



Role of Religion in Shaping Social Norms in Contemporary Society

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Abstract: Religion plays a crucial role in shaping social norms and influencing community dynamics in various societies around the world including Kenya. Social norms are essential for addressing key societal issues. Social norms on the other hand are the informal rules that everyone shares about how people should behave, supported by expectations and approval or disapproval. Social norms are like a glue that holds society together. These social norms create a shared understanding of what is and what is not acceptable across societies. This paper investigates the role of religion and how it shapes social norms in contemporary society. The study follows Durkheim's Functionalist Theory of Religion. It uses a case study research design, yielding a qualitative approach. The study population was 20 respondents from the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, using a convenient sampling technique. The sample size was determined by saturation method. Saturation in this study was achieved after interviewing 15 respondents from the institution. Data was collected using an in-depth interview guide for primary data and secondary data was obtained through analysis of scholarly articles, journals and online publications. Collected data was analyzed after coding, categorizing it into themes and analyzed thematically using content analysis. The findings in this study show that religion greatly influences social norms, moral standards, and social expectations. The study concludes that society is a complex system of interconnected parts that is driven beliefs. Religion therefore plays a key role in maintaining cohesion and social order in society there by shaping societal behavior.

Keywords: Religion, Social norms, Society, Contemporary society, Role

How to cite this work (APA):

Onsarigo, T. G. (2025). Role of Religion in Shaping Social Norms in Contemporary Society. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 9(4), 700 – 711. <https://doi.org/10.59765/pg84kt>.

1. Introduction

Religion has always played a fundamental role in the formation and governance of human societies. Despite the growing secularization of modern society, religion still has a significant impact on social norms, values, and behavior. Religious beliefs that influence ideas of morality, justice, gender roles, and interpersonal relationships frequently inform social norms, which are the acknowledged

standards of behavior within a group or society (Durkheim, 1912).

Although belief systems and cultural values have become more diverse as a result of modernity and globalization, religion continues to be a crucial institution that helps people and societies understand moral behavior and social responsibility (Giddens, 2009). Religion's continued influence on family dynamics, politics, education, and

conflict resolution highlights how important it is in establishing normative frameworks in the modern world.

Assessing societal cohesiveness, moral consensus, and cultural continuity requires an understanding of how religion shapes social norms. Depending on how its teachings are understood and implemented in societal institutions, religion has the power to both unite and divide people (Ives et al., 2024). Religion has been a pillar of social structures throughout history, offering a moral compass, encouraging communal cohesion, and impacting governance, claims Riviş-Tipei (2023). The study demonstrated how religious beliefs and everyday life were frequently intertwined in ancient societies. Rituals and practices influenced social norms and individual behavior. The study concluded that understanding the historical roots of this connection is important for putting the modern role of religion into context.

Religion can be viewed from a sociological angle as the collection of beliefs, practices, and moral communities that help people connect with the sacred and find meaning in life. This sociological approach to religion does not question whether a particular religion is true or not. Durkheim & Davy (2014), all religions are true in their own fashion; all answer, though in different ways, to the given conditions of human existence. Sociologists are interested in the social aspects of religion on things seen rather than those heard

Social norms are the informal rules that everyone shares about how people should behave, supported by expectations and approval or disapproval. According to Gelfand, Gavrilets & Nunn, (2024), Social norms are the glue that holds society together, yet our knowledge of them remains heavily intellectually trapped within the individual minds. The study found that these social norms create a common understanding of what is acceptable and what is not in all societies. It is concluded that following these norms is essential for a well-functioning society and that these norms act as a bond that keeps society together.

Perry & Perry (2016), the key theme of Contemporary Society is the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial order in today's world. Contemporary society describes the late modern, globalized, digitally connected, and diverse social order in which identities are formed, and institutions are continually negotiated.

Religion plays a vital role in shaping attitudes, values, and behaviors. It's crucial to see how it influences social and cultural norms. According to Afrilsah (2024), religion has significantly impacted ethical values and social standards in various societies. Religious teachings rely on sacred texts and the interpretations of religious leaders. They provide moral guidelines that affect behavior and

relationships. From the Ten Commandments in Judaism and Christianity to the Five Pillars of Islam, spiritual doctrines offer moral direction that tackles important questions of right and wrong, justice, and compassion.

