the Ghana Society. Many of these youth involved in these conflicts are those in the age brackets at the schools. There is a need for clear and better understanding of why Christian and Muslim relations at certain time is peaceful and at another time become conflictual. The purpose in this study is to explore and find out the conditions in the school that influence Christian and Muslim relations in the schools in the face of rising religious motivated tensions and conflicts in Ghana. The aim is to get a deeper understanding of conditions within the schools setting that influence the relations between Christians and Muslims.

The involvement of youth in conflict and specifically the tension between Christians and Muslims in schools is an issue of concern for policymakers in the country and there is the need for a study in this area to find out the prevailing conditions in the schools for Christian-Muslim relations in Ghanaian schools. The “Senior High School case” in Ghana would serve as a helpful resource for heads of public schools, Ghana Education Service and other stakeholders to get new insight into the pattern of relations between Christian and Muslims. The study would also compliment the effort being made by the Christian and Muslim Councils in Ghana in mediating religious conflict in schools. And lastly this study is aimed at contributing to the existing knowledge on religion, conflict and peace.

1.6 Justification for the study.

The school as a public space is a place where students with diverse religious affiliations and cultural backgrounds meet to be prepared for life. It is therefore tasked with two main responsibilities. It is a place where the cognitive abilities of learners are developed to understand and master aspects of reality in a form of structured programs (Abdool et al 2007:552). These programs in the form of subjects, are expected to inculcate into students’ social skills to make them competent in life. Therefore, it is imperative that stakeholders in education and school authorities in their policies ensure an environment accommodative for all

students for effective teaching and learning. Lagerwey and Lagerwey-Voogt (2005:202) agree and stated, “learners are at school to learn; and teachers are at school to facilitate their learning, the school managers are to create the conditions for optimal learning”. This means that the school must make room for various religious identities to avoid discriminations

Additionally, the school Abdool et al (2007) contended is a demonstration of life in its microcosmic nature. It is therefore expected that the school prepare students through curricular and extracurricular activities welcoming the diverse nature of the students to conceptualize, accept religious differences among people and be prepared to accommodate such differences. This knowledge would help minimise attitudes such as discriminations and stereotypes that lead to passing judgement on others. This would reduce conflict and most importantly religious motivated conflict. In some countries like Norway where secularization is matured the school environment has space for religious identities just as is represented in the wider society. Muslims girls can be seen with their religious long dress and the hijab in schools.

However, in some countries, the school as in the case of the larger society varies. In Britain and France, the space for the accommodation of Muslims’ practice and identities within the school systems is connected to church-state inherited relation (PISA 2007). In Britain, the state and the church have created favourable context for the accommodation of Muslim religious demand in schools. On the contrary, in France, there is no clear room for accommodation of students with diverse religious background and especially those in the minority (PISA 2007). According to Fetzer and Soper (2005) Muslims related policy accommodation in school is similar is one of a conflictual relation like that of the catholic church and the state. Accepting religious identities with their practices has become difficult in the French school systems generating controversies over wearing of hijabs to school. And PISA (2007) argued that even though there is space for religious identities, this space is limited.

And in Ghana, in recent times, such conflictual situations on religious identities in schools is on the rise in public and private schools This raise an issue of concern on Muslims and Christian relation in schools in Ghana. In 2015 there was a report on the wearing of hijab in taking photo identification for national examination (Peprah 2015). This generated debate and tension in certain parts of the country as to why the Muslims girls were asked to remove their headscarf before the identification photos. This situation of tension and conflict inspired by religion in schools is the basis for this current study on Christians and Muslim relation in the two selected

High Schools in Ghana. With a clear focus on the Conditions for Christian and Muslims relations in the schools. The next section discusses the study context.

1.7 Context of study

The study was conducted in two selected schools; **Dansoman** and **Awoshie** all suburbs in the Greater Accra Region Ghana. The two locations were formerly under the same Ablekuma South Municipality. Recently, the two have been separated for effective management within the municipalities. For clarity and comprehension, I will present a brief discussion on each of the school and its location. It worth noting that the selected schools share similarities as well as difference. The two schools are public schools and are both under Ghana Education Service, but one is co-managed by government and a religious organization and the other is solely managed by the government. The two schools accept student with diverse religious affiliations.

1.7.1 Dansoman

The first school selected for this study can be found in Dansoman a suburban area in Accra the capital of Ghana. It is a missionary co-educational school founded in 1997 by the Metropolitan Archbishop of Accra, Archbishop Dominic Tandoh with seventeen girls and six boys in an uncompleted building closed to one of the residential areas in Dansoman (Ghana Education Service 2015). In the year 2005, the schools board of governors agreed and gave the school up to be absorbed into the public-school system.

Today, the school has a population of over thousand students and over fifty teachers drawn from Dansoman and its surrounding towns near and far. It has space for only day students and have and at the time of this study has no intention to provide space for boarding house. Currently, the school run all Ghana GES approve programs (GES 2015), Dansoman though originally a typical Ga community is ethnically diverse with many religious activities including Christianity and Islam. Christians are in the majority in this area but has a Zongo (Muslim location) community close to the end of the suburban community.

Dansoman is the single largest planned urban settlement in the West Africa sub-region. It is about 7km away from the Accra city centre. Even though is a popular town in Accra, the place has not been captured in scholarly works. It is one of the diverse communities in Ghana and its diversity lies in income, ethnicity and religion (AMA 2014). It was founded by the late Nii Kojo Danso in 1960 a Ga but now a home for all ethnic and religious backgrounds. It has a population of about 56,267 people (AMA 2014). It is believed that the place was named after Nii Danso

Historically, Dansoman is made up small villages such as Gbese, Glefe, Sakaman Mpoase and Jonkobli with an estimated vase land (Seworno and Barry 2015). The land initially was then owned by stools and families. But the through an executive instrument (L.S. No 233/68) the government compulsorily acquired portion of the land for Ghana Housing Corporation for estate housing projects and poultry farming. This state interventions led to Dansoman been the largest estate in West Africa (Seworno and Barry 2015). The areas attract all class of people ranging from high income to low income earners because of the estate housing project and the surrounding villages which later became a dwelling place for many natives and migrants of low-income earning status.

Today, Dansoman has developed with many of the old areas renamed including Akokofoto, Exhibition, Mataheko, Sahara, Roundabout, Asoredanho, Agege and SNNIT flats the state housing project. The area is densely populated with many public and private schools from early childhood centres to university which serve the educational needs of the population. The area is highly religious with fair representation of Christians and Muslims, with Christians in the majority. At the time of this study there is no official documentation on the numbers Christians and Muslims in the communities. Dansoman is noted for vibrant commercial activities. Popular among such commercial activities is the hospitality and allied industries, financial institutions, spar and beauty centres, telecommunication and among others. There is also agricultural activity in fishing and salt mining at the beginning and the tail end of the of the municipality. It also has a market to serve the need of the people (AMA 2014, Ghana Statistical Service 2014)

1.7.2 Awoshie

The second area selected school for this study is located close to the Zongo community of Awoshie township and surrounded by many Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. It is a co-educational institution established on the 25th of Janaury,1940 by Joseph T. Leigh a sierra Leonean and Jerome Acquah a Ghanaian near the Adabraka police station. It was move to its present location in 1972 by the government of Ghana. The school has a student population of 2,672. The school has space for day and boarding students with a staff strength of 182 teaching and non-teaching staff. It runs all Ghana Education Service approved programs (Ghana Education Service 2018). Awoshie the present location of the school is a Ga community which is ethnically and religiously diverse. The religious culture of the town is reflected in the population of the school.

Awoshie is one of the developing areas in the Ga central municipality and as at the time of writing there are no clear scholarly works on the area. There is no authentic history on how the

area was founded but the area is known for Apostle Kojo Sarfo's School of Arts and Sciences and the Edge Hill Senior High School. According to the Ghana Statistical Service, the area was separated from the Ga South Municipal Assembly in 2012 with the Greater legislative instrument 2135(2012). Awoshie is ethnically diverse with the Gas dominating followed by the other ethnic groups in Ghana (Ghana Statistical Service 2014). The Gas are the original custodians of the land of Awoshie and the traditional chief in the area has autonomy unlike Dansoman there are no state housing project in the vicinity. The town is highly religious with Christianity taking majority of the population followed by Islam and then the African Traditional religion. There are vibrant Christian activities with many churches competing for membership as well as Zongo (Muslim locations) mainly around the commercial car park in Awoshie.

The area though densely populated, the present study could not find any document on the population of the area, but the 2010 population census note that the population of the Municipal area is 117,220 but did not give out the numbers representing Christians and Muslims. Awoshie has vibrant economic activities which include commercial, agricultural, mining (stone quarry) among others. There are other areas of employment such as carpentry, hairdressing, petty trading, construction, mechanic etc. There also financial institutions, hotels, telecommunication and hospitals in the vicinity. However agricultural activities are very minimal because of the topography of the area. Awoshie market is one of the new but vibrant market in the municipality.

1.8 History of religion and education in Ghana.

The Republic of Ghana in West Africa is religiously pluralistic with the traditional religion playing host to many religious traditions including Christianity and Islam. The country has area of approximately 238,538 squares with a population of over 25 million people. There are various religious representations in Ghana including Christianity with a population of 68.6%, Islam 17.5%, traditional religion 11.5%, other religions 0.7% and a non-religious population of 6% (Ghana Statistical Service 2012:40). The religious statistic shows that Christian are the majority group in Ghana. The census result was protested by the Coalition of Muslim Organization in Ghana. The group argue that Muslim population could be higher however, they could not provide statistical proof to support their claim (Ammah 2008)

Historically, Islam is noted to have preceded Christianity. Islam entered the country through the activities of Wangara traders and clerics from Northern parts of Ghana and later spread across the length and breadth of the country (Wandusim 2015; Obeng -Mireku 2017). The southern part of the country was influenced by the Hausa jihads in the early part of the 19th century from the Northern Nigeria. Sunni Muslims in Ghana forms the majority of Ghanaian Muslims with the Ahmadiyya group in the minority. Islam did not only remain in the northern part of Ghana but also to the middle belt before Christianity. According to Obeng-Mireku (2017), Islam influenced the life and thought of the people in the Ashanti region of Ghana and there was Islamic service in the Ashanti king's palace.

Education and schooling in Islam began with Islamic tradition of learning and Islamic clerical practice in the 15th century. It was believed to provide intellectual and spiritual contribution to the regions where they have influenced. The traditional qur'anic schools called "*makaranta*" were purely to train adherents and their children in qur'anic verse and morals (Obeng-Mireku 2017). In the 20th century these schools were converted into Islamic school and later into national education system for efficient management. The migration of the Islamic school was not as fast as that of the Christian schools given the Christian school edge over the Islamic schools (Owusu 2017).

Christianity on the other hand, made its maiden appearance in Ghana in the late 15th century through the European traders. The Portuguese merchants of the Gulf of Guinea who were accompanied by a Roman Catholic missionary built a church close to the Elmina castle in 1529 (Sarbah 2010). However, there was not much Christian activity in Ghana until 1828 (Samwini 2006). According Sarbah (2010), this inactivity was due to the early departure of the Portuguese traders. But later there was a renewed missionary works through the coast of Ghana from England, Germany, Denmark and many others.

In 1828, missionary work began in Ghana spearheaded by the British merchants and the Basel missionaries in the southern part of the country. Following a political upheaval, the missionaries move to the northern part of Ghana opened eight mission stations. One notable legacy of the then missionaries was the restoration of peace between the indigenous people and the British merchants (Obeng -Mireku 2017; Sarbah 2010). They were followed by the British Methodist Society who help in the translation of the English bible into Fanti one of the local dialects in the coastal south.

They later moved to the middle built in Ashanti region but found out the region had already had contact with Islam. Islam was fully in existence in the king's palace and according to Obeng-Mireku (2017), James Hayford lobbied with the Ashanti king for a Christian service to be held alongside Islamic service in 1830.

One of the major contributions of the various merchants and missionaries in Ghana was in education. The Danes, Dutch and English who were believed to introduce formal education in Ghana started the castle schools to educate their "mullato" (mixed race) children with the native women. Also, to educate people who served as administrative assistants and soldiers for them. The focus of education at this time was to train few locals in the rudiments of literacy and numeracy (Owusu 2017:26) The missionaries went into education in 1881 with the Basel mission having most to the schools followed by the Wesleyan, Bremen and the Roman catholic with just one school at the time (Samwini 2006; Obeng-Mireku 2017).

They were involved in education because they need people to help them communicate and interact with the natives and to help them propagate the gospel. They later developed and added basic Arithmetic, English language and craft. The aim of education at the time was to train the mind, heart and hands. However, some scholars argued that education by the European merchants and missionaries were aimed at serving the needs of the two groups. Similarly, Afful-Broni (2013) argued that educational and pedagogical practices at the time of the Europeans merchants and missionaries were tailored to meet their "taste and market". This aim has prevailed to date and Owusu (2017:14) confirmed and write "and such colonization of education has continued to the present time". Christianity and Islam both influence education in Ghana and today they are the major stakeholders in education contributing both in infrastructure and in human resource. Their histories make them visible in public and private schools in Ghana. Their visibility in the school setting lead to the inculcation of the rights to religious freedom in all schools most especially the public schools which is accessible to all citizens.

1.9 Christian/ Muslim relations in Africa

Christian and Muslims relations in Africa is characterised by peaceful co-existence and intermittent tensions, confrontation and in some instance's violent clashes. Africa traditional religion have played host to Islam and Christianity who have become major religions in the continent for centuries. The culture of tolerance peaceful co-existence between Christian and Muslims in Africa countries is manifested in the larger society and at the school. In Kenya, a Christian majority country, the culture of tolerance can be seen in their judicial system.

According to Alio (2015), Kenya leaders over the years have maintained the Khadi court and after independence have enshrined it in their constitution as a subordinate civil court. This court deals with Muslim cases such as marriage, divorce and inheritance. At the school, Christian and Islamic religions are taught from the basic school to the secondary level to ensure that student from these religious backgrounds get to know about each other's religion to promote understanding and enhance their relationship from the school into adulthood (Alio 2015; Lauritzen 2013).

It is worth noting that despite these pictures of tolerance in Kenyan society, there are periods of tension and conflict in between Christian and Muslims. Many of such tension and sometime conflicts are noted to be due to missionary activities by Christian and Muslim adherents. Again, long neglect, abuse and marginalization of Muslims by the government have also been identified as source of religious tension and conflict (Alio 2015).

In Nigeria, Christian-Muslim relation in many parts is one of competition than peaceful co-existence mainly at the northern part (Obeng-Mireku 2017). The country's population of one hundred and eighty people is evenly distributed between Christian and Muslim. The northern part of Nigeria is predominately Muslim domain and the southern part also dominated by Christians (Paden 2015; Obeng-Mireku 2017). The nature of Christian-Muslim distribution in terms of population and the geographical location affection their relation, making it more competitive than coexistence. This is visible in many aspects of their social lives especially in politics and education. In politics when a Christian candidate wins an election it goes in favour of Christian and vice versa (Paden 2015). In education the location of the school and the head determines which of the two religious values is inculcated in the day to day running of the school (Ushe 2015). Paden (2015) noted that this spirit of competition and in addition to historical grievances have been the source of religious tension, conflict and violent clashes involving Christians and Muslims.

1.10 Christian/ Muslim relations in Ghana

Christian-Muslim relations are in general cordial and Ammah (2000) asserted that this is based on African identity as both have integrated into the African culture. Similarly, Sarbah (2010) in his doctoral thesis 'Critical Study of Christian -Muslim Relation in the Central region of Ghana with a focus the Traditional Africa Values' argued that the type of Christianity and Islam have been heavily influenced and shaped by the traditional religious values. This peaceful co-

existence is dated back to the 15th century. This relation has been cordial from the introduction of the two religions in the 15th century. For instance, it has been argued that Islam preceded Christianity in the Ashanti religion but on arrival of Christianity and upon request the king allowed service of the two religion in his palace (Obeng-Mireku 2017; Wandusin 2015). This cordial relations between Christian and Muslims is also reflected in the schools from the time through the ages until recently.

However, for the past two decades this peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims has not been without tensions and sometime conflict. The global trends of religiously motivated conflict are also manifesting in the Ghanaian society. Ghana constitutionally is a secular nation, but Christianity have a strong hold in the lives of the people making them the majority group over Islam. The numbers have also become a source of controversy as Ghana Muslims did not trust the population results from the Ghana Statistical service amidst national demonstrations as noted earlier (Ghana Statistical Service 2014).

In the early part of the year 2000, conflict between Muslims and Christians sprang up during the massive move of Pentecostal and charismatic movements with the sole aim of converting Muslims for Christ. The new converts are paraded in churches in the communities testifying of their new faith. This led to strong confrontations and violent clashes in many communities and especially in the northern parts of the country (Azumah 2000). These conflicts are also experienced in many second cycle schools as some of these religious groups visits the schools during their worship time. The trend still prevails today in many of the second cycles schools in Ghana.

Also, the perception of Christians towards Muslims in Ghana has also been the source of conflicts in the country for many years (Azumah 2000). Islam is perceived as a religion that promote violence by many Ghanaian Christians. This perception affects their relationship as Muslims are perceived as a violent group. Such perception breeds distrust, stereotype and discriminative attitudes between the two groups and in most instances such attitudes of Christians have been a source of conflict in many communities and schools. It is in this vein that in this study I aimed at exploring the relation between Christians and Muslims in the Senior High Schools by examining conditions for Christians and Muslims at the schools.

1.11 Structure of the thesis

For clarity, the study has been divided into six chapters. Chapter one serves as an introduction to the study. This include the general introduction, aim of the study, research problem, research questions, research context, brief history of religion and education, significance of the study and structure of the thesis.

Chapter two is a presentation on literature review and theoretical framework for the study. The first part of the chapter explored relevant and related literature on the area of the study. It began with an introduction and discusses literature on religion and conflict from various context and Ghana, religion and human right, and religion and peace. The second part presents the theoretical framework. Theories such as intergroup contact theory and theory of perception from the field of social psychology and dialogical pluralism on interfaith dialogue have been adopted for the analysis of the field data. These theories help development of framework for the analysis and discussion within the Ghanaian context.

Chapter three also present a discussion on research methodology for the study. It discusses the data collection method and how the data collection was conducted by the researcher. It also includes the selection of participants for the study and how they were interviewed. There is also a presentation on observations made by the researcher. Lastly, it includes research quality issues such as validity, reliability and ethical considerations.

Chapter four also discusses analysis of the field data. The analysis of the data was presented using concepts from the theoretical framework. The concepts adopted were used in the presentation of the data analysis based on each school. Pseudo names were given to each school in the analysis based on ethical considerations

In chapter five, a thematic interpretations and discussions of the research findings were presented. It discusses perceptions, Christian-Muslims relations, Religion and equal status for Christians and Muslims in the school, cooperation between the two groups, and support from authorities. Finally, chapter six ends with a conclusion and a recommendation for further studies.

1.12 Limitations of the Study

This study has not been without limitation. Information and data from Ghana Statistical Service, Accra Metropolitan Assembly and Pew survey have been of tremendous help in this study. However, their information and data were gathered in 2009, 2010 and 2014 respectively. There

may be modifications in these information and data as Ghana population have increased more than when the census was carried.

Also, this study was a qualitative in nature therefore the sample size of ten participants was invariably small. The reason is that the finding here may not represent the situation in many public High Schools. I recommend a mixed method approach for this phenomenon for an in-depth information.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

With many religious tensions and conflict in recent times, within and between groups, Christians and Muslims relations has become a core issue in academic and policy circles globally for the past two decades. A lot of studies have been conducted yielding a large store of literature on the phenomenon which cannot be reviewed in a single study. This chapter reviewed related and relevant literature based on the focus of this study and a selected framework in relation to conditions for Muslims and Christians in High Schools in Ghana. It begins with a systematic review of relevant literature on Christians and Muslims relations from other studies in the first part of this chapter and followed by the selected framework in the last part.

2.2 Literature Review

There have been many predictions over the years of a world without religion as societies progresses. It was predicted that religion's influence will reduce and can only be felt in the private space with little to no influence in public space (Dobblelaere 1999; Lambert 1999). However, predictions by most modernization and secularization theories on religions extinction have proved futile. Despite the numerous tensions and conflicts in the name of religion, and the resurgence of religion in most parts of the world especially America, parts of Asia and largely Africa is anything to go by- then religion has gone nowhere (Bibby 2011; Habermas 2008).

It has been noted that even though religions role in society has change over the years, it influences remains intact in the lives of many people and societies (Beyer 1999). Thus, contrary to the predictions of the death of religion, many people still turn to religion as a fountain of hope and many societies are organized based on religious values. Faith continues to play significant role in the lives of many people and even influences polices by global actors (Pew Research Centre 2015). Therefore, individual or groups' faith in any society need to be taken into accounts in formulating polices. This will make people feel accepted as their faith is captured in their national policy; consequently, reduce faith induced tensions and conflict in our society. Indeed, there is a clear indication that religion would continue to prevail in human history, but its denominational forms will take different shades (Bibby 2012; Obeng Mireku

2017). Bibby (2012:12) in confirmation of religions resilience but shift in denominations write that “only specific firms that provide religion will change”. Its influence will continue to be visible in every aspect of the social structure.

Literature on religion, peace and conflict has existed for many decades but have increase in the wake of many religiously motivated conflict around the world after the bombing of the world trade centre and similar events in Europe and Africa. This section presents a few based on the focus of the study which is intended on investigating conditions on Muslim and Christian relation in High schools in Ghana. As the focus is on the school the literature is divided into three sections namely religion and conflict, religion and human rights and religion and peace.

2.3 Religion and conflict

Religion despite its wide usage in in academic literature has no agreed meaning. Thus, giving a precise meaning of religion is a difficult task. Scholars have suggested a variety of definition for religion and notably and relevant for the discussion on religion and conflict is Paul Tillich’s definition of religion as an ‘Ultimate concern’. Tillich defined religion as ‘the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, a concern which qualifies all other concern as preliminary, and a concern that in itself provide the answer to the question of the meaning of our existence’ (Paul Tillich 1963 in Edwards 1979:7). In his view faith is the state of being ultimate concern and further explained that anything that achieve the status of ultimate concern for man is God. Ramsay (2004) on Paul Tillich definition asserted that the ultimate concern (God) demands total surrender from a person who faithfully accept his authority. Also, faith in and surrender to God should be holistic regardless of what must be sacrificed in the name of faith. Faith is an act and task the covers the believers entire being- an act that covers both the conscious and unconscious. It forms part of an individual’s identity and any threat and disregard for an individual or groups religion is a threat to their belief and identity which would generate a reaction and resistance. Indeed, this definition is relevant in explaining the link between religion and conflict. The nexus between religious and conflict has been aged old phenomenon (Appleby 2000; Juergensmeyer 2000). Historically, it is dated back over 2000 years ago between the Jews and the Roman (Garrison 2003).

Today, religion appears to continue to be at the centre of many conflicts. Religion is accused of providing the ideology, motivation and organizational structure for many religious conflict and violent clashes in many parts of the world (Juergensmeyer 2000). In Europe many of the violent clashes and acts of terrorism are due to the activities of religious crusaders, jihadist and or fundamentalists who feels their religious identity has come under threat in the light of

Western civilization (Appleby 2000; Huntington 1978). And many of such religious motivated conflicts leads to loss of lives and properties. Abdool, Potgieter, Walt and Wolhuter (2007) on religion and conflict confirmed that religion can serve as a source of conflict leading to social unrest in many parts of the world. They write “religion, in this case in a fundamentalist-extremist form, can have serious deleterious effect on social cohesion and civic peace”.

There have many instances in the global communities where religion has served as a source and motivation for conflict. From September 9/11 attack on the world trade centre, to the North Ireland conflict, Darfur in Sudan to Boko Haram in Northern parts of Nigeria and certain parts of Ghana where there have clashes between African primary religion and Christianity (Abdool et al 2007).

For most religious adherents, their commitment, loyalty and obedience to their object of worship is their priority. Such firm stands in their faith in some cases is based on a promise of a glorified life after death (Rehman 2010). From such premise and conviction, one is willing to break lay down rules and regulation in defence of their faith. Such religious beliefs that are translated into acts of conflict and violence tend to threaten the peace and stability of our world today providing a recipe for an uncertain future (Dei-Fitih 2018).

Islam has been in the spot light for all forms of religious conflicts and acts of violence. Obeng-Mireku (2017) in his work “*Christian and Muslim Relation in Ghana and Nigeria*” argued that any time there is an act of terrorism, the first question that comes to mind is who the perpetrator(s) of such act is or are. But in most cases, the answer to such questions points to Muslims. He writes “the first suspect that comes to mind today whenever there is a violent attack is a Muslim” (Obeng-Mireku 2017:21). There have been many studies in which religion and Islam to be specific have argued serve as a source and motivation for such conflict. In such conflicts interpretation of Quranic verses have been used to support such violence against members of other groups (Appleby 2000; Juergensmeyer 2000).

The use of qur’anic verses to justify violence act has been supported in some studies. Schwartz-Barcott (2004) noted that there is a relationship between violence, war and peace in Islam. In other words, there are verse in the Quran that support war, peace and violence in Islam. There are qur’anic texts that justifies the use of heart, tongue, hand and sword in promoting Allah’s agenda over the Christian kingdom especially the west. Similarly, Delcambre (2005:8) also maintained in her book “*Inside Islam*” that radicalism is deeply rooted in Islam. She asserted that interpretation of Quran is used to justify violent actions. The subject of religion, conflict and violence is not limited to Islam, some scholars have also focused their works on Christianity and how its scriptures and hymns support violence acts. These incidents of religious conflicts

are not limited to the wider society but are also mirrored in the schools. In Europe, there have been reports of religiously inspired conflict in schools. Abdool et al (2007:543) reported that in London, the creation of religiously based schools for the Abrahamic traditions (Jews, Christians and Muslims) in their communities was met by different opinions. A section of the communities was in favour of the creation of the schools, while others were against it arguing the provision of state funded faith-based schools would further enhance the division in the British society (SAPA-AFP 2005 cited in Abdool et al 2007).

In France, the opening of the first private Muslim school as noted earlier in 2003 raised tension in a catholic dominated community. This led to tension in their community as the Muslims could not understand because there were Jewish, Catholic and Protestant private school in that community (Blignaut 2003:10). According to Kelland (2004:5) a Bangladeshi Muslim girl living in Britain lost a legal battle for the right to wear her full Islamic dress in school. And similarly, in France another Muslim girl lost the same battle with her school authorities.

These tensions and conflicts are not limited to Europe, in South Africa, Jewish students are concerned about anti- Semitic feeling among Christian and Muslims compatriots.

Religion serving as a motivation for conflict may also be due to the parties involved in the conflict and their attitude and behaviour compatible to the one perceives the surrounding environment and the way environment responds to the individual's needs (Angessa 2013:13). Sources of conflicts Treve (2013) contended could be the incompatibility of objective and subjective interest of the group or individual. These subjective elements as sources of conflict may be perception, attitudes, values need and understanding. Objective element of conflict Treve (2013) mentioned includes elements such as competition over scarce resources for instance place of worship, quest for empowerments and the claim for autonomy which is not limited to a specific environment.

Attention have been drawn by scholars' that conflict is not limited to religious domain but involves the complex interplay of religion, economic, social, political and other institutional factors rather than being exclusively religious (Kim 2009; Obeng Mireku 2017).

For instance, in Nigeria and Ghana, religion is not an individual practice but a collective. Obeng Mireku (2017:22) asserted in the northern and eastern parts of Nigeria for instance ethnic groups takes on religious identities dividing the nation into Christian and Muslim domain. Conflicts in these areas are more economic and other structural factors driven than exclusively religious.

2.4 Religion, Human right and conflict

According to Ghanea (2011), the relationship between religion and human rights is both complex and inseparable. Many of the world religions have supported acts of violence, repression and prejudice in many societies in the world. Religion have been at the heart of most conflicts that has violates the rights of many for decades. This is because religious principles most often violate the fundamental rights of the individual and promote collective principles against the individual interest. This position in most cases contradict the principles promoted in the human right declaration therefore in most instance fuelling tensions and conflict among religious groups. Rehman (2010) in his book *Religion and Human Right: A Comparative Analysis* observes that religions violate basic human rights and divide people because each religion promises salvation to its adherents. He writes “Christ is supposed to save those who believe in Him as a second person of the Trinity, whose blood will save them from the wrath of God the father.

Similarly, Muhammed also promises to save only those who believe in Allah and him the last prophet (p.1) This implies that the salvation and the life hereafter is not for all but only those who believe in these personalities leading to exclusion. Such scriptures and their interpretation by religious adherents tend to exclude those who don't believe in these personalities who are ways to God. No revealed religion has promise to save all mankind. These principles of exclusion among many such principle from religious books have been the building blocks of the faith of Christians and Muslims (Rehman 2010). It is then is translated into attitudes in their interaction with people from other religions and in some instances creating tensions and conflicts.

Meanwhile article 18 states that *“everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance”*.

This gives every individual regardless of religious affiliation the right to belief and practice their religion in freedom, alone or in community with others and in private or public without any visible or invisible impediments (Donnelly 2003). This means that freedom of religion entails right to manifest beliefs and practice and the right to be free from constraints in matters of religion. Following the declaration of the human rights laws, many nations in the global north

and south have ratified these laws and government are expected to work for these laws to be translated into the lives of all people in their societies at all levels.

However, the development and implementation of human rights values in education is part of a complex political reality (Ghanea 2011). Many nations states are faced with several challenges in within educational systems in implementing ideals of human rights values in educational institutions (UNESCO 2011:15). Generally, this challenge of implementation leads to social exclusion and inequality in institutions and societies at large. This present a threat to peaceful co-existence among groups because exclusion leads to negation of human right and an increase in social injustice. For instance, Nitho-Nitho and Nieuwenhuis (2010:168-169) in their work on “*Religious Intolerance: The Case of Principals in Multi-faith Schools*”. Observed that irrespective of laws and policies laid down for principals in multi-faith schools, they were unable to reconcile the constitutional requirements with their own tradition and rules in the schools. They reported that many schools in South Africa have faced lawsuits for violating the religious rights of students and staff by refusing to accept, tolerate and accommodate their religious beliefs and practice in organised school observance.

Reconciling the human right statutes at the school to reduce tension and conflicts, Zwibel (2012) in her paper on “*Faith in public school system: principles for reconciliation*”, explored freedom of religion in the context of religious accommodation in public schools in Canada. Reflecting on human right law in conjunction with Canadian law in the public system, the author advocated for religious accommodation in schools with students with multicultural and religious backgrounds to avoid tensions and conflict to ensure individuals rights are not violated.

According to Zwibel (2012), to ensure religious freedom, schools must operate on these factors; firstly, public schools must remain neutral and not endorsing any religion over the other. Efforts must also to be made to avoid indoctrination in the school setting. Secondly, human rights statutes require accommodation of religious practice in schools and schools must make provisions for such practices. However, to maintain its neutrality, the school must consider the effect of the practice on the school. On the part of the students, Zwibel (2012) advocated that if accommodation of one practice infringes on their right they can be allowed to opt out without penalty. She contended accommodation of religious practice must be available to all without preference. Thirdly, the school represent the wider society and must endeavour to foster tolerance and respect for diversity, promote equality and prevent discrimination against marginalised groups. Finally respect for the rights of the child and the rights that students must

participate in their own education. In all circumstances, the right of the child should be key at any claim of religious accommodation in schools.

2.5 Religion and peace

Religion does not only provide motivation for conflict but also serve as condiment for promoting peace. This is because religion is a major way people engage with and interpreted the world. It shapes norms, values, behaviours and making it a vital tool for peace. Literature on religion and peace have gain attention of many scholars (Schmidt, Kelsey, Christensen Haqq and Adenge 2016). Obeng-Mireku (2017) contended that there is relationship between religion and peace and he writes “this is hardly surprising since peace is an ideal advocated by both Islam and Christianity”. Christians and Muslims all claim peace as central themes of their message. Akama (1998) confirmed that peace is a central message not only for Christians and Muslims but for all religions.

Similarly, Schmidt et al (2016) in their literature review *on Effective Inter-religious Action in Peacebuilding* stated that religion is key in peacebuilding because it has developed various laws and ideas that provided adherents with commitment crucial to peace related values. They write “some of these values include empathy, an openness to and even love for strangers, suppression of unbridled ego, forgiveness, articulation of human rights, interpersonal repentance, acceptance of past errors as a means of reconciliation and drive for social justice” (p.16). These values mentioned are key and relevant in creating peaceful environment.

Indeed, religious values have the tendency of promoting peace in society. Islam as a religious tradition has rich resources both in scriptures and its teachings that culminate into values to promote peace. For instance, values such as equality, peace-making, tolerance for physical difference, social status and diversity can all be found in the Quran and other Islamic teachings (Schmidt et al 2016).

In agreement, Abu-Nimer (2003) contended that social justices are inherent value in Islam, a value necessary for effective functioning of nations. Raphael Swewind (2013) in his book *Being Muslim and Working for Peace: Ambivalence and Ambiguity in Gujarat* asserted that Muslim activist in Gujarat describes themselves as peace ambassadors and argued because peace is a core value in Islam.

In the case of Christianity, the bible in both old and new testaments teaches adherents to live and promote peace with neighbours. It teaches that peace among persons, groups and nations

can be possible in good will towards one another (Schmidt et al 2016). In the academia, various scholars have written extensively on efforts of Christians and Christian organizations to promote peace and wellbeing in many societies in the world.

Smock (2006) recall a Rome-based community of Sant 'Egidio successful mediation role to bring an end to the 1992 civil war in Mozambique. Scholarly works have also been done on the role of two religious' leaders in Nigeria and their contribution to conflict resolution. An epitome of peaceful co-existence between Christian and Muslim Pastor Wuye and Imam Mohammed were both affected by the religious conflict in 1992. They both decided to come together in 1995 to establish the Interfaith Mediation Centre. Dwelling on the similarities in the Bible and Quran, they train people in strategies for conflict resolution with clear emphasis on peace (Schmidt et al 2016; Obeng- Mireku 2017). And in Ghana, representatives from Christian and Islamic Councils of Ghana have successfully mediated tension and conflicts in many high schools on issues of dressing, place of worship and prayers for Muslims students.

The literature review clearly confirms Kollantai (2007) claim on religion as a double edge sword. It is evident that religion continue to play a major role in inciting conflict and violence in many societies in the world and serve as a tool for promoting peace. The intention in this study is to contribute to knowledge on religion, conflict and peace. The focus is exploring institutional(school) conditions that influence Christian and Muslim relations at the High Schools in Ghana. The uniqueness of this study lies in the comparative dimension, two government school but difference in administration.

2.6 Conceptual framework

Many scholars have explored religious groups and conflict from various levels and from different angles with various findings. Different models, frameworks and theories were employed in studying the phenomenon in many parts of the world. In studying the phenomenon, some scholars employed socio-theological approach and others use social interactionist theory that motivate violent acts (Juergensmeyer and Sheikh 2013; Felson and Tedeschi 1993).

From the African context, several scholars have researched into religion, peace and conflicts among religious people. Akinade (2002) for instance also studied the day-to-day interaction among religious people in shared public space. He concluded his study by promoting the “dialogue of life”.

Abdul-Hamid (2011) confirmed that the “dialogue of life” has proven to be effective in promoting healthy relationship in Ghana’s religious pluralistic society and most especially among Christians and Muslims. Similarly, Obeng-Mireku (2017) also noted that the “dialogue

of life” is effective than a professional handshake at a conference. Also, Harris on conflict, investigated citizen ship right on social cohesion among religious people. Again, Obeng Mireku (2017) studied the Muslim Christian relation in Ghana and Nigeria and contended that Social capital perspective can improve relation between Muslims and Christians and serve as basis to reduce tension in the regions.