According to Gavrilets et al. (2024), social norms include beliefs about what others do and what they should or shouldn't do. Such norms exist due to a collective belief in their existence, similar to self-fulfilling prophecies. The study concluded that norms differ among families, cultural, ethnic, or religious groups, regions, and countries. These norms are shaped by exposure to various situations, leading to different levels of adherence often described as societal tightness or looseness. 'Tight' cultures have strong norms, low tolerance for deviance, resistance to new ideas, and uniform social behavior. In contrast, 'Loose' cultures display more relaxed norms, greater tolerance, and more varied behaviors.

In the United States, Khalil (2024) believes that values and norms about gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights are often changing in modern society. The study found a notable increase in support for LGBTQ+ rights and gender equality over the past decade. In 2019, 61% of Americans supported same-sex marriage, an increase from just 36% in 2005. The study concluded that today's society is moving toward more inclusive values and norms as part of modern life.

In Europe, Luckmann (2003) states that changes in religion and morality are based on the notion that religion is not merely a temporary phase in human development. The study identifies various social forms of religion and morality, such as archaic societies, early high culture, and functionally differentiated societies. It also suggests that a privatized form of religion is a fourth social form found in Europe. This form is marked by functional specialization and a modern sense of pluralism. While the privatized form lacks a universally accepted model, the situation in Europe includes a mix of different forms along with trends toward fundamentalism and a desire for wholeness.

Schlesinger and Foret (2006) note that the discussion about the role of Christianity in European politics and society has returned strongly. The study established that in a secularized Europe, religion is striving for recognition and a place in public life. The study concluded that religion plays a role in the European society of providing a cultural identity and influence on both resistance to and acceptance of change.

Riviş-Tipei (2023) opines that religious values have been important in shaping cultural norms. Religions influence artistic expressions, moral codes, and interpersonal relationships. They play a key role in defining what is acceptable or taboo within a culture. The research concluded that religious beliefs affect and enrich cultural

practices, values, and how these beliefs are received in society.

Kasa (2025) explored the influence of religious beliefs on historical events and cultural traditions. The study found that religion is a major part of human life. It shapes personal beliefs and moral standards and impacts social structures, political systems, and cultural practices. The study further found that religious beliefs can both bring people together and create conflict in the same measure.

In Asia, according to Cheung et al. (2018), attending religious services and participating in religious activities influence adolescents' civic and social values. The study found that religious engagement had different effects on youth, one of them being shaping social norms. The results in this study suggesting that Western models show a positive relationship between religious engagement and citizenship values may not apply to Asian societies.

In Pakistan, Rashid (2023) noted that religion significantly shapes social attitudes, values, and behaviors, influencing individual beliefs and societal norms. The study explored the complex relationship between religion and social attitudes and found that religious beliefs affect individual practices and shape ethical codes and collective identities.

In India, according to Nath & Phil (2015), religion plays a significant role in human society. Many believe that religion is instinctive. Almost all aspects of society, including economic and political, are influenced and regulated by religion. The study found that religion shapes individual character and molds social life. It creates a sense of social value in people's minds. Religion promotes uniformity in behavior and strengthens social bonds, acting as a tool for stabilizing social order. The study also shows that religion had a strong influence in controlling society during primitive times, and this influence has not completely vanished today. By fostering patriotic feelings in people, religion helps maintain social integration.

According to Idi & Priansyah (2023), the diversity of culture and religion in Indonesia is one of the nation's assets that must be protected and respected. The study established that this diversity is often a source of conflict and tension among religious communities in Indonesia. According to the study's findings, religious moderation can help foster interreligious harmony and lessen social tensions and conflicts between different religions in the nation.

Religion has been crucial in forming societies, political systems, and civilizations, according to Alshehri (2024). Religion still plays a significant role in today's social and political issues. According to the study, religion offers frameworks for addressing contemporary issues like violence and inequality. It also emphasized how religions

have a significant impact on public affairs globally, influencing human rights, democracy, and social justice. This research demonstrates how, by acting as a moral compass for both individuals and societies, religion has frequently influenced cultural norms and values.