In trying to understand the phenomenon in this study at the school level, a framework from two theories and an approach have been chosen namely Intergroup Contact Theory, Perception theory and Dialogical Pluralism Approaches. The framework largely depends on Allport’s (1954) contact theory and is supported by Unumeri (2009) Perception theory and, Abdool, Potgieter, van der Walt and Wolhuter (2007) Dialogical pluralism approach to dialogue.

These theories and approach even though are complete in themselves only dealt with aspect of the phenomenon. This necessitated a combination of the three as they complement each other and indeed useful to understand the phenomenon under study. The combination of the three frameworks also offer a holistic approach to the study. I will discuss the framework developed by each author in their work and beginning with Allport’s contact theory. This will be followed by Unumeri’s (2009) Perception theory and lastly, Abdool et al (2007) Dialogical pluralism approaches.

2.7 Contact or Intergroup Contact Theory

Intergroup contact theory originally proposed by Allport in 1954 has been confirmed to work to reduce prejudice among groups (Everett 2013). In his book “*The nature of prejudice*” 1954, Allport dealt with the issue of racial segregation in the United State of America and the Jim Crow’s law. Dealing with the issue of prejudice, later studies on contact theory noted works to reduce prejudice by minimising anxiety and fear among groups thus reducing conflict among groups (Pettigrew and Tropp 2008).

Allport (1954:261) contended that through appropriate contact, prejudice can be reduced between minority and majority groups. Building on separate issues like high school student representing America minorities and native American, Jews, Chinese and Japanese student in intergroup relations, it was recorded that there were issues of segregation among members. Therefore, contact with negatively stereotyped groups works generally to improve attitudes towards group members (Pettigrew,1998). Novak et al (2011:7) posited that Allport recognized that not all contact between groups works out positively. Contact theory proposed intergroup contact will work to reduce barriers like prejudice, discrimination and stereotypes from groups under four key conditions.

The four key conditions necessary to enhance intergroup relationships Allport enumerate as; *equal status, intergroup cooperation, common goals and support by social and institutional authorities* (Everett 2013; Novak et al 2011). Three of these conditions relevant to this study will be expounded in the following paragraphs

2.7.1 Equal status

Allport laid emphasis on equal group status within a given situation (Everett 2013). Novak et al (2011) added that the situation should promote equal-status interaction between members from different groups. Among members with different backgrounds and status, there should enough opportunity for interaction on personal intimate level. That is, in a contact situation, members of a group either religious ethnic, gender etc should not have an unequal hierarchical relationship.

In a school, the contact situation should create an equal status interaction between students and teachers. (Everett 2013). And among students with diverse background, there's the need for equal status accorded to all students. This condition Pettigrew (1998:66) confirmed as relevant but contended that defining "equal status" could be a herculean task. However, most studies have supported that with optimal contact it works to reduce prejudice and disconfirm stereotypes among members. Thus, equal status is important both prior to and during contact situation (Everett 2013).

2.7.2 Intergroup cooperation

is the second key condition that works to reduce prejudice and improve relationship between people with different background. When members in a group frequently work together in a non-competitive environment (Everett 2013). Working together in an environment with an individual or group considered as an out-group in the spirit of cooperation, they begin to learn about each other. The interactions encourage behaviours that disconfirm prejudice and stereotypes that groups hold about each other (Novak et al 2011:8). Through cooperative activities, Everett (2013) posited reduce barriers such ethnic, religious, racial and gender are reduce promoting healthy intergroup relationship in that environment. Therefore, attainment of common goal must be an interdependent effort without competition (Everett 2013). Several studies over half a century have confirmed that intergroup cooperation in schools have foster healthy relationship among student and reduce conflict (Everett 2013; Novak et al 2011; Pettigrew and Tropp 2008).

2.7.3 Support of social and institutional authorities

It is the third condition in this study (Allport 1954). Everett (2013) indicated that there should not be social or institutional authorities that explicitly or implicitly endorse contact and there should be authorities that support positive contact. Similarly, Novak et al (2011) also explained that those in position of authority are expected as those supporting inclusion and intergroup acceptance. This implies that in any given situation or in any group, there should be no official laws promoting segregation of group members (Everett 2013).

Allport's contact theory Pettigrew and Tropp (2007) observed has continue to receive support through many studies, However, like every other study there have been criticism. Key issue raised were that in each situation, how does such change through contact transfer from individuals in within group to out- groups and across other situations (Everett 2013).

Studies have explained how intergroup contact works within, without and across group situation to reduce prejudice, stereotype and discrimination. Multiple mechanism has been put forward to work with in -groups and out-groups to reduce prejudice and negative attitude and to enhance relation among group (Everett 2013; Pettigrew 1998).

The interrelated processes that operate through intergroup contact to mediate attitudinal change are *learning about the out-group, changing behaviour, generating affective ties and In-group appraisal* are processes that leads to attitudinal change and enhance intergroup relations.

Learning about the out-group has been argued to be a major process for intergroup contact to be effective (Everett 2013; Pettigrew 1998; Pettigrew and Tropp 2007). Allport (1954) contended that intergroup contact facilitate learning about the outgroup and this new knowledge offers an individual the opportunity to correct negative perception and prejudice about the out-group that hinders healthy relations between groups. Similarly. Habermas (2008a) on '*Secularization theory*' contended that to avoid conflict and promote peaceful relationships among religion, they must both to develop the culture of learning about each other. Learning will lead to appreciating the out-group world view thereby changing behaviour towards the out-group.

Additionally, appropriate intergroup contact has been noted to reduce fear and anxiety people have when interacting with outgroup. Thus, Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) argued minimises the negative perceptions and evaluations about the outgroup promoting good interaction between groups in any given situation. Thirdly, through intergroup contact, the knowledge about the out group increases one's ability to take the perspective of the out group. Empathy is then developed towards the out-group's concerns.

The role of the knowledge of the out group in prejudice reduction has been criticized, however, Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) argued affective tie develop through knowledge of the outgroup reducing anxiety and develop empathy for outgroup. Through optimal contact which provides insight into one's own group as well as that of the outgroup. In this context, one gain insight and knowledge realising that ingroups norm, values and customs are not the only approved ways of living. This new knowledge reshapes an individual view of the ingroup minimising negative perceptions about the outgroup.

I find Allport's contact framework useful in analysing the data on the conditions of Christians and Muslims relations in high schools in Ghana. Again, Intergroup Contact has been proved useful in many studies within the school setting overs the years (Everett 2013).

2.8 Perception

The concept perception despite its wide usage has no agreed meaning. It has been defined differently in many fields of study and this study a few will be considered based on the study focus. Perception is a process of recognizing, organizing and interpreting sensory information (Sheets and Brenner, 2001). Precisely, perception is about how people combine information gathered to form impression about others (Parksion,2007).

According to Unumeri (2009:3) the world is not psychologically equal for every individual. People or individuals on the same phenomenon may express different opinions. This could account for the difference in belief, opinion and actions of groups and individuals that experience the same phenomenon or situation. In simple terms, Nelson and Quick on perception described it "as a process of interpreting information about another person" (Nelson and Quick, 1997:83). After interpreting information gathered about an individual, an opinion is formed. It is worth noting here that the opinion we formed about other people largely depends on the nature and volume of information available and how accurately one analyses and interpreted such information.

Therefore, in the view of Delamater and Myers (2004:106) perception refers to constructing and understanding of the social world from information received through our senses". This means that it involves the process by which impression about other people's traits and personalities are formed. Rao and Narayan (1998:329) stressed on the mental processes that enables us to understand our environment. Here, emphasis is laid on cognitive factor that perception is the only determinant of human behaviour. Thus, human actions whether negative or positive is based on one's perception about an individual, group and on a phenomenon.

People's perception about others is based on how they see the 'other' negatively or positively. And this largely based on mental picture they have about the other and the environment.

Also, perception is explained as "an individual or groups unique way of viewing a phenomenon". It entails the processing of stimuli, incorporating memories and experiences in the processes of understanding (McDonald 2011:14).

Scholars have noted three major characteristic that influence our perception of other people (McDonald 2011; Nelson and Quick 1997; Narayan1998; Unumeri 2009). These characteristics Unumeri (2009:20) identified as *Perceiver specific, Target specific and Situation specific*. These factors will be discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

According to Unumeri (2009) "*Perceiver specific*" is a key characteristic noted to influence perception. An individual's familiarity with the other is major factor under perceiver specific. Here the implication is that when an individual compares themselves with others in each situation, they are arrived at superior position. Assuming such posture and from that position decisions is made about the other. Such decisions could be negative or positive.

It has been argued that to develop accurate perception about others, we need to gather relevant and accurate information about the individual or the group concern to have a balanced perception (Unumeri 2009; Nelson and Nayaran 1997). This will help avoid the mistake of glossing over vital information we may not take notice of very important things. We will be dwelling on incorrect information about people or group when we get familiar with them. Unumeri (2009) posited, the closer we relate to people, we tend to screen information and select and settle with those that explain how we think and feel about them. Such positions affect the way we relate to them.

Perceivers attitude which emanate from belief system is another factor that affect people's perception (Unumeri 2009). The convictions a perceiver develops about the perceived largely depends on information. Our moods are another factor that greatly influence the way an individual perceive the other. Generally, the difference in our reaction to people and situation depends mostly on our mood. This implies that, an individual's happiness or sadness about a situation or people determines how they react towards people or situation. Such differences in our moods are based on stored information and experience we have about people and situation. (Nelson and Quick 1997).

Self-concept is noted to play critical role in an individual's perception. Naturally, people with positive self-concept tend to see positive attributes in other people and the way they live their lives. However, those with negative self-concept mostly tend to perceive negative attributes in others. In the religious circles and among Christians and Muslims, their perception of how God

relate with His creation is key to how they see themselves and others. When their self -concept in relation to God is positive they tend to exhibit the positive attribute to people within and without their groups and vice versa (McDonald 2011).

People's perception about the other is also influenced by some characteristics that are unique to the person being perceived, the target which Unumeri (2009:21) called "*Target specific*". The target here refers to an individual being perceived by perceiver. Peoples appearance in terms of their height, weight, age, race, gender, religion etc affect the way others perceive them. Also, an individual's appearance in a form of dressing add up to how they are perceived. For example, a practising Muslim in a non- Muslim community is often identified by their dressing, that is either by their long dress for men and women, headscarf for women and hat for men.

Additionally, verbal communication is another important factor by which a target is perceived. A target is identified voice, accent and tone. When Muslims approach a Christian or Christians approach Muslims, they have different perceptions about each other. In some countries and, like Israel most of them see each other as enemies because of their differences.

The third major characteristics that influence the impression formed about an individual or a group is what Unumeri (2009) described as *Situation -specific*. This refers to the social context within which an interaction takes place between people or an individual. For example, when you meet a Muslim in a Christian organisation his action will be different from when you meet the same person in Muslim organisation. An Imam teaching in a Christian mission school setting will be acting differently from when in an Islam school. A strong Christian school has rules that determine how people in that context behave. Therefore, a situation influences people's behaviour but does not necessarily affect the individual's inherent belief and character.

The theory of perception is relevant in the analysis of the data on conditions of Muslims and Christians relation in High schools in Ghana because our perception largely influence the way relate to other people different from our own group. This relationship with other groups depends on the information we have about the other and the interpretation we give to those information

2.9 Dialogical Approaches

In their work, *Inter-religious dialogue in schools: A pedagogical and civic unavoidability* Abdool, Potgieter, Walter and Wolhuter (2007) explored social and civic conflicts in the communities and schools in South African. The authors argued that these conflicts are religiously motivated. Owing to many religious conflicts in most societies, the authors narrowed their work to the school where there is a representation of many religions and possible conflict.

They traced religiously motivated conflicts in many parts of the world between the various religious groups and situated their work in South Africa. They emphasised that religious conflict in schools can be overcome by inculcating in the students an attitude of openness towards interreligious dialogue (Abdool et al 2007).

Unveiling the various layer of religion, Abdool et al (2007:545) sought to discover structural possibilities for interreligious dialogue between different religious adherents. Religion, the authors indicated to have six layers which they inculcated into their *Dialogical pluralism* approaches at the school. These layers are expounded as follows.

Firstly, the authors identified *the direct observable layer* with ritual nature. In this layer, Abdool et al write believers are believed to “worship in shrines, altars, churches, mosque, holy place etc” where they gather collectively or as individuals to worship their object of worship.

Second to this layer is *the sense of awe and respect to God or gods*. The God or gods become the object of worship. The believer confesses their sins, observe rules and regulations with respect to food, cloth and drinks. The believers are also expected to behave in an approved way. Here young converts are guided into the norms and values

Theological, dogmatic and confessional the third layer analysed. This layer is restricted to the religious leaders who specialise in the dogma of their faith, write and preach about them. Their writing is sanctioned by higher authority and adherents abide by them as tenets of their faith.

Abdool et al (2007:546) also analysed the fourth layer as *philanthropic*. This layer humanitarian layer demands that members love and care for each other and their neighbours. Members of a religion are seen exhibiting this layer when their love is reflected in their civic or social senses by showing their love for their neighbours.

The last *two layers are the faith and spiritual layers*. Faith layer Abdool et al explained as religious adherents developing relationship with a deity whom they believe will offer them security. Such higher divine being, or beings are experienced through revelation or through books

The *spiritual layer* is the deepest level. Religions have spiritual dimension and the spiritual. Abdool et al (2007:547) contended is “a subjective experience that points to an orientation towards both an intrinsic and extrinsic religiousness”. Intrinsically, religion is perceived as something deeply personal to the individual. It is expressed in how one relates to the divine and to nature, culture, self, emotions, life and death. The spiritual layer represents the mystical face of religion, fountain head of divinity and the source and essence of the soul. (p.547).

In interacting with people from other religious backgrounds, one needs to be mindful of all these layers of religion and how they blend to form the world view of its adherents. In interacting

with people from other religious groups, one needs to acknowledge these layers of one's own faith and the faith of the other group considering the superficial and the deepest levels of religion.

With this framework of the various layers of religion, Abdool, Potgieter, Walt and Wolhuter (2007) outlined three existing approaches such as *exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism*. Building on these three approaches to dialogue in a religiously pluralistic school setting they advanced their *dialogical pluralism*. I will briefly expound the three existing approaches and later discuss their approach and its relevance to this current study.

2.9.1 Exclusivist approach

Abdool et al (2007) stated that the exclusivists demonstrate strongly held beliefs about their religion. They perceive it as essentially true religion and all others are heretical. They prefer not to interact with other religious groups, and any form of interaction with other groups can only be on their terms. Abdool et al (2007) asserted that exclusivists are oriented to think that interacting with members of other religious groups will be limited to witnessing to them about just one true faith tailored to suit the circumstance.

Assuming a superior position on one's religion as the only true religion can lead to tension and intolerance. This view is confirmed by Shemar (2004:233) and writes that the conviction that one's religion is the only true religion can lead to intolerance. And Mwanga (2006:253) in agreement noted that political intolerance is believed to be motivated by religion and strongly held group identity. But on the contrary, Abdool et al did not find this approach to dialogue or intergroup interaction as mainly a source of conflict by citing the Catholic nun and one-time Nobel Peace Prize Award winner, Mother Theresa and Mahatma Gandhi using this approach. This approach is popular among adherents of Islamic and Christian religions.

2.9.2 The Inclusivism approaches

Abdool et al (2007) identified two types of inclusivism. They argued that one group of inclusivists, sees all religions are true and pathways to the same deity. This view is contradicted by comparing Presbyterian, Baptist, Greek Orthodox Christianity Mormon etc. These religious groups do not share the same world view and not on the same path. However, can be said to be inclusive because they share deep spiritual levels.

The second inclusivism are said to also hold superior perception about their religion but also regard other religious tradition in a more positive way to salvation. However, they perceive other religious traditions as originating from their own or a fulfilment of their own. Abdool et

al (2007) contended that this approach cannot be conducive for interreligious dialogue as one will not be comfortable to see faith, they cherish playing second fiddle to another.

2.9.3 Pluralism approaches

The pluralist Abdool et al (2007) noted base their argument on the premise that all religions are rooted in human experience. The belief systems of these religion can be explained as context specific and gives different view about what is divine. The pluralist focuses on what is shared by the different religion rather than their uniqueness making them equal. Comparing different religions like Presbyterian, Greek Orthodox Christian, Baptist etc, they are not equal, and each have their deep spiritual levels.

Abdool et al (2007:551) proposed a *dialogical pluralism* for interreligious relationship. Their approach is a step away from the pluralist approach. Unlike the pluralist view of religions as equal and stressing the need for interreligious group dialogue to enhance different tradition, in dialogical pluralism, the authors emphasis is on understanding the tenets of the other religions based on the other's presumption. They identified two world view in an approach such as *critical openness and transformers*. *Critical openness* asserted that in interacting with others religious people must adapt to a given context and express themselves in such a way the others will understand without any tension. An emphasis is made that believers in one faith should be bold enough to make room for their own faith and that of the other in a community of openness and freedom. A community that provide space for free floating of ideas must be created.

In the view of *the transformers*, during interreligious dialogue, religious people must modify their messages by eliminating aspects of their faith that might not promote healthy dialogue and create tensions and possible conflict (Abdool et al 2007:552).

According to Abdool et al (2007), the dialogical pluralist advocate that believers in dialogue with one another should move away from enrichment of different tradition and find out how the others differ, what they share and what can be learned.

Approaching intergroup relationships with groups from diverse religious background through healthy dialogue can reduce tension and possible conflict. This approach the authors write "is probably the best foundation for conducting interreligious dialogue". Their argument is because people may have been fully rooted in their faith and cannot be ignored or taking for granted.

However, they proposed a combination of the three main approaches as a good basis for religious group interaction in a pluralistic community. This they contended be done considering the age of learners within the school community.

My study population is those from the high school which make Abdool et al dialogical approach the best for the analysis of data on conditions of Christians and Muslims in high schools in Ghana.