Rashid (2023) investigated the connection between social attitudes and religion. He studied how moral frameworks, cultural values, and societal behaviors are shaped by religious institutions, practices, and beliefs. Using sociological perspectives and research, the study showed that societies are significantly affected by religious beliefs. These beliefs often form the basis for legal systems, cultural norms, and social structures.

According to Okolo & Nwanchor (2025), present-day Nigeria has always been influenced by either the Christian or Islamic religions which are seen as the major faiths in the present-day religious landscape. The study found that religions has oftentimes influenced the decision-making process of the nation which has its attendant implications on the society. The study concludes that policies and decision making in Nigeria should not be devoid of religion and religious backing and must always take into cognizance the interest of other religious traditions. The study further concluded that for contemporary society to move forward and reach its expected goal, there should be a clear distinction between the secular and the sacred and matter of secular should be handled without giving room for any religious influence of any such.

In South Africa's diverse religious landscape, Beyers (2021), established that in the role of religion and spirituality in transforming society, Christianity remains dominant at around 85%, and religion still continues to shape cultural norms and social behavior. The study found that religious institutions do influence gender norms in many communities in the country.

According to Khalil (2024), there has been a significant transformation in social values and norms related to racial reconciliation and post-apartheid identity. The study looked at how South Africa started a process of national healing and reconciliation after apartheid. It found that this process included various truth and reconciliation initiatives aimed at addressing historical wrongs. The study points out that these efforts have led to changing social norms. Citizens are now encouraged to confront the past, recognize different racial identities, and strive for a more inclusive national identity. This shift is largely due to the influence of religion and religious leaders in the reconciliation process.

According to the 2014 Census, 39% of Ugandans are Roman Catholic, 32% Anglican, 11% Pentecostal Christian, and 14% Muslim. Other religious groups and

those without a religious affiliation make up 5%. Agnostics and atheists combined are only 0.2%. This shows that over 99% of Ugandans belong to some religious group. These statistics highlight the significant role of religion in the values of the country. The study established that historical role of religion in shaping the governance of the country needs to be understood in the context that politics and religion are intricately infused and entangled in such a way that none can do without the other (Ssentongo, 2022).

According to Murungi et al. (2022), religion plays a key role on the use of HIV/AIDS prevention strategies among young people. The study found that religious leaders can help in HIV/AIDS prevention among young people in the Lira district. This means that religious leaders should be involved in HIV prevention programs designed to stop new infections among young people.

According to Mrutu (2023), Tanzania has a varied religious population, based on the 2020 Pew Forum survey, the religious composition in Tanzania is estimated at approximately 63% of the population identifying as Christian, 34% as Muslim and approximately 5% of the population practices other religions. These figures show that Christianity is the largest religious group in Tanzania, followed by Islam. Churches and mosques frequently function as community hubs offering moral counseling, healthcare, and education. They support the social norms of elder respect and community responsibility. The study also discovered that in recent years, religious organizations have drawn increased attention for their contributions to conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The 2004-founded Interfaith Standing Committee for Muslims and Christians was highlighted. By planning workshops and other activities aimed at fostering peace and reconciliation in the nation, this committee hopes to increase communication and understanding between the two groups.

According to Kenga (2016), Muslims comprise 11% of Kenya's population, while Christians comprise approximately 83%. The remaining 4% are made up of various religions, including Buddhism, Baha'i, Hinduism, and traditional African beliefs. Furthermore, 2% of people say they have no religious affiliation. These groups have formed organizations like the National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCCK), the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM), and the Hindu Council of Kenya (HCK) to represent their interests in various forums. As the leading religion, Christianity significantly shapes social norms and influences the country's politics. In times of political crisis, religion plays an important role in condemning social marginalization and political repression. Politically, religion can influence which party an individual supports or campaigns for.