In relation to this study Abdool et al dialogical pluralism is summed up as follow; all religions have observable and non-observable layers that are relevant to its adherents and propiate interreligious relation is based on an understanding of the various religious layers to help iron out religious difference. Dialogue at the school is relevant because the school is a miniature society that prepare learners for all facet of life. No single condition is effective basis for interreligious dialogue, rather a combination of suitable approaches based on age can improve intergroup relationship.

The three conceptual frameworks expounded above will serve as theoretical framework for this study. Allport (1954) four key conditions in his intergroup contact theory will serve as the basic framework which will be supported by Unumeri (2009) Perception theory and Abdool et al Dialogical pluralism approach.

2.12 Summary

The chapter began with a review of literature related to religion, conflict and peace. The review was divided into three parts subtitled *religion and conflict*, *religion and human rights* and lastly *religion and peace*. Literature on religion and conflict shows how religion have contributed to conflict situations in some societies in the world through the ways the way adherents interpreted religious text. Similarly, literature on religion and human rights also depicts how religion and human rights statues operates from different angles and sometimes creating tension and infringing on the rights of people and students in the school setting. Lastly, the review on religion and peace also took the accounts of how major religions with the value can promote peace focusing Christianity and Islam which are the focus in this study.

The second part of this chapter was on the conceptual framework considering two theories and an approach in religious dialogue. The conceptual framework was built on Allport's contact theory, Unumeri's theory of perception and Abdool et al pluralistic dialogical approach in religion. The combination of the three provides insight into generation of framework for the study and served as a guide for the selection of research methods.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research approach and research design which includes methods and procedures used in the study. It also provides information on research site, population sampling and sampling size. Again, it gives a vivid description of data collection methods, pilot study, data analysis, validity and ethical considerations in research and field experiences. The chapter concludes with a summary on the methodology.

3.2 Research Approach and Design

Research approach is the plan and the procedures involved in research (Bryman 2012). The research approach adopted in this study is the qualitative approach to understand the relationship between Christian and Muslims in two selected Senior High Schools in Ghana. Design in research refers to a procedure on how a researcher intends to carry out research processes to find solution to research problems and to present and explain knowledge (Creswell 2009). This implies that a design is a framework for conducting research that needs a careful planning of right activities at the initial stage, through to data collection techniques and the use of appropriate ways of analysing collected data. Again, the design chosen in this study is the qualitative case study design which will be discussed after the research approach.

3.2.1 Qualitative Approach

The study adopted qualitative approach which is aimed at understanding some aspects of social reality through words rather than numbers for data analysis (Bryman 2012; Chambliss and Schutt 2009). This suggests that participants get the opportunity to express their views and perceptions on issues. The approach aids in exploring and understanding the meaning participant or participants ascribes to social problems. In relation to this study, the approach gave me the opportunity to interact with the participants on individual perceptions towards the Christians and Muslims. Students were also asked to express their views on the environment created by the school authorities for such interactions.

Participants in this study were free to share their views as I explored the topic for the study with them. This is in connection with Creswell assertion that qualitative approach allows the

researcher the flexibility to explore topics and enable participants to share their views freely on Phenomenon (Creswell 2012).

Similarly, Brock-Utne (1990) also noted that this approach allows participants to freely express themselves about their social world rather than taking them through leading questions to meet researcher's expectation. This means that qualitative approach brings the researcher closer to the participants for amicable interaction. It helps the researcher to make sense out of participants views as they freely express their opinion on social reality with little or no interference.

In line with the above, this study is based on exploring and finding out relations between Muslims and Christians at in their natural setting which the school. Its focus is to, through interaction with participants find out their perceptions about each other in the school and conditions available to promote healthy relations. Therefore, in this study I interacted with participant on their perception to each other during interviews.

Furthermore, it was interesting to choose qualitative approach to gather relevant information to help answer the intention of the study. Again, this approach is used because of its inductive nature that make room for the application of concepts emerging from theories. Further, it is an approach where the individual subjective views can be expressed. But its subjective way is not opened to generalization. However, it has great strength in context. Thus, the individual's views, values and behaviour are respected by the researcher (Bryman 2008).

In short, qualitative approach emphasizes peoples' lived experiences that are basically suitable to identify the meanings people (students and teachers) attach to events, processes and structures of their lives, their perceptions, assumptions, pre-judgements and pre-suppositions (Miles and Huberman 1994). This approach helped me to explore deeper on the relationship between Muslim and Christians in senior high schools and provided me with broader understanding and how the Muslims and Christian in senior high schools and provided me with broader understanding and how the Muslims and Christians relate, cooperate and how the school administrate provide equal grounds and facilities for Muslim and Christians

3.2.2. Research Design

The aim of the study was to explore and find out conditions available for Muslim and Christians students at selected High Schools in Ghana. To generate in-depth information for this study, the case-study design within qualitative approach was chosen to obtain, organise and interpret data which has been argued by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007 :78) that a "research design

is governed by “fitness of purpose” this in turn determines the methodology and design of the research”. In relation to this study, this design is suitable for the two selected schools one public mission school and public school.

The case study design entails an empirical investigation of a phenomenon that occurs in a real-life context (Yin 2009:15). In this study, Christian -Muslim relation as a contemporary phenomenon in real life context was very necessary as the intention in this study was to explore and find out the conditions for Christian and Muslims students in the schools.

A case study design has been argued as involving an in-depth investigation of a bounded process or individual systems based on extensive data collection (Creswell 2014; Yin 2009). Stake (1995) explained that the bounded system in a case study could be an individual, a classroom of students or a group of professionals. In this study, the bounded systems are the students in the two schools and the teachers as a group of professionals from different religious backgrounds.

Case study have been criticised for not providing strong basis for scientific generalization (Yin 2009:15). Lauritzen (2013:70) accepted that this is true to a certain degree as case study do not deal with statistical figures. However, it worth noting that findings from a case study can represent or be part of a bigger picture in the society. In support with Lauritzen (2013) the design used indeed, could not completely represent the entire Ghanaian society. However, findings obtained can give some indication on Christian -Muslim relation in other school. In strengthen the case, two schools were chosen for this level of study, a number small enough for me to fully explore further conditions and the nature of interactions between Christians and Muslim.

Also, the case study design has been criticised as ‘lacking rigour’ because researchers do not stick to a set of procedure (Yin 2009:14). By not following a framework, there is a risk on bias as the bigger responsibility falls on the researcher. In this study, this was overcome using semi-structured interview and observation guide. This has been discussed in the procedure for data collection. But care was also taken not to lose objectivity.

3.3 Research Site

A research site according to Neuman (1997:350) ‘is the context in which activities occur, a socially defined territory with shifting boundaries. The research was conducted in in two schools in Dansoman and Awoshie respectively in Accra the capital of Ghana. The selection of these two schools was based on their accessibility and suitability (Cohen, Mansion and Morrison 2007). These two communities where these schools are located, are densely populated with Muslims and Christians living together interacting on daily basis at the schools. Also, they have been chosen to save time for the data collection.

3.4 Sample and sampling procedures- selection of participants

Sample is the fraction of the population that is selected for investigation. It is the subset of the larger society under study which serve as a representative for the study (Bryman 2008;2012). A vital aspect I consider as far as sample and sample size are concerned was the procedure to be used. Maxwell (2005) asserted that in qualitative study, samples obtained are usually small for easier interpretation and to ensure understanding.

The assumption here is that it is likely to gather detailed and information rich data from each participant. Therefore, the study used participants from each school. Four schools were considered at the initial stage and two were selected out of the four. The selection of the two was because they are schools that have both Muslims and Christians and for proximity, one public mission and one public school were selected. And from each school, five participants were chosen, and from each of the schools, four students and a teacher were chosen.

Out of the four students’ participants from each school, two were a representative of their religious group. One Muslim and one Christian religious student representative were chosen as representatives of their group in the school. The student’s religious leaders were chosen because of their experience in dealing with the school authorities. Again, from each of the school, experienced assistant heads who were school chaplains and subject teachers were chosen for detailed information. They also acted as gate keepers of the schools. Below is the table showing category of schools chosen for the study and number of participants for the study.

Table 1: Categories of schools and number of participants for the study.

Category	MMS Mission school	OSSE Public school	Total
Students	2	2	4
Student religious representative	2	2	4
School teachers	1	1	2
Total	5	5	10

3.4.1 Purposive selection and sample procedure

The study made use of purposive sampling in selecting participants. It involves careful and intentional selection of a group of people who are in the position to provide rich information needed for the study (Cohen et al, 2007; Gall, Gall and Borg,2007). This means that purposive sample is a means of selecting research participants based on the needs of the study. Patton (1990) explained that in purposive sampling, participants who are able to give detailed and rich information needed in the study are chosen.

To affirm this assertion, I selected relevant and experienced participants who have been in the schools for at least two years for the study. Precise sampling criterion was used to allow the researcher select participants who satisfied important criteria and were important to the study (Gall, Gall and Ball, 2007). The general criteria used here in selecting the ten participants were;

1. Two school chaplain who are assistant heads, and subject teachers were chosen
2. Four second- and third-year students and student's religious representative each from Christian and Islamic backgrounds were also selected from each school.

This technique is a feature of qualitative research argued by Cohen et al (2007:103) that using purposive sampling, the researcher handpicked the cases to be included in the sample purely on their discretion and the cases "typicality and thus build up a sample that suits their specific needs satisfactorily". There are three types of schools in Ghana, purely Public schools, Mission Run School and Private Schools. As the focus of the study was to investigate and find out conditions for Christians and Muslims students in schools. In this respect, two schools were selected based on their typical characteristics.

One public school and one mission public school to understand the phenomenon of interest. These schools were selected with the assumption that rich information would be obtained for analysis. Again, the choice of purposive sampling was to select participants who were

experienced with school's culture because the more experienced they are, the more likely they could provide relevant answers to questions.

Therefore, school chaplain from the two religious traditions and second- and third-year students who have experience the culture of the school were selected. Among the selected student selected were also student leaders of the religious groups on campus who had experiences in negotiating with the school authorities for space and time. I selected suitable participants by contacting my formal headmistress and from the Ghana's Ministry of Education website to enable me select schools with the characteristics need for this study. From these contacts I settled on the selected schools who fit into the criterion of the study. Creswell (1994) noted that the idea behind qualitative research is to purposely select participants who are suitable to answer the research questions.

I therefore purposefully chose participants who in my opinion were relevant for my study. The study involves small sample from the population and fit the characteristics that are appropriate for the study. Maxwell (2005) indicated that in a small and limited sites purposive sampling is suitable rather than random sampling. Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) also pointed out that many qualitative researchers prefer purposive sampling to random sampling method because their intention is to study social actors in the natural settings to find out the meaning attached to their social reality.

As I reflect through the sample size, the sample seems small and might influence the study. However, findings could still provide an indication of what is pertaining in each of the religion Christianity and Islamic religions. Therefore, the choice of purposive sampling used is appropriate for the study.

3.5 Data collection methods

This section describes instruments used in data collection and how it was conducted. A methodological triangulation of interview, observation and documents were used to gather information for the study. This confirms Strauss and Corbin (2008) assertion that qualitative research allows the use of many source of data. In aligning with this assertion, three out the many alternatives instruments for data collection were chosen. Interview and observation gave me the opportunity to get closer to the participants for first-hand information on their perception of each other religious background and how they relate with each other within the school environment. Also, observations of activities gave me a clear picture of what happens on the

ground. Interviews and observations are fieldwork activities that provides direct information to the researcher. This view is supported by Patton (1990:46) that “field work is the central activity of qualitative enquiry”.

These methods allow the researcher study participant in their natural environment. I had the august opportunity to interview and observe teachers and student in their classroom, during lunch break, religious group meetings and at worship time in school. It is argued that in qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument in the data collection (Creswell 2012). This made information from interviews and observation very necessary to data collection. Semi-structured interview within interview with observation were employed for the study. The next section is a presentation on interview.

3.5.1 Interview

Interview was the main instrument used for data collection in this study. In the view of Kvale and Brinkmann an interview is an interpersonal conversation between two partners, interviewer and interviewee on a research topic of “mutual interest (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009:123). The interviews are initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of gathering rich relevant information. It is one of the main tools for data collection in qualitative research and very useful for assessing people’s daily experiences, emotions, attitudes and their feelings on social realities Information collected from the interviewees are organised and interpreted by the researcher.

Semi-Structured Interviews were used to obtain detailed information and for collecting rich and tangible information (Kvale 1996). The reason is that it creates room for flexibility and without bounding participants’ freedom of expressing their perceptions and detailed responses. It seemed to be time consuming however, it offered me the opportunity to obtained rich and elaborate information for this study.

Before I carried out the interview, I explained and clarified the purpose of the study to the participants. I established informal conversation with participants in Ghanaian and English languages. This helped free participants from tension and created relaxing atmosphere for free flow of interaction with participants. The actual interviews lasted between 30 to 40 minutes for each participant. I asked and probe the two religious groups how they see each other. During the interview, I recorded and made field notes to capture every detail. The use of interviews in this study have provided me with detailed information and description of human perception and participants’ experiences between Christians and Muslims.

3.5.2 Observation

Observation in this study was used as supplementary method for data collection. It provides a researcher to gather information ‘live’ from ‘live’ situation Cohen et al (2007). The observation was semi structured and captured what I observed such as:

1. worship time for the general school
2. Observation of the two Christians and Muslims interactions
3. Observation of students religious group meetings

The semi structured nature allowed me not to be restricted to specific or limited observable characters rather gave me the opportunity to observe other relevant and related features. The weakness of this method is that participant may pretend when they know that they are under observation. This may influence their action and behaviour and may in turn affect data. Therefore, interview has been used as the main and observation as supplementary method.

3.5.3 Documents

The use of document has also been used as other supplementary method for broader information Bryman (2008) asserts that the use of official documents deriving from the nation can be reliable and provide detailed meaning. I made use of articles, book, journals media and publication on issues regarding the two religious’ groups. The information obtained from these documents served to support the perception of participants for example how people from different religion perceive and behave towards each other, conflict and tensions between the two groups. Precisely how Christians perceive towards Muslims and vice versa. The documents were useful and comprehensive, and I could not alter any information written in them. Despite any discrepancy the documents might contain, the information obtained from the them were very helpful.

3.6 Pilot Study

Pilot study is the way of pretesting the research instruments for a study. This was done to try all the research methods used in the study before the real data collection in this study. This was done for example, to ensure that interview guide was appropriate and applicable for conduction within a reasonable duration. The idea behind the piloting was to carry out a preparatory investigation to double – check the applicability of research instrument (Gall, Gall and Borg 2007). This implied that the pilot study was meant to check whether there could be challenges employing the methods for collecting data. In this study I tried out the methods for example the interview guide in an experimental school which was part of the selected school for the study.

I used audio recording in capturing views expressed by participants. I did that to correct and reframe some unclear questions for quality study. Another aspect of the pilot study was very helpful because it made me to be conversant with my interview guide and acquired skills in using all the methods. I tried the recorded devices before the actual data collection.

3.7 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis like thematic analysis was used. In the analysis, I played and listened to the recorded interviews and read the field written notes over and over for accuracy. Thematic arrangement was used with the aim of organising theme which was initially derived from the data that were relevant for interpretation of this study. Thematic analysis is a pattern identification within a data, use of emerged themes as category for analysis (Fereday, Muir-Cochrane 2006:3-4). In analysing qualitative data, the initial task was to find and identify concept that helped explain situations. In making meaning throughout the data, themes and categories were emerged from the data without predetermining them.

The use of thematic analysis was flexible because it enabled me to use emerged themes with varied qualitative perspective such as interpretative perspective and different research questions. In the analysis I read through data and sorted out varied themes obtained from interviews and observations and transcribed as well as categorised into written text. Throughout the analysis I reflected through how the emerged themes were related and connected to the concepts and theories used in this study. In short, all the analysis in this study were interpreted in line with the research questions, themes and based on the participants perceptions.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

An important aspect I considered for quality work was validity and reliability. Validity is the relevance, correctness and strength of research which is connected to research purpose. Reliability is the consistency and trustworthiness of research and can be reproducible by other researchers (Kalve and Brinkmann 2009). This implies that reliability concerns itself with being able to use the same instrument to measure or describe the same phenomenon. Also concerns with whether research really measure what it is supposed to measure.

This study will mainly concentrate on validity based on the fitness and purpose of the study. The nature of my study is a qualitative kind and concerns with various information on what is

surrounding and circulating in a specific environment: the schools where research was conducted.

Validity

Validity can be explained as the ability of the results of the study to tally accurately to the concept being studied (Bryman 2012). This means the ability of the result to clearly identify what the researcher intended to study. As emphasised earlier, validity was used in this study to ensure whether my research studies truly studied what was viewed and observed. During the process, I prepared an interview guide in line with research question to ensure validity. I ensure clarity of research questions as it is one of the criteria to ensure validity. The clarity was firmly ensured through pre-testing. With this research questions and methods were tested for improvement.

I enhanced validity through: Restructuring research question to obtain good set of questions and as indicated earlier, pre-testing question to minimise and avoid repeated mistakes. Beside these, I also considered the culture of the various schools as every school has its own beliefs and norms that governs students and teachers. Awareness of the schools' values and beliefs strengthen the study.

Furthermore, I ensured views and experience of participants were presented based on their own description rather than my own preference. That is to mention I avoided altering the views of my participants. I maintained participants' views by re-reading the transcripts over and over for accurate information.

In sum, obtaining variety of information and describing situations as valid as possible made me to use three methods and triangulated them at different stage in this study. Triangulation the use of two or more methods of data collection to study from more than one standpoint (Bryman 2008). This suggests that a researcher uses one or two research methods to study same situation and ascertain whether the method provide the same findings. I noted the use of triangulation helped strengthen data gathered since data obtained from interviews were disproved or supported by observation and documents. On the other hand, clarified and confirmed information obtained. This sum up how validity was emphasised to strengthen this study.

3.9 Ethical Consideration

The study exercised ethical principle that governs research. Ethic is a principle sensitivity to the right of others, which consider truth as good and recognise human right as better (Cavan 1977 in Cohen et al 2007). Therefore, in this study, I protected the dignity of my participants to avoid any risk and negative situations. Considering the outcome of my study I first asked permission from the heads of institutions and explained the purpose of the various activities like audio recording and note taking to clear uncertainty. I also assured them information obtained from them are meant for this study purpose and they are well protected. I further maintained participants pseudonyms and not disclosed their real identity in this work to maintain and protect dignity of participants.

3.10 Summary

This chapter has presented and elaborated the methodological approach to the study. It employed qualitative research with case study design and described how the data obtained from the was conducted. The chapter also provides the population, sample size and the sample techniques for the study. Again, it discussed the methods used for collecting data from the participants. The procedures for analysing data have been presented. The data was analysed thematically. Finally, the ethical issues were considered to conclude the chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS ON CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

4.1 Introduction

The chapter present findings on Christian and Muslim relations in the school community. It focusses on condition in the school that enhance their relations. The presentation begins with Christian- Muslim relations in the schools and this is followed by Christian perception about Islam and Muslim perception about Christianity. It also entails the status of Christians and Muslims in the school, their cooperation in the school and the support Christians and Muslims get from the authorities in terms of their religious identity and practice in the school.

4.2 Christian-Muslim relations in the schools

At the schools in Dansoman and Awoshie and as in any other school in Ghana, Christian and Muslim students and teachers relate with each other on daily basis. The nature of their relations in the school confirms the assertion made by Abdul -Hamid that the Christian -Muslim relations in Ghanaian communities is a daily reality (Abdul-Hamid 2011). They relate and cooperate with each other quite well throughout the day. And in the case of those in the boarding house this continues even after classes. Through observation Christians and Muslims students work in group projects in all practical subject areas.

They also formed study groups and freely share course materials and textbooks with each other. They are also well represented in extracurricular activities in the school as they interact and relate well with each other in sporting activities. In the student leadership, there is a fair representation of Christian and Muslims in the schools as reflected in the larger society where we have a Christian president and a Muslim as his vice.

The participants were aware of their religious identities, but the knowledge of their different identities does not affect the way they relate with each other. One Muslim participant from Awoshie school through the interview stated, *'she is a Christian and I am Muslim but that does not change anything madam, we are all human beings with blood from God'*. This statement implies that they see them self as one equal human being created by God *and* their religious affiliation does not change their position with God.

The school also recognise their different identities and made provision for their religious practice in the school, but this does not cut across all schools. The situation in the mission public school was different in this study. From the observation in Dansoman, there was no mosque for

Muslim prayers. The Muslim student participate in the daily mass organised in the school and they indicated they are quite comfortably.

Through the interview after participating with students during Friday mass, a Muslim participant two hinted that *“madam, what can we do, we are already here through no fault of ours and have to enjoy the Christian service.”* They enjoy the service, but they prefer a mosque where they can pray. They feel they do not have equal status in the school as their Christian colleagues. A Muslim male participant through the interview lamented that they have written to the authorities to provide a place of worship for them but are often reminded that it is a mission school that cannot serve the needs of the denomination they represent.

Asked whether they can go out to pray, a female participant revealed that they are not, and offenders are pushed. She said, *“you can see madam, the whole school is walled, and the security is tight”*. The Muslims participants all expressed worry and dissatisfaction and stated that they will continue to put pressure till the issue is addressed. They however mentioned they are comfortable with the school because they are there to learn. But in Awoshie, the situation is different. For instance, in Awoshie there is a mosque on the school compound for Muslim daily prayer. The provision of the mosque in Awoshie was to cater for the day and boarding students.

It is worth noting that this disturbing situation according to the students does not affect their relations because it is a mission school. In finding out whether the mission school was their choice they mention that it was the computer selection placement process of the Ghana Education Service and not their choice. One thing that echoed in their response of the absence of mosque in their school was that they are managing the situation. The Muslims participant also revealed that except for the absence of the mosque they are comfortable and interact and relate well the Christians. A female and a male Muslim participant both indicated that they have relative who are Christians and the nature of the environment at home is what they see in the school apart from the mosque.

The Christians participants in Awoshie and Dansoman also revealed that they have good relationship with their Muslim colleagues. They learn, and share things together and as well get along with each. In Awoshie one female participant mentioned in an interview that she shared her bed with a Muslim student when they came to the first year and there was shortage of bed in the school. She could not watch her go back home to wait whiles academic work had begun and so offered to share her bed with her till she gets her own. The participant stated,

‘Madam we relate well, we don’t have problem, no, see, I don’t know Fauzia from Adam, but I just decided to share my bed with her because we are all Ghanaians and now, we have become sisters. This relation has put our families together’.

They do not only share bed but also food and clothing. From the observation, Muslim during sports freely share and exchange their shoes and jerseys in an atmosphere of love. These were the findings from the observations and the interviews from the field on Muslim Christian relation in Awoshie and Dansoman school. The schools like the larger society, reflects the beliefs and values of the society. These was reflected in the Christian Muslim relation in these schools. However, the religious hegemony enjoyed by some religious denomination in the society is also reflected in one of the schools.

4.3 Perception About Religion and Conflict

This section of the chapter presents a discussion on religion and conflict. The discussion is based on Christian perception on conflict within religious circles. It was evident that Christians consider themselves as a peaceful in-group and perceive Muslims and Islam as an out- group characterise by conflict and violence. The discussion in this section, therefore, is based on these views of the participants. It has been divided into two parts with the presentation on Christian perception on conflict in relation to Muslims and Islam. It is followed by Muslims perception on Christians/Christianity and conflict.

4.3.1 Christian perception about Muslim/Islam

The Christian participants from the study share different opinion on Muslims as a group and Islam as religion. Some participants were of the view that Muslims are nice people, united and love members of their group but are hostile to non-believers of Islam. Such attitudes of Muslims to these participants is based on the teachings from the Quran, thus their holy scripture endorses their attitudes in general. Others on the other hand believe Muslims are kind to their own people and to other non-believers of the Islamic faith. They however agreed that they are violent, and this nature is based on the way they are treated.

Unumeri (2009) noted that when a group or an individual engages in comparison of themselves against the other, they are prone to assume a superior position. And from that perspective, the make decision about the group which may be positive or negative. This was the situation in this study. From the interview, it was revealed that when Christians compare themselves with the Muslims colleagues in the school, they are the peaceful group who do not use violence means in the school to gain the attention of the authorities. Christian participant two stated that *‘we don’t have a place of worship in the school, but we do not complain, but they fought and got it’*. This view was also expressed by participant six in an answer to a question.

This means that this Christian participant perceive Muslims as people or a group who use violence as means to attract attention and get their needs met. These are perception people hold about Islam and Muslims are strong and indivisible group (Johnson 2015). But such perception may not hold for all Muslims but few individuals. This makes the violent act of one bad nut affect the entire group. In an answer to a question, participant eight explained that they are not all violent and that those Muslims who engages in conflicts and other violent act are not true Muslims and do not understand the Quran. The participant eight notes *'those Muslims who cause trouble in this school and even in our communities madam are not true Muslims, they don't read'*. The participant further added that there are decent and peace-loving Muslims who do not engage in any violent act. In another instance, participant one revealed that generally at the Zongo (Muslim communities) areas of Awoshie there is always conflict therefore in her opinion Muslims are violent including those in the school. Recounting how they all rush to a scene any time there is disagreement in the school. This opinion supports the assertion that how individuals perceive members of another group depends on the information about the group, how such information is interpreted to form an opinion about the perceived (Unumeri 2009). Such information are stereotypical attitudes from many of the Christian participants in this study as they explained Muslims behaviour based on their situation.

In conclusion Christians perception on Islam and Muslims are different in this study. Whiles some participants perceive Muslims as an out-group who create tension and used violent means to achieve their goals, other participants are of the view that they are not violent in general. To this group of Christian participants Muslims violent acts are situation specific, thus depending on how people or group perceive and relate with an individual or a group determine the response (Unumeri 2009)

4.3.2. Muslims perception on Christians and Christianity

The views of Muslims participants about Christians was quite different from their Christians counterparts. Interestingly all Muslims participants did not perceive Christians as violent. On the contrary, they perceive them as an out-group who have superiority complex. Christian comparatively feel superior and, in their view. Christianity is the most authentic religion and every 'other' lead nowhere. Abdool et al (2007) posited that the exclusivist in relation between religious groups, demonstrate strongly held believe about their religion. They perceive their religion as true and all others as heretical. Also, Shemer (2004:233) noted that the conviction that one's religion is the only true religion does not promote good interreligious relation. This

assertion was what runs through the Muslims participants perception of how Christians perceive themselves.

Through the interview, participant three stated that the Christian in the school feel they are superior because of the faith. The participant notes *'the attitude of the Christians is annoying, they see their faith as the best and the only way to heaven and we are already on our way to hell. They think they are holy, and we are not'*. Abdool et al (2007) and Shemer (2004) asserted that such perception of a group about themselves against an out group in a community does not promote healthy relation and peaceful co-existence but rather leads to tension and intolerance.

These assertions were confirmed by the Muslim participants. According to Participant seven such posture by their fellow Christian student in the school is annoying. He notes *'anytime we are asked for Christian worship and we refuse their facial expression towards us is like we are missing heaven'*. He explained that their comments and posture show they have the best. Such attitudes towards Muslims and Islamic faith is based on impression formed about the group and their faith which may be based on their interpretation of what Islam means. Such interpretation may not represent what Islam truly stands for.

Similarly, Allport (1954) indicated that when a majority group by their background judge themselves as best against minority group, it does not put them on the same status and affect their interaction. The Christian in terms of population out-numbers Muslims in Ghana and this reflect in the school. Christians in the two schools visited are in the majority. Such attitudes of Christians superiority towards Muslim does put them on the same level which may be the reason why they use violence to draw attention to their needs.

Again, Muslims perceive that Christians do not love each other though their faith is based on love. Muslims see their group as strong group and love is one key factor that binds them together. Participant three and seven share this view and through the interview, participant seven revealed

'we Muslims love each other and will fight to defend our brother or sister in time of trouble. You don't need to know what went wrong you just must help. An attack on one Muslims is an attack on the entire group. We love each other, and we love justice. Muslims are not violent, but we cannot also be cheated or treated like second class citizen in our own country.'

In their view they love each other more than the Christians. Islam and Muslims are monolithic group in that by their bond together, one-person violent act is the basis for societal judgement of the entire group. Participant five in answer to question explained why they love each other.

On the issue of tolerance, Muslim perceive Christians as a group that do not tolerate others faith and do not even care to learn about Islam. But the Muslims mentioned that they read the Christian bible and could quote some verses from the bible. Participant seven from the public mission school claimed he reads the bible,

‘madam I read the bible because my auntie and my cousins are Christians and I sometime spend holidays with them. We attend church together and so I hear and read their bible. But sadly, they have never set eyes on the Quran’.

Allport (1954) stated that prejudice and stereotypes are reduced when majority group members stay and interact through intergroup contact. Similarly, Pettigrew and Troop (2007) further explained that through optimal contact, majority group members learn about minority group and acknowledge that there are other worldviews and appreciate such views. However, from the interview even the family contact could not change the perception of the Christian toward the family member.

These negative attitudes of Christian inability to understand the Islamic worldview according participants from the two schools is experienced in the school. Teachers and students believe Islam endorses violence and conflict without reading but based on information gather from other people (Nelson and Quick 1998). Such interpretations based on people’s experience may not represent an Islamic worldview and may be situation specific (Unumeri 2009)

In conclusion from the interviews with Muslims participants from the two schools, Muslims participants agreed in their answers to questions that Christians are not violent. But they hold this perception that Christians been the majority group feel they are superior; every other religion have missed the way to Christ and are not ready to learn about other religious traditions. This according to the participants does not promote good relationship. Such impressions about a group does not enhance peaceful co-existence in a community like the school.

4.3.3. Teachers perceptions about Christians and Muslims

Parkinson (2007) posited that perceptions are impression people form about others and Unumeri (2009) also added that such impression people form about an individual or group depends on information gathered about the group based on experience. Again, people’s perception is also based on the situation and the environment (Nelson and Narayan 1997). This was evident in the teachers’ opinions about their Christian and Muslim students. Teachers perception on Christian and Muslim students in the school varied. At Awoshie the teacher participant was of the view that Christians and Muslim are the same because they are serving the same God. ‘*There is no difference between them*’ was her answer to a question.

On their approaches to issues in the school, the participant noted that there is difference in their approach to issues. In an answer to a question on violence, teacher participant one revealed that they are all not violent however, Muslims student would make sure their demands are met. Recounting her experience as a school chaplain she notes *'my Muslim student will not compromise their faith before any law. Here in this school, we had difficult time getting them to participate in social gathering because Christian prayers.'*

This is an issue no other religious adherent will bow for and Zwibel (2012) advocated that school authorities should not force religious minority group to participate in other majority like Christian practices. Nitho-Nitho and Nieuwenhuis (2010) also argue that authorities must not favour one religious' group. People will not trade their religious identity for acceptance in another majority group.

Contrary to the view of the teacher from Awoshie, the Dansoman teacher perceive Muslims as rowdy but also added that in the school they adhere to school rules because of the consequences involved. He added that most instance they are always involved in defiant behaviours. This position of the teacher affirms the assertion that Muslims are always tagged with violent acts. The teacher perception here depends on the situation in the school. In an answer to a question teacher participant two stated *'there are rules here and whether Muslim or Christian, no one is above the law.'* In a follow up question, the participant revealed *'there are other Christian denominations here and the rules apply to all including Muslims'.*

According to Zwibel (2012) schools and school authorities should remain neutral in dealing with religious groups in the school setting. The rules of the school should not favour one religion against the other. If there are rules that put all student on the same platform that will enhance relationship and interaction among minority and majority religious group. Setting up rules for people to comply in one setting is not enough ground to conclude a groups violent tendency over the other. An individual may behave well in one setting but might be different in another setting and this depend on the perceiver (Unumeri 2009).

Christian on the other hand in the view of the teacher participants are not violent in their demand towards their religious practices in school the teacher participant explained. However, she added *'they are not saints either, but this depends on the level and commitment to their faith and denomination'.* The participant explained further *'we have instances where they join the Muslims and other to press their demand home to the authority'.* The participant concluded that

in her view, and comparatively the Christians group are respectful and easy to deal with on religious practice in the school.

From the Dansoman school, the participant notes that the Christians are law abiding and gets along with the school's rules on religious beliefs and practices in the school. In an interview, he revealed *'may be because it is Christian mission school, the Christians easily identifies with the religious practice here better than other groups in the school'*. This perception of the teacher participant two of the Christians against the Muslims may be wrong. The perception is based on the attitude of the student in the school and may represent who they may not be out of the school premises (Unumeri 2009).

In conclusion, the teacher's perception on Christian and Muslims in their school may not be conclusive on who these groups in the schools are. Also, such perceptions of the teachers are based on information they have about them and how such information are interpreted.

4.4. School tensions and conflicts

Ghana has been adjourned as peaceful country as noted earlier in chapter one. And several Ghanaian scholars attest to this assertion. The peaceful co-existence between Christian and Muslims form the central themes of many Ghanaian literature on Christian-Muslim relation (Abdul-Hamid 2011; Ammah 2007; Sarbah 2010). However, in recent times the consensus on peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims in the school and the entire Ghanaian society, have been experiencing tension and conflict due to negative perception and discrimination among Christians and Muslims in the schools.

Tensions and conflicts in the school are often based on conditions in the school coupled with happenings in the society. This means the religious tone of the society influence the tone of the school as the member of the school are drawn from the society. Therefore, tensions, conflict and violence experiences in the main society is also experienced in the school and its immediate communities.

Participants in the study from the two schools mentioned incidence of tensions from the schools that brought in key stakeholders in education and attracted national attention. From the interview, participant one from Awoshie and five from Dansoman in separate interviews recall incidents such as wearing of hijab by Muslim girls in public senior high school, Muslims students been forced to participate in Christian activities in Christian mission school. The removal of hijabs before taking photo identification for national exams and the provision of

place of worship for Muslims in public school where there is land for that purpose. These incidences created tension and hatred for the Muslim students in the schools as they fight for what they termed as their fundamental religious rights. According to one participant from Awoshie their demand for a place of worship was a struggle between them and the staff, *'it was a tough struggle, they did not want us to have a place to pray'*. This created tensions between Christian and Muslims in the school, the students and among the staff as revealed in this study.

Peaceful relation between Christians and Muslims did not take the place of their religious identity. They were conscious of who they are and will not trade it for the comfort of the other. The issue of the wearing of hijab by Muslim girls in the senior high school did not remain in the school. It travelled beyond the borders of the school and attracted national attention and demonstrations were staged as indicated earlier by Muslim coalition groups in some regional capitals. This incident incited key religious leaders. Whiles Muslim leaders asked for state intervention Christian leaders encouraged heads of their institutions to remain resolute to their principle.

Through the interview, it was revealed by the Muslims participants and was confirmed by the Christians participants that the building of the mosque created tension between the school authorities notably the then headmistress, the Muslim teachers and the Ghana Muslims Student Union representatives in the school. The fourth Muslim participant mentioned that it took the intervention of GES official and some of the staff to have the mosque. He stated,

“Madam it was not easy, it looks like war, we were hated by them, but we don't complain when they ask us to say the lord's prayer at general assembly and to attend Sunday church as Muslims. But we forced, we moved heaven and earth to get this mosque here. Our Christians friend were not comfortable with us, but we did not mind”.

But this incident did not generate in to any violent clashes in the school, however the peaceful co-existence did not over ride who they are and the need to differentiate them from the other along religious line in the use of concepts such “us and “them”. This incident confirms Tajfel and Turner (1979) assertion that when people perceive themselves as a member of a group be it an in-group or out-group, their perception and judgement is to classify, identify and differentiate themselves from the group they belong. But they did not allow the incident to truncate the peaceful relation between them in the school.

But this was not the case in at Dansoman school, their fight and voice for a place of worship could be described as on issue in their imagination as most of the Christian mission public schools will not allow this to happen. They securely hold on to their Christian beliefs and

superiority. It worth noting that in Dansoman school not only the Muslims are repressed but the other Christian denomination. The denomination from which the school emerged see themselves as one from which all others emerged. This position Abdool et al (2007) posited affect intergroup relations when one groups assumed the position of accepting all other emanating from the major group. In the case of Awoshie school the Christians who participated also felt there is discrimination against the Christians as they do not have a church hall but a general assembly hall for all other social gathering.

In conclusion, adjourning people from living out their identity and in this context religious identity, is possible source of tension and conflict. Angessa (2013:13) explained that religiously motivated conflict in any community is inspired by attitude of the religious group and how such attitudes and behaviours are perceived in the environment. Participant in these studies are people who have lived in the school for two or three years as participants were selected based on how long they have stayed in the school.

The rational here is that through the two years they have interacted with each other and have impressions about each other. Therefore, they have experiences in the conditions in the school and how these affect Christian and Muslims relation in the school. Forcing Muslims to participate in Christian activities is what lead Angessa (2013) argued leads a group of people to claims of autonomy on place of worship and other practice and its consequences.

4.5. Religion and peace in school.

Religion does not only serve as source of conflict but also for peacebuilding in society. Obeng-Mireku (2017) contended that peace is an ideal advocated by Christians and Muslims. Similarly, Akama (1998) added that Muslims and Christians have peace as central themes in their message. This was the position of the Christian and Muslim participants in this study.

Through the interview, Christians participant in the study from the two-school indicated that Christianity is a peaceful religion and that Jesus Christ exhibited this peace in the face of persecution through to death. They added that he left this example for all those who believe in him and follow his teachings. From Awoshie school and in answer to a question, participant one revealed, *'we the Christians here are law abiding and the teachers here can testify. We don't create troubles in this school because our bible tells us to obey authorities'*. This claim was later confirmed by another Christian participant at Dansoman school of the law-abiding nature of the Christian groups in the school. This position of the Christian confirms Haqq and

Adenge assertion on religion and peacebuilding. According to Schmidt et al (2016) religious laws and ideas provide the adherents the basis to leave in peace with others.

The Awoshie teacher participant also claim that in her view the Christians are peaceful. The participant through the interview notes, *'my sister Christians are peaceful, I mean every true Christian who has had an encounter with Jesus is peaceful.* In an answer to a follow up question the participant explained that there have been times when there is visible sign of positive discrimination against Christians student in favour of the Muslims. The participant cited an example on the place of worship and meetings for religious activities where the Muslims were given a better option in her opinion over the Christians. The Christian religious group leader did not complain but they however confided in her and indicated they accepted the option for the sake of peace.

Abu-Nimer (2003) contended that social justice are inherent values in Islam. For the Muslims, it is a value necessary for effective functioning of societies and nations. This was the position and claim of Muslims participant from Awoshie. The participant unanimously agreed that Islam means peace and their various text from the Quran that enjoins them to do good to their neighbour and leave in peace. They however added that Islam is against moral decadence and injustice. Until they experience injustice, they are peaceful group. Demanding justice in the face of injustice to one participant in answer to a question does not make Muslims violent.

At the Dansoman school, the teacher participant stated that their school environment is peaceful and have not experience any tension or violence from any religious group. He added, *'here they comply because before the admission you are made to go through the rules and accept them'*.

On the contrary, at Awoshie the teacher participant also indicated that their school environment is peaceful except in the pass when they experience heavy tension over place of worship for the Muslims student. In an interview, the participant revealed *'but for the timely intervention of representatives from Christian Council of Ghana and Muslim Council, it would have been a different issue'*. This confirms Schmidt et al (2016) assertion that religious organisation has played key roles in conflict resolution. The result of their intervention was the mosque for Muslim prayer in the school. From the observation there was a mosque with an area for ablution before prayer. The Christian groups have the assembly hall as their place of worship.

In conclusion, the two-schools visited agreed that their school premises are peaceful and Christian -Muslim interaction is peaceful. Students and teacher participants agreed that peace is central to the two religion and that is evidence in their daily experiences with each other

through interaction. They also explained that in conflict situation they rely on tenets of their faith as it enjoins them to live in peace with each other. The Muslims however emphasis social justice as a key element of their faith for which no Muslims will not trade it for any other option.

4.6. Status of Christian and Muslims

Everett (2013) stated that in a contact situation, members of group should not have hierarchical relation like student- teacher relationship. Also, Novak et al (2011) posited optimal contact situation promote equal status interaction between group members. Through observation at Awoshie school, it was evident that Christian and Muslims students have good relation between them. There are also no obvious scenes of discrimination during morning gathering as Muslims were seen freely sing Christians songs. An interview with the participants revealed that they are comfortable with the conditions in the school in terms of religious practice. Participant six notes *'we the Muslims are ok here. We have our place of worship and joining them for general assembly is not bad'*. The participant added that at worship there is no difference between teachers and students and most of the time that relationship affect the atmosphere of the school. They could approach the teachers to discuss relevant issues with them. In an answer to a question, a Christian participant also hinted that Muslims and Christian in the school in his view are on the same plain because their religious activities have been captured in the school calendar and time table. Christians and Muslims have been given time at the end of the day in school on Wednesdays for their religious activities. Through the observation, during this time teachers are seen interacting with students based on their religious affiliation. Teacher participant one in an answer to a question note,

‘they are our children and we are all children of God and it does not matter which religious background one comes from. That is why over here we treat them equally. I sometimes go to their mosque to observe them pray. I have learned how to concentrate in prayer by observing them’.

The teachers claim was supported by the participant in this study that they freely share not only religious issues with the teachers because they are given the opportunity but also academic and other personal issues. Indeed, equal status promotes interaction between groups with different background. However, Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) acknowledged that defining and achieving equal status can be difficult task. Though the teacher participant mentioned that she sometimes goes to the mosque to observe Muslims prayer section the Christian students do not go to the mosque, but this does not affect their relations. Infrastructure wise the two religious’ group at Awoshie have the same status for their religious practice.

The situation at the Dansoman school was different. Christian and Muslims are not on equal status in terms of infrastructure. There is no space provided for their daily prayers in school. Hamburger and McKenna (2006) observed that in an intergroup contact there is a subtle difference in the use of space and sitting position among group members. This was the observations made at the school. Christians and Muslims participate in only Christians services and there was no space and time for Muslims or other Christian denominational activities. Through the interview participant seven stated, *'there was no time and space for any religious activities for Muslims and even other Christian group'*.

The teacher participant in an answer to a question, stated that their school is a Christian mission school. *'this is a mission school and we cannot contradict ourselves by giving Muslims space to pray or wear hijab, no'*. The teacher participant explained that apart from place of worship and their religious outfits, student and teachers have good relation because as Christian the bible enjoins them to treat people well. The teachers further explained that by law Ghanaian students wear school uniform and that should be enough for all student. He added that any additional clothing will undermine the essence of school uniform.

The participant added that professionally they treat them well to enhance their academic work. This claim confirms Schmidt et al (2016) assertion that religious values enjoins religious people to live at peace with their neighbour. The teacher claim was however refuted by participant eight who revealed that in addition to preventing them from praying in the school, they are not allowed to pray in a nearby mosque during their free time.

In conclusion, Christian -Muslim relations in the two schools confirms the assertion that achieving equal status is a difficult task in a contact situation even in an optimal contact situation (Everett 2013; Hamburger and McKenna 2006). In one school there was equal status in the provision of space for Christian and Muslims. Again, the school has captured their religious activities into the normal school schedules. At the personal level, there exist intimate relations between the two groups and the school authorities. Through interviews and observation, teachers and students relate well with each other. However, the Christian were not under any obligation to participate in Muslims prayer. But the situation at this school, promote equal-status interaction between Muslims and Christians on one hand and teachers and students on the other.

The situation was quite different in the second school. There was cordial relation between Christian and Muslim students and with the school authorities. But through observation and the

interviews, there was rather a rigid atmosphere at the school which was confirmed through interviews that the school has rules and regulation that controls their behaviour on campus. In an observation after school the students were seen relating with each other better than in the school environment.

Also, there was no space provided for Muslim prayer as in the case of the first school. Religious activities were solely that of the school's religious denominational activities. Despite these subtle differences, the Christian Muslim relation at the two high schools agree with the assertion that when there is an equal status in a contact situation, it reduce prejudice promote good relation among majority and minority groups.

4.7. Intergroup cooperation.

Contact theory proposed that when members of diverse groups work together on a project it enhances relationships (Everett 2013; Pettigrew and Tropp 2008). Novak et al (2011) added that when the interaction during the group project encourages behaviour disconfirmation of prejudice and negative perceptions the groups hold about each other, it results in building confidence in each other and enhance intergroup relations.

Through the field study, by observations and through the interviews conducted, at the two schools there Christian and Muslims cooperate with each other in academic and no academic activities. At Awoshie through the interview, it was revealed that the students work in non-academic project initiated by the president for an award. The students are grouped in a team to work on a project for an award. Through this project a Christian participant in this study recount a life changing experience with the colleague Muslim student and stated,

‘my experience with a Muslim neighbour has always make believe they are rowdy, dirty and academically low. But working with Zuleika as team a team mate has change my notion. It's amazing she is so organised and on point with her time. As the leader of my group in the project her creative contributions have been very wonderful. I so much respect her for her hard working and calm nature. Indeed, one bad nut spoils all other nuts. She is exceptional’.

The participants experience with the colleague Muslim confirms Novak et al (2011) and Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) assertion that optimal interaction disconfirms prejudice and negative perceptions that group hold about each other. It provides an individual the opportunity to learn about the other generating affective ties between them. According to participant two in a follow up question, the impression about Muslims based on an experience prior to the encounter in the group project has changed and the Muslims has become a study mate for

academic work as they are both second year student. Learning about other group through contact Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) posited enable an individual to know that there exist other world view and ways of living social reality rather than one's own.

Also, from the same school through observation I realised that because of large class size, the teachers use groupwork as a teaching strategy. The groups are generally representative in terms of race, gender and religion. Teacher participant one explained that they intentionally under the circumstance to foster unity among them and this has helped deal with anti-social tendencies in many of the students. A Muslim participant on group cooperative non-competitive activity narrate how there has been changes in her perception towards Christians Participant three note,

‘we Muslims think Christians feel superior and do not respect us but the Christians I work with at the science laboratory are different. They respect my views and make me feel welcomed. They even know my prayer schedule and reminds me anytime I am engulfed in my practical's. We learn together, and they share their learning materials with me’.

In an answer to a follow up question the participant revealed that their attitude towards her him make him believe in Christianity and sometimes ask them to pray for him. He added that though he will not convert to become a Christian he has learned that they are good and share these experiences from school with the parents. Through observation I noticed that during launch they sit together and eat. The teacher's participant from the school added that the Muslims except for very few during Christian worship for the entire school participate hearty and give contributions towards a Christian charity program in the school.

The teacher participant however added that when they come to first year few Muslim students struggle to with some of the Christian activities in the school. But through group activities their perceptions change and begin to get along. Novak et al (2011) and Everett (2013) agree that not all contact between groups works out positively. However, Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) advanced that optimal contact through cooperative group works to reduce negative perception and prejudice between minority and majority groups

From the field data, through interviews and observations the contact between Muslims and Christians at the school through classroom projects and extracurricular activities such as sports, music and presidents' awards scheme among others at the visited school have help decongest negative impression Christian's and Muslims hold about each other. Developing relationship between some individual students beyond the borders of the school.

At Dansoman, the picture of Christian Muslim relation was not different but with some few exceptions. As in the case of the Awoshie school, the students revealed that they have related well with each other through group works and other sporting activities. In an interview, Christian participant eight mentioned that she has learnt a great deal about Muslims through sports camp meetings. According to this participant every year they go for camp meeting where they meet a whole lot of students from other schools and one striking thing, she noticed is that Muslims love each other affectionately and this even extend to the non-Muslims camp mates. They are also law abiding and follow camp rules to the latter compared to other camp mates. Participants eight through the interview notes,

‘I live in a Muslims dominated area (Zongo) towards the eastern part of this community and prior to my contact with Muslim colleague my mother told me Muslims are violent and wicked and told me to be careful when dealing with them. This impression about them through my mother has changed now. Not all Muslims are violent as I was told. I now have my opinion about them’.

The perception many Christians about Muslims are that they are not law abiding, violent, oriented towards conflict (Obeng-Mireku 2017). But as per this participant these impressions about Muslims have gradually change through contact situation. Also, through daily living on campus with each other some negative perception Christians and Muslims have about each other has reduce. However, it is worth noting that despite the good intergroup relations between the Christian and Muslims there were exceptions from the group cooperative activities. Two participants stated that working together with Muslims in a group and daily interaction with them confirm their perceptions about them. For these participants, Muslims are violent and rude recounting an incident which happened at the school and after school. For participant seven Muslim will join a brother in a fight without asking for the cause. In an answer to a question, the participant notes,

‘Muslim are violent or let me say most are violent and quarrelsome. There was an incident that happened between one of them and a tutor and when the guy was discipline the others from the other classes rushed out shouting. It took the school authorities time to calm them down. After school did you know these boys with some of the Muslim girls attempted vandalising the tutor’s car? They are rude and violent’.

Unumeri (2009) posited that impression are formed based on people’s experiences with the other. These experiences according to McDonald (2011) and Pettigrew (1998) may negative or positive. Also, Unumeri (2009) asserted that an individual experience about the other is also based on the situation. That is the social context within which the interaction takes place between people. According to this participant, within the school and outside school the Muslim

interaction in these two situations in the view of the participants makes them violent people. Comparing the Muslims to Christians in group activities the participant four noted they are aggressive and only few are calm naturally.

On the contrary, the teacher participant two stated that the Muslims and Christians in the school cooperate in a lot of project such as agricultural project, science and mechanical works. In the participants view they get along. But also confirm that at the initial stages when they are enrolled fresh in the school, they struggled for some time but by the time they complete school, they become life time friends. Thus, their daily interactions throughout their stay in the school change their perception about each other.

In conclusion, intergroup contact proposed that through cooperative activities between groups members of a group learn about each other. Through the learning processes, impression is formed which may confirm an earlier impression an individual through experience have about the other. On the other hand, the new knowledge about the other may change an earlier impression for the better and improving relationship between groups. From the interviews, most of the participants have wrong impression changed about Islam and Muslims and vice versa. Whiles others have through the interactions entrenched negative perception about Islam and Muslims.

4.8. School Authorities Support

The school is a miniature society that has membership like that of the larger society. Its activities must therefore encourage cohesion of the members represented. According to Everett (2013) and Novak et al (2011) intergroup contact will work to reduce negative perceptions and prejudice between groups when there are no official laws supporting segregation of group in a contact situation. Thus, those in position of authority are expected to promote agendas that encourage inclusion and intergroup acceptance. Zwibel (2012) advanced that to ensure religious freedom and to create a conducive atmosphere for all learners, the school must remain neutral to all religious groups in the school.

In Ghana, there is no official law supporting religious segregation. Schools are expected to respect the religious rights of majority and minority groups. From this field study religious neutrality differ at the two schools. At the Awoshie school from the observation and through the interviews, the school has maintained a neutral religious position on Islam and Christianity. From the observation the school has provided religious space and time for Christian and Islamic practices. There is a mosque and a place for ablution at the school where Muslim student

practice their daily prayer. And there is a big hall which doubles as church auditorium for Christian service and general assembly hall as according to the Christian participants in this study there are no taboos on place of worship in Christianity.

In an answer to a question, the teacher participant revealed that there was pressure on the school to provide space for Muslim prayer in line with the constitution of the country. The participant added that since the space was given to the Muslim there have been peace and the Muslims in the participant view feel accepted. Teacher participant one revealed,

‘This provision of place of worship for the Muslim was not easy. The former head of the school was not in favour and this created tension which almost erupted into conflict. However, the contention over a place of worship was resolved by the help of Christian and Islamic counsels and Ghana Education Service. The school had no option than to provide a place of worship for them. It has been peaceful there after’.

In this context, providing space for the two religious groups the school is accepting and accommodating the groups as they are. Zwibel (2012) contended that schools must not endorse one religion over the other. This has been the situation at Awoshie the school authorities have provided equal space for the two group. In answer to a question the teacher participant stated that religious activities in the school is not rigid, but student are by the laws of the school expected to attend general assemblies for necessary information.

In an answer to a question on those who do not belong to Islam or Christianity, the teacher participant stated that they are very few and sometimes join the two major group. In an interview with student participant, it was revealed that generally, the school is fair with Christians and Muslims. Participant three notes,

‘madam this school they have tried at least we have a place to pray. It was not easy but at last we have it and there is peace here now. We are not like others, we have it. We are also given time on the school time table for our association meeting. And madam you know this is not for Muslims but all Christian denominations on campus’.

This confirms the assertion that when groups operate in an equal- status in a contact situation, it reduces conflict as expressed by the participants (Novak et al 2011). Abdool et al argued religion have physical and spiritual layers which needs to be considered in an interreligious relation. Therefore, providing space to practice their faith takes care of the two layers of religion in honour of the deep level of the deep supernatural. Student spend most of their time in school and providing space and time for students for such practices can create congenial environment for effective teaching and learning. Justifying the provision for space and time at the Awoshie

school, the teacher participant explained that Christian and Muslims are serving the same God, and both are seeds from Abraham and deserve to be treated equally.

Zwibel (2012) argue that the school authorities must not endorse any religion over the other and must not engage in any form of indoctrination within the school setting. To this effect, in an answer to a question teacher participant one note,

‘well, having place and time for Muslims and Christian here does not mean we are promoting Christianity and Islam over the other religious minority because they are not under any obligation to attend their programs. We just want to fulfil our constitutional mandate and ensure their religious right is fully given to them’.

Again, in an answer to question on religious outfits the teacher participant one indicated that there is no law allowing religious outfit in the school and the is a prescribe school uniform and the school would like to maintain that. Participant stated, *‘my sister let keep it there, we have given what we think will serve their spiritual and emotional needs. Its ok that way’*. The participant added that the school has accommodate them for the sake of peace.

On the contrary, at Dansoman school, the situation was different. There was no religious freedom for the religious minority group though it is a government school. Through the interviews and observations, the school is perceived as promoting doctrines of a particular Christian denomination over Islam and other denominations (Zwibel 2012). All students are made to participate in mandatory Christian activities. Through observation there was no place for Muslim prayer as in the case of Awoshie. Also, there was no space for religious activities for religious groups on the regular school schedule. In an answer to a question, participant eight revealed that there is no time for religious group activities. The participant notes,

‘Madam, we don’t have that here in this school we know that other school have but we don’t have. Not even for other Christian denomination, it is very strict here, but it is not far. After attending their own they should also give us the opportunity to do our own but no’.

Meanwhile, human right statues and Ghana’s constitution requires accommodation of religious practices in schools and therefore endorsing one religious’ practice over all others is a violation of the fundamental rights of the minority in this context. However, the situation does not seem to pose problem to the other Christian denominations like the Muslims. Through the interviews Muslim participant expressed their displeasure over the situation.

It was also revealed that they have written to the school authorities, but they seem not to care about their spiritual needs’ whiles in school. In an answer to a follow up question, the Muslim student explain that at times they intentionally come to school late to avoid the church service,

but they are punished. A situation they are deep worried about and would move any length to seek redress.

On the part of the school authorities, in an answer to a question the teacher participant insisted they cannot allow other religious practices in the school. Additionally, the students are aware of the conditions of the school before enrolling in the school. A follow up question from the student participant also indicated that their selection to the school was based on computer selection and they have no influence. The student added they would have opted for a religiously free environment.

A Christian participant also lamented about the rigid religious climate of the school especially at certain time of the year. The participant added that they are disturbed about the punishment authorities have attached to the religious activities. This confirm the teachers claim that they are to comply. From the observation I saw some student punished for coming late because the teacher on duty that day revealed they came late because there was a church service.

In conclusion, in Ghana, there is no official law supporting schools to segregate student and force one religious' practice over the other. The government over the years and in the face of religious conflict in some of the schools as stated in chapter one categorically stated that no school should force any religious practice on students. The public schools are however divided on the issue

Summary

This chapter is a presentation of data that emerged from the field on Christian /Muslim Relation in two selected Senior High Schools in Ghana. The presentation of the findings was based on the thematic review of literature and the theoretical framework such as Christian / Muslim Relation, Perception of Christian and Muslims, School tensions and conflict, Religion and peace in school, Status of Christian and Muslims in school, Intergroup cooperation in school and School authorities support.

From the interview conducted, it emerged from the two schools that Christian -Muslims relation as agreed in Ghanaian literature is one of peaceful co-existence (Abdul-Hamid,2011; Sarbah,2010). However, on religious line there has been tensions that almost became conflictual and spread to the communities around the schools. On perceptions of Christians and Muslims towards each other according to the field data through interviews, Christian perception of Islam

and Muslim remains negative with some exception after interaction with some Muslims through school arranged programs. Muslims on the other hand also have negative perception about Christians and Christianity superiority nature and aggressive attitudes of winning them over into Christianity which participant acknowledge exception.

On school conflicts and tensions, the two schools through interviews revealed that there has been tension that almost generated into conflicts due to religious practices such as prayers and clothing. However, one school mentioned that this conflictual incident yielded positive result. On religion and peace, the data through interviews and observations shows that there is peace between Christians and Muslims at the school. Equal status for Christians and Muslims at the school is not the same in the two school in this study as revealed by the empirical data from the field. As noted in the literature equal -status is difficult to achieve this was what was revealed in the field data through interviews and observation in one school. Where as in the other school in terms of religious practices, the two religions in focus are place on the same level to some extent.

The data also shows that on intergroup cooperation between groups, from the interview there are enough opportunities for Christian -Muslims interactions at the two schools. This has helped disconfirm prejudice and negative perceptions between the two groups leading to healthy relationship to a lifelong relation to some participants. The data also shows that there are no official rules from the government to the school management supporting religious segregation of any group in school. However, the implementation of religious right at the schools differs from school to school. These findings will form the basis for the discussions in chapter five.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS ON CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATION IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN GHANA

5.1 Introduction

Religiously inspired tensions and conflict in post-modern societies has become an issue of concern in the global north and south. These tensions and conflict are not limited to the wider society but in recently in the high schools. This worrying trend is often between majority and minority groups. The effects of these tensions and conflict in schools affect relationship between the religious groups and in some cases leads disruption of the academic calendar, the destruction of lives and properties. This chapter discusses findings from Christian/ Muslim relation at the two selected schools in Ghana.

The discussion focused on conditions for Christians and Muslim students at the school and their perception of such conditions for their religious practices. The chapter analyses findings from the data as presented in chapter four. The discussion is largely based on the themes from the literature reviews on the framework from intergroup contact theory, theory of perception and with support from dialogical pluralism. The second part present general conclusion and recommendations for future study on these emerging issue of religious conflict in schools.

5.2 Christian-Muslim relations in the school

In chapter four, I present a discussion on Christian -Muslim relation in the school as one that is generally peaceful but at certain times experiences tension at the Awoshie and Dansoman schools. These tensions experienced are based on the perception of the religious groups about each other's faith. The negative and or positive perceptions each group have is based on information and experiences about each other. This affect the way they sometime relate with each other and the school authorities.

The findings from this study support the assertion that perception about the 'other' is based on information gathered, experiences, and how these information and experiences is interpreted (Unumeri 2009). It is interesting to also note that one's the information and experiences may

sometimes not present and aligned with current situation. The empirical evidence from this study confirms the claim that contact under certain key conditions leads to behavioural change reducing prejudice between groups as in the case of Awoshie school. Also, it has been recognised that not all contact between groups works out positively (Novak et al 2011). For instance, in Kenya negative perception between Christian and Muslims led to massive attack on Christians at Garissa university college claiming lives (International Religious Freedom Report 2015). On the contrary, in the schools visited in this study, though negative perception still persisted between Christians and Muslims it never developed into attacks and clashes in Ghana.

Similarly, Nigeria the election of student union president at the Federal College of Education, led to a violent clash between Christians and Muslims. In another instance in Northern Nigeria in Kaduna secondary school, tension brewed between Christian and Muslim girls over alleged negative attitude of Christians in the form of abuse of the holy Quran. This has devastating effect, affecting their relation on campus (Ushe 2015). Indeed, not all contact works to disconfirm prejudice to promote healthy Christian -Muslim peaceful co-existence.

This implies that negative perceptions and attitudes about each other's religion in any context has the potential to incite conflict. In the school setting, this can affect teaching and learning processes disrupting academic life. Such school based religious conflict can spread to the wider society as those reported in the Ghanaian media in 2015 sparking protest by Muslim groups in the country. Some of these perceptions which form negative attitudes Unumeri (2009) indicated are based ignorance of Christians and Muslims about each other's religion as indicated by participants in this study.

5.3 Christian -Muslim perceptions

Social perception is the way information about others are interpreted (Nelson and Quick 1997). Perception formed about the other depends on the amount of information available and the correct interpretation of the acquired information (Unumeri 2009). Indeed, the evidence from this study on Christian and Muslims relation is largely based on how they perceived each other. The perceptions determined feelings and moods towards each other. Our feelings and the way we act are also influenced by our environment. Christians and Muslims in the High School in Ghana relations is also influenced by the school environment and the information they have about each other.

Abdool et al (2007) noted that in interreligious relation, positioned assumed by religious people is based on how they perceive themselves against the other. Unumeri (2009) in agreement with this assertion noted that a key factor in perception is how familiar we get to the object or the individual we perceive. Within the school environment, Christians and Muslims interact at various ways in class, dining hall, dormitories etc. During this time students become familiar with one another and form impression-based positions taken about the other person. Muslims in the high school perceive Christians as religious exclusivist who in their view are the best religious group accepted by God. Again, for the Christians, their Christian Jesus is the only way to God. Abdool et al (2007) noted that such assumption of superior position create tension and hinders interreligious relations in schools.

The superior attitude by Christian and their numbers in the school influence the way school authorities treat them in terms of infrastructure. Government schools in Ghana for decades have programs and infrastructure that favour the Christian majority, and this add up to the superior posture of the Christian in the school creating tension in terms of religious practice. In this sense, Muslim feel segregated and, in some case, seek redress through tension and conflict. This confirms Unumeri (2009) assertion that people's behaviour in a context depends on the conditions at the time and may not represent the personality of the individual or group. This means that Muslim student may not be oriented towards conflict, but unfavourable school conditions can cause them to seek redress conflictual.

Meanwhile Christian perception of Muslims in the school setting is in two folds. Firstly, Muslims in the view of Christian are united and bonded by love for each other but this love is exclusively for the Muslim brotherhood and not for non/believers. Thus, impressions formed about people are not always negative. However, Muslims are also perceived generally by Christians as rowdy and violent group to the extent that they are always attached and tagged with any act of violence and as described by Obeng-Mireku (2017) before they are questioned. Obeng-Mireku (2017) noted that Muslims and Islam is always associated with violence to the extent that any time there is an act of violence or acts terrorism, the first answer to the question of the perpetrators is Muslims. Thus, despite the positive perception Christians have about Muslims love for one another, their perception of associating Muslims and Islam with violence remain the unchanged.

The implication is that such perception within the school certain may affect the relationship between Christian and Muslim as they may not always be the brain behind every evil or violent act in the school. A trend the Muslims participants in this study mentioned is quite worrying and has made innocent people suffer for crimes they did not commit but were perceived to have

committed because of their religious affiliation. Thus, Christians and Muslims both have negative and positive perception about each other. Despite the relatively peaceful co-existence in their relations Christian negative perceptions of Islam and Muslims persist. As noted by Everett (2013) and Novak et al (2011), contact only works to reduce prejudice but does not totally erase it.

5.4 Religious conflict in school

Religious tensions and conflicts are not limited to the main society but spreading into the school environment (Abdool et al 2007; Ushe 2015). Religion serving as a tool for conflict in many instances have been due to the perception of the parties involved in the conflict. This perception in Angessa (2013) view may be compatible to the way an individual or group perceive the environment and how the environment respond to their needs. The evidence from this study shows that conflict and indeed religious conflict can erupt based on the perception of the group or individuals view of the environment and its readiness to meet their needs.

According to Novak et al (2011) in a contact situation discrimination can serve as motivation for conflict between groups. And when a minority group feels they are not treated fairly in a contact situation, that can serve as a breeding ground for tension and possible conflict as mentioned through the interview sections in this study. But it is worth mentioning that tensions in themselves are not conflict however when conditions such as discrimination, prejudice fuelling tensions are left unresolved, it can generate into conflict.

In a similar vein, Treves (2013) also contended that source of conflict in addition to individual or groups perception can be due to attitudes, values and need for understanding. Many religious conflicts in society and at in the school are based on attitudes of religious people towards each other. For instance, in Nigeria at Kaduna the attitudes of Christian girls towards the holy Quran created tension between them and their Muslim colleagues at Queen Amina college (Ushe 2015). Similarly, in the empirical evidence from this study shows that attitudes of Christian student towards Muslims in the school generated tension and lead to a fight between two boys after school.

Again, the election of student union president of the Federal College of Education generated misunderstanding between Christian and Muslim students leading to violent clashes between the two groups in Zaria Nigeria. (Ushe 2015). An empirical evidence from this study through interview indicated that the Muslim student contended with school authorities to have fair representation in the student leadership. But this achievement varies from school to school as

in this same study religious minority per the school's administrative regulations do not permit other religious groups in their key student leadership positions.

Treves (2013) also noted that religious conflict can ensue due to competition over scarce resources like place of worship and claim for autonomy. Similarly, in London the creation of Christian school sparked controversies with one group claiming it further divide the school community (Abdool et al 2007). In the same vein in this study the request for space and autonomy over Christian practices in the public school sparked tension between Muslim student union and the school authorities.

In this context, and from the interview and observation there was available land for such project. The school authorities however were of the opinion of not turning the school into religious hub. The student prevailed and had their place of worship, but this was not applicable in all context. The story line was different in the second school in this study. Authorities could not create any space for Muslim prayers and would not allow them to go to a nearby mosque to pray. Such conditions in schools becomes a breeding ground for tension as student religious rights are muzzled.

In another instance the literature evidence from other studies confirms the battle of Muslim clothing for girls to schools in some parts of the world like Britain and France (Kelland 2004 cited in Abdool et al 2007). The wear of long dress and hijab by Muslim girls as noted in this study is not allowed in the Ghanaian public-school system. It was revealed in the interviews and observations these are not allowed in the public schools. This as mentioned in this study sparked a nationwide controversy that brought various stakeholders involved in education.

The implications of some of these school based religious tensions and conflict has the potential of affecting Muslim- Christian relationship in the school and to disrupt academic in the face of conflict and violent clashes. Nationally as in the case of hijab and Muslim dress for school, such struggles and conflict can generate into conflict and violent clashes which can have long term effect on socio-economic life of the country.

5.5. Religion and peace in school

The double side nature of religion makes it serve as inspiration for conflict and a vital tool for peace. Religion is key in peace building because it has laws and ideas that provide adherents with commitment crucial to peace related values (Schmidt et al 2016). Indeed, as noted, the finding from this study indicated that religion provides key solutions in peacebuilding in times of conflict. Also, religious laws and ideas are essential in reduce tension and conflict resolutions

as in the case of Awoshie school where ideas were drawn from Christianity and Islam to diffuse tension over the building of mosque in a public school.

Peace is an ideal advocated by both Christianity and Islam (Obeng-Mireku 2017). Muslims and Christians claim peace as a central theme of their message. Akama (1998) in confirmation peace is central message not only for Christians and Muslims but for all religions. According to the Christian and Muslim students love is major element of their faith and for the Muslims Islam simply means peace. But in as much as peace core element, it also rooted in social justice. Values such as forgiveness, articulation of human rights, reconciliation and drive for social justice among others are key and relevant in creating peaceful environment.

Dwelling on values such as forgiveness and peace, the role of two religious' leaders in Nigeria and their contribution towards conflict resolution is worthy of emulation in another context. Pastor Wuye and Imam Mohammed who were affected by religious conflict moved beyond the divisive tendency of conflict (Schmidt et al 2016). Drawing from the similarities between the bible and the Quran, they lived in peace afterwards and jointly establish interfaith mediation centre to help train other in conflict in their communities (Obeng-Mireku 2017).

Similarly, the Christian and Islam councils in Ghana drawing from the values such forgiveness, articulation of the right of all, reconciliation and social justice have worked hard over the years to mediate religiously inspired conflict to ensure peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims. For instance, empirical evidence from this study through the interview shows how the religious leaders of Christian and Muslims came together to mediate a conflictual situation at the Awoshie school. They ensure there is a place of worship for Muslims to promote peaceful co-existence between the two group and to create a congenial atmosphere for effective academic work.

Again, the joint effort of the two council also worked to cool down tempers when tension raged when Muslims girls were asked to remove their hijab for identification pictures for West Africa examination. As noted earlier in this study this led to demonstration by Muslims groups but there was amicable solution through the two councils. This confirms Schmidt et al (2016) assertion that over the year Christian leaders and other religious organizations have worked hard to restore peace in many conflict zones in the world.

This implies that indeed religion does not only provide incentive for tensions and conflict but has rich values that can promote peaceful co-existence in society thereby avoiding conflict. It will therefore be necessary that as Ghanaian are basically religious the security service should include Christians and Muslim clergy in their teams in dealing with conflict in the country.

5.6. Christian-Muslim status in school.

In an intergroup contact situation, equal status between members is a key condition to reduce prejudice and enhance relationship in a group (Novak et al 2011). When members in a group have equal status and there is no hierarchical relationship between groups in the school setting, it creates good condition and congenial atmosphere for teaching and learning (Everett 2013). Finding from this study shows that equal status is vital for members in the learning environment as in the case of Awoshie and Dansoman schools. Pedagogically, teachers and student have relatively warm relationship and even one beyond the classroom.

In a contact situation in the school, authorities in addition to teaching and learning would have to accept students of diverse religious background. Also, the need to understand their spiritual needs as an essential part of their daily lives. Knowing them intimately through the creation of equal opportunities for them to interact with each other will help them know each other better than attaching labels to them and marginalising those in the minority like Muslims and in other situations Christians.

But as posited by Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) it is often difficult to achieve equal status in a contact situation. Indeed, empirical findings from this study shows that achieving equal status between groups is a herculean task. In terms of religious practices in schools in Ghana as in the case of the two school in this study. Equal status between Christian and Muslim student is not the same in all school setting. This is because religious activities in the public schools in Ghana mostly favour Christians and Christianity. From early morning assembly to closing prayers are Christian prayers in most of the schools and as in the case of those in this study.

Religious service on Sunday for those in the boarding schools and special occasion are all in favour of Christians. This makes Muslims student uncomfortable and marginalised as in the case found in this study. In seeking to achieve this equal status it become an issue of struggle between the Muslim student and the school authorities. Meanwhile there is no official rule forbidden them but the Muslim student in Awoshie prevail and have their place of worship. However, they still participate in other Christian activities which authorities said could not be scrapped off.

On the contrary and as noted earlier achieving equal status is difficult and, in some situations, it is practically in possible. Abdool et al (2007) asserted that religiously exclusivist do not make room for other religious group in intergroup relations as they perceive their religion as the only authentic one that should be accepted. In a religiously exclusive school setting providing equal status for religious minority was practically impossible as revealed by the empirical evidence

from this study. The Dansoman school was religiously exclusive and has no space for Muslim and other Christian denomination their setting.

This happens when religious people in comparing their faith with other judge themselves as superior to the others (Unumeri 2009). The missionary school comparatively with their superior attitude want to impart their society with their belief system through education and therefore in their setting, they make no room for any other religious group. Such negative perception manifesting in of one's faith affect intergroup relation, denying the equal status hinders others to fully appreciate their faith.

Public schools in Ghana are state owned and are not bound by any religion. Historically and in terms of population, Christians and Christianity are the dominant religion because of their numbers. They were the first to start formal education and have influence the education system with their beliefs and practices. Muslims who by their number in the minority are marginalised in terms of school religious activities as in the case of mission state owned school where Islamic activities are excluded in the school. Providing equal status for Christian and Muslim in the school for them to feel accepted would provide enough opportunities for interaction even within the various Muslims groups and between them and the Christians to interact on personal intimate levels.

5.6. Intergroup cooperation in school

In the chapter four, I presented finding on Christian and Muslim cooperation at their senior high schools in Awoshie and Dansoman as one that personify intergroup cooperation. Christian and Muslims in the school environment interact both structured as in the case of classroom and in other extracurricular activities like sports and games. During intergroup cooperation in activities people get closer to others they originally do not know and begin to learn about each other. Through their interactions there is a change in perceptions they have about the other prior to their contact.

Contact theory has group cooperation as one key condition that work to reduce prejudice between group. When members work together in group project, they get to know each other (Everett 2013). Additionally, Novak et al (2011) explained that interaction between groups encourages behaviours that decongest negative perceptions groups hold about each other. And in place, encourages positive perception that enhance intergroup relations. Contact through group cooperative works has been prove in many studies. For example, working on data from sport arena among football professional in America and Europe, Wilson (2015) confirmed that

at the end of each season there was significant change in perception between groups of players positively.

Similarly, empirically Christian and Muslim student in this study through the interviews agreed that through group activities such as working together on non-competitive science projects helped them learn about the other groups. The new knowledge about the other disconfirm perception they have prior to their contact and during the contact. In many situations through intergroup cooperation activities negative perception gave way as members learn about each other generating affective ties and friendship was developed between them. When such change in knowledge about the other and change in perception is transferred to other Muslim in the school and the society at large, it will enhance Christian -Muslim relation reduce religious conflict.

Support from Authorities

Following the declaration of human right laws which include religious rights which grants individual their rights to practice their religion in private and in public, many nations including Ghana signed up to the law. Governments of nation states are therefore expected to enforce these laws to be translated into the lives of all citizens. But the development and implementation of these rights values is complex. Many nations are faced with challenges of implement right values in their educational institutions (UNESCO 2011),.

According to the International Religious Freedom Report (2015) there is freedom of religion, and Ghana has fully ratified right to religious freedom as per the nation's constitution. But as in the case of some developed nations like Britain and France and in the African continent South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria, implement the rights values in educational institution is met with many challenges. Evidence from this study shows that even though there are no official laws from the national level supporting Christianity over Islam and vice versa there is no equality in religious practices at the public schools.

However, in many of the public schools in Ghana, Christianity seem to have advantage over Islam in terms of religious practices in the school such as morning worship and prayers. Religion and individual identity are inseparable as such exclusion and inequalities in terms of religion can affect peaceful co-existence by creating tension and in some cases conflict. This is because religion is knitted with people's identity and so denying them opportunity to practice their religion at the school where they spend more than half of the day becomes an infringement on their religious right.

The support of other religious practice in the school over the religious minority group can be influenced by perception of school authorities of the religious minority prior or from the society which is translated into the school. Frier (2005) noted that teachers as cultural worker become agent who carry societal values and perpetuate in the school setting. Therefore, societal attitude towards Islam is what is reflected in the school, the school tend to support dominant religion in the school.

In South Africa for instance, it noted that school principals have allowed their religious belief and practice to influence their administration of their school against religious minorities instead of implementing the constitutional rights of the student (Nitho-Nitho and Neumenhus 2010). In a similar vein, in Kenya, at the beginning of this year there was violent clash between Christians and Muslim over discrimination based on religion by the school administration in Jamhuri High school.

Also, from this study, empirical evidence from the interviews and observation indicate school authorities and not a national official law seemingly supporting Christianity over Islam. This also sparked tension between authorities and Muslim student until an amicable solution in favour of the Muslim minority brought peace in the school in Awoshie school. And after this incident, the school has created enabling environment all groups and managed to remain religiously neutral by giving space to all religious groups in the school and time for after school religious club activities.

In contrast, this is not the case in all the senior high schools in Ghana. Not all public schools are neutral by providing equal status for all religious groups in the school. In Canada for example school are to ensure students with different religious background are accommodated, Zwibel (2012) advocated that school authorities and their rules should not favour one religious group and where one religious line need to be followed as in the case of the Dansoman School in Ghana, the authorities should not make such religious practice punishable in case one decides to stay way in the school. But in the case of the Dansoman school there was no religious neutrality and offenders are punished for staying away from Christian practices in the school. Meanwhile the constitution of Ghana grants religious freedom for all, but the authorities' actions is in direct contrast and a violation of the constitutional rights of their religious minority groups. A key condition in contact that encourage change in perception of Christian majority in this context is been denied and instead the religiously exclusivist values of the Christian group pushed on the Muslim minority nurturing hatred and negative perception towards Christians.

In the view of Abdool et al (2007), the school environment is not for only pedagogical purposes but also a place of where societal values such as respect for one another and peaceful co-existence are taught. But when it becomes a place where segregation along religious line is promoted even with optimal contact it does not help in enhancing relationship between Christians and Muslims. For schools to create enabling environment for all they must avoid imposing one religious' practice on all students with the aim of indoctrinating them. Zwibel (2012) in agreement argue that public schools must not become ground for evangelism and indoctrination in favour of one religion.

The implication is that such negative attitudes will persist in society and eventually erode the beauty of peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims. This is because the knowledge of their right will cause them to use whatever can give them the needed attention as in the case of Awoshie school. School authorities must be made aware of the religious pluralistic nature of the Ghanaian society and the need for it to reflect in the schools. Indeed, not all contact lead to change in attitude toward a negatively perceived group even in the school environment.

Summary

The chapter presented a thematic discussion on Christian -Muslim relation in the senior high schools. The discussion is based on empirical evidence from emerging and in the light of the review literature and the theoretical framework. Christian- Muslim relation at the high school is generally peaceful and cordial. Indeed, in Ghana there is peaceful co-existence between Christian and Muslim student just like the mainstream society. But this peaceful co-existence does not change the negative perception between the two groups hold about each other. Christians perceive Muslims despite their peaceful relations as quarrelsome and violent. The Muslims also perceive Christians as exclusivist who personalised God and look down on their religious minorities. The negative perception at the high school has been the source of some struggles and tensions in some high schools in Ghana between Muslims and Christians. The tensions were due to unequal status given to Christians and Muslims in the school. The unequal situation is influenced by the perception that Christians are in the majority, religious activities in most of the public high school and especially those in this study are Christian activities against Islam and Muslim.

These finding affirm the assertion that not all contact between groups and works out positively to improve attitudes between groups. This is because there are various forms of interaction at the school from classroom activities to extracurricular activities which should work and reduce

negative perception between Christians and Muslims. But this does not work in all context, while it worked well in one context, it could not work so well in other context.

Interestingly in Ghana, there is no law segregating people along religious lines. The constitution of the country supports religious freedom for all citizens. However, its implementation at the schools varies from school to school. While some schools have fully support and remain neutral to all religious groups, other schools support one religion against other religious minority creating unequal relation between the groups. This does not mean that there is conflict in the schools in this study, but what was evident based on the field work is that there is no freedom of religion in all public schools. Thus, such situation can become source of tensions and conflict at the schools if appropriate steps are not taken to address the issues of prayer, place of prayer, religious clothing and the Christian hegemony in many of the schools.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter present conclusion of the study on Christian and Muslim relation in two selected school in Ghana. In this study I focused on exploring condition for Christians and Muslims at the high schools in Ghana. Drawing conclusion, I will reflect and highlight the conditions of Christians and Muslims at the school that provide motivation for religious tensions and conflict. The second part of this chapter suggest what need to be done to avoid religiously motivated tensions and conflict. The part also provides recommendations for future study.

Christian-Muslim relation at the two selected High School can be describe as peaceful confirming what some Ghanaian scholars described as ‘dialogue for life’. This peaceful co-existence is reflected in the daily lives of staff and students at the schools. At the schools, one can find Christians and Muslims students engage in joint school projects like president award scheme and agricultural projects. And among the staff, there is healthy relationship and a fair representation of the two religious’ groups in their organizational chart to ensure their voice are heard in some of the schools.

Yet, it is worth mentioning that their relation is not without negative perception for each other. Muslim perceive Christians as a group of people with superiority complex looking down on another religious minority groups. The Christian also perceive Islam as religion of violence and Muslims in general as a group oriented towards conflict violence. As a result, they are accused of every violent act in the school. From the study, some of these negative perceptions are based on personal experiences through interactions within the school environment and from their communities.

This negative perception sometimes affects their relationship towards each other. Meanwhile religious and moral education is taught at the basic school with the aim of correcting these wrong perceptions and ensure understanding between the two dominant religious group. And at the Senior High School, Religious education is an elective subject for those offering General Arts program. But the knowledge acquired from the subject has not been translated to reduce the negative perception Christian and Muslims have about each other.

This raise the question of the content of the religious and moral education as a subject. The empirical evidence from this study shows that Christian have shallow information about Islam perpetuating the cycle of negativity right from the school to the main society. Muslims on the other hand have knowledge about Christianity but these knowledges also put Christians and Christianity in an awkward position. In the context of the school, these negative perceptions

affect the way Muslims react to Christian activities in the school. Muslims students finds it difficult to conform to the Christian dominated activities in the schools. They demand the need for better condition for religious minorities like Islam. Thus, the need for place of worship for Muslims and their exemption from Christian activities that has dominated public schools in Ghana.

The request made by Muslim students for accommodation of Islamic religious practice in the public schools recently sparked controversies and tension in many public Senior High School schools in Ghana. Evidence from this study confirmed the request for accommodation of Islamic practices in the public school in Awoshie generated tension for some time between the school authorities and the Muslim students. But the timely intervention of the education officers and Islam and Christian councils that led to amicable resolution.

As discussed in chapter five, because of the pluralistic religious environment Christian and religious leaders are visible in the Ghanaian public space. Their visibility in public space is also experienced in the school. In many instances where religious lack of accommodation of religious minority practice generate tension, these leaders are quick to mediate to restore order in the schools as in the case of Awoshie. They do not only wait till conflict situation, but they also periodically visit the schools for religious education. This is mostly experienced in the mission government school where such school have their latent objective of evangelism.

Empirical evidence of this study shows that establishing equal status in school is indeed difficult to achieve. At the school, relationship between teachers and students is relatively equal, but in the case of religious practices in the school, religious minorities are not on the same plain with the religious majority group. Islamic religious practices are not accommodated in the school. A situation which is in contradiction with the constitution of Ghana. Christianity in this school define the rules of the school and does not make room for other religious minorities.

A situation which is worrying and does not reflect the religious pluralistic nature of the Ghanaian society. In the Ghanaian society, Christianity and Islam are the major religion and there is the need for these two to work out to accommodate each other in any environment to support the long history of tolerance and peaceful co-existence between these two religions. But this situation is not prevailing in all public schools. As in the case of Awoshie school where Islam is accommodated, and Christians and Muslims are given equal space and time for religious practices enhancing their peaceful co-existence. Through this some Christian students testified that they have learnt a lot about Islam and vice versa.

It is interesting to note that based on the evidence from this study through cooperative activities for some Muslims and Christian students have helped reduce prejudice they have about each

other. This shows that in the school setting, one of the key ways to reduce negative religious perception between Christians and Muslims is to encourage cooperative curricular and extracurricular activities. During such group activities students get to know each other better as they interact with each other. Such new knowledge corrects prior knowledge they have, and relationship are enhanced as in the case of the students in this study.

However, this does not always hold in all situations as there were instances where experience from such intergroup cooperative activities were not encouraging and rather deepened the negative perception of Christians towards Muslims and as a result accommodating their religious practice has been limited by school rules with the intention of maintaining religious sanctity in the school.

Meanwhile there are no national rules supporting religious segregation in the school. Thus, there is freedom of religion at home and in school per the constitution of the country. But the full implementation of this at the basic school including the High school in practice is a challenge. Christianity and Christian practices dominate religious activities in the schools in this study. And even at the school where equal conditions are created for Christians and Muslims, Christian prayers are said at the morning gathering which is compulsory for all students irrespective of their religious background.

Closing prayers at these schools are also Christian and all students are expected to recite such prayer. Absentee students from such gatherings are punished. A situation which does not depict the religious climate of the country. In the main Ghanaian society, during national gatherings like Independence Day celebration neither Christians nor Muslims are under any obligation to recite a religious prayer. Each religious prayer is offered one after the other. The school as a miniature society should therefore reflect the values of the larger society where Christian - Muslim relation is accommodated and tolerated to advert the tensions recently emanating from the school environment because of Christian hegemony over other Muslims in the public schools.

RECOMMENDATION

Religion and individual's identity are inseparable and in the recognition of this fact International laws have been enacted to ensure people religious rights under any condition and at any place are not unduly violated to ensure peaceful co-existence. Religious conflict as indicated in many studies as mentioned earlier indicate that religious conflict affects lives and property and in the case of the school disrupt academic activities. There is the need therefore to critically examine the causes of such conflict that is gradually creating fear in modern societies and threaten peaceful relation especially between Christians and Muslim at macro (larger society) and micro(school) levels. In the light of the this, this study makes some few recommendations to that will help accommodate people with different religious backgrounds in religious pluralistic schools as in the case of Ghana.

One of the key ways to control and possibly avoid religious tensions and conflict in the schools is that schools and school authorities must be and remain neutral to the various religious groups. Religious right as enshrined in the constitution of Ghana and emphasised by successive presidents must move from policy level to the schools. As there this no national law encouraging segregation of people along religious lines school, the Ghana Education Service must ensure that students religious rights are not violated. This means that school authorities should not promote any dominant religious groups values in the school setting over the minority. To put this into practice, there should be a monitoring team from the Ghana Education Service to periodically check on the religious activities organised in the schools.

In the case of the mission public schools, to create the culture of tolerance and accommodation some of the religious activities should not be compulsory for all students. For instance, Muslims students and other religious minorities should not be forced to attend morning mass in the Catholic schools as they will not participate in the lord's supper and other related activities. Sunday worship must also not be made compulsory for non-Christians in the case of Christians mission schools and Tuesday and Friday worship in the case of Islamic mission schools must be restricted to Muslims and other should join at will. The schools should provide space for Muslims to pray especially in the case of the boarding house schools. This will go a long way to check the activities of notorious students who leave the schools in the guise of worship outside the school.

The pluralistic religious nature of the Ghanaian society will require that the religious and moral education should continue to the High Schools. And since this is not a core subject it should be captured in the social studies which is a core subject for all students. The emphasis of the

syllabus at this level should aim at correcting the negative perceptions of these religions and to educate on the value of tolerance. It must encourage tolerance for religious minorities right from the school to the larger society. By this, the cycle of intolerance which is gradually eroding the beautiful co-existence between Muslim and Christians will be reduced. Also, schools cultural and religious festivals should be brought back, and all religion represented in the school be encouraged to participate during this festival as an additional means of religious people learning about the beliefs and values of other religions. This will help religious people appreciate other religion and to decongest negative perception religious people have natured for each other.

Finally, collaborative learning and group project as proposed by Allport and Everett must be one of the major teaching strategies used at the high school to teach. This will bring students from different cultural and religious backgrounds together. Through such strategies for teaching, students will get to know each other better by understanding their worldview. This will lead to decongestion of negative perception about one another's religion creating good perception about each other's religion.

Future study will undoubtedly continue to explore religious coexistence in general and particularly one between Christian and Muslims at the macro and micro levels such as the school. The reason is that currently Christians and Muslims outnumber every other religious groups in the world. According to Pew survey, their current population would increase to about three trillion by the year 2050. These numbers would also come with coexisting challenges. It therefore demands an ongoing research to handle issues of tolerance and peaceful coexistence in the High School where many of the future leaders are been prepared to handle such issues.

Again, study need to be conducted on how human rights statues are to be implemented in the school by the school authorities to create a friendly learning environment devoid of tensions and conflict in general and most importantly one centred on religion.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1a, Interview Guide

Christian-Muslim Relation in Ghana: A Case Study of Two Selected Senior High Schools in The Greater Accra Region.

This is the interview guide that was used in carrying out the interviews at the schools in Awoshie and Dansoman. Semi-structure face-to-face interview guide.

Interview Guide for student participants.

1. How did you become a Muslim/Christian?
2. Do you have other members of your family who belong to Islam/Christianity?
3. How long have you been in the school?

4. How do you students relate with each other in the school?
5. How do students relate with teachers in the school?
6. What is your personal impression about Christians and Muslims?
7. What do you as an individual know about Quran/ Bible?
8. What does the bible/quoran teach about peace?
9. How many Muslim/Christian friends do you have?
10. How do you feel about being in the same class with Christians/Muslims?
11. What do Christians and Muslims share in common?
12. What is your impression Christian/Muslim relationship in the school?
13. Is there any problem in your relationship with Christian/Muslim in the school?
14. Have you attempted converting any of your friends into your faith? If yes what was your reaction?
15. Have some of your friends also tried to convert you to join their religion?
16. How do you feel having religious group in this school?
17. What challenges do you face in having meetings in this school?
18. Are there meeting places for religious groups in the school?

Interview Guide for Teachers

1. How many students are Christian?
2. How many Muslim students do you have in your school?
3. Do you allow students to engage in religious activities in your school?
4. Does the school rules permit students from different religious background to form their group in the school? Which groups are permitted, and which ones are not?
5. Have Christian /Muslim students formally requested to form a union in the school?
6. Does the school permit students from different religious affiliations to use the school facilities for their meetings?
7. Are students allowed to wear their religious clothing to school? Explore reasons
8. Has there being any problem with the relationship between Christians and Muslims students in this school?
9. If there are, what are the nature of this/ these problems?
10. What has the school done to ensure peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslim students in the school?

11. Are Christians/Muslims allowed to do evangelism in the school? 1

1 2. If yes what form does it take? If no, why?

Appendix 1b Observation Guide

Categories	Descriptive notes	Reflective notes
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Early morning		
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Gatherings		
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School worship		
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Sunday service		
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Facilities for religious		
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Group meetings		
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Group or		
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Collaborative studies		
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