According to Simiyu & Stephen (2021), the biggest challenge in education for moral and religious values in Kenya today is living a virtuous life. Drawing from Aristotle, it is important to engage children with regular training in virtue within a structured educational system. The study found that education plays a key role in guiding the youth to become responsible citizens who can help with the economic, social, and political development of the country. This study aimed to examine how religion shapes social norms in today's society, as it is believed that the educational system in Kenya focuses on providing Religious Education in institutions set up or sponsored by mainstream religions. This study aimed at examining the role of religion in shaping social norms in the contemporary society.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Religion has played an important role in shaping the moral foundation and social norms of societies around the world, including Kenya. Religion continues to be a great influence in the daily practices of most Kenyan societies. Despite this influence, there is still doubt on the kind of influence that religion exerts in the contemporary society in Kenya.

According to Khalil (2024), the role of religion in shaping social values, norms, and identities in different societies is complex and continually changing. The relationship between religious beliefs, practices, and secular ideas has significant effects on both individual and group identities, as well as social unity.

According to Riviş-Tipei (2023), it is undeniable that societies have undergone rapid transformations associated with technological advancements, globalization, and cultural shifts giving rise to questions on how religion's traditional role will navigate the complexities of the modern society. Despite these gaps in literature, there is still need to understand the role of religion in shaping the social norms in the contemporary society therefore this study.

1.1.2. Theoretical review

This study used the Structural Functionalism theory based on the ideas of Herbert Spencer (1820–1903). The theory compares society to a living organism. Various institutions, like government, education, and religion, function-like organs that work together to keep society stable. Emile Durkheim built on this theory by highlighting that society is a system of connected parts held together by shared values and norms, which he called "social facts." He showed the impact of these social forces through his study of suicide. He demonstrated how social ties and religious affiliation affected suicide rates.

Later, Robert K. Merton refined functionalism by distinguishing between manifest functions (intended outcomes), latent functions (unintended outcomes), and dysfunctions (harmful consequences). He used education as an example to show how social processes can serve multiple roles in society. This theory helps explain the important role of religious beliefs, such as Christianity and Islam, in the lives of Kenyans through socialization and social placement, which in turn shape their social norms. It also clarifies how disruptions in religion and religious beliefs in Kenya can affect the political landscape since religion and politics are interconnected.

2. Literature Review

Religion affects every part of human life, including politics, social interactions, culture, and the economy. Chikodi Josiah (2021) notes that religion serves as a key tool for social control over individuals and society. It helps promote peace and security while reducing youth militancy. Andrighetto and Vriens (2022) explain that social rules guiding behavior have a long history in stable societies. Their study found that social norms can lead to changes in behavior. For instance, the spread of these norms played a crucial role in reducing smoking in public, increasing eco-friendly habits, changing food consumption behaviors, and encouraging social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers concluded that social norms have specific features that make them effective in addressing collective action issues. They greatly enhance how predictable people's behavior is, enabling better social coordination. Social norms are vital for social life.

According to Zhang et al. (2023), human societies have gone through significant sociocultural changes due to globalization. The study found that social norms are seen as the common values, expectations, and beliefs held by most members of a group or society. To create and maintain a stable society, humans have developed many social norms. These norms play a crucial role in guiding individual and group behaviors on a small scale and in promoting social order and cooperation on a larger scale. The study concluded that social norms serve as the unique bond within human societies. People tend to follow these norms to meet mutual expectations in their social groups.

Hasan and Juhannis (2024) assert that it is crucial to encourage religious moderation in the classroom. The study underlined that education is crucial in forming students' personalities and attitudes in addition to imparting academic knowledge. It made clear how urgent intolerance resulting from religious differences in schools needs to be addressed. Students may feel excluded and find it difficult

to focus on their studies when they encounter prejudice because of their religion.

The study came to the conclusion that schools can become safe places for all students to grow and learn without fear of discrimination, especially in today's interconnected world, by recognizing the significance of combating intolerance, fostering an inclusive environment, and teaching tolerance from an early age. The study also noted that the emergence of radical organizations that use international platforms to spread religious extremism is a result of globalization. Social media and the internet are significant components of globalization that facilitate the rapid dissemination of radical ideas. Conflict and mistrust with religious groups may result from this shift in how people view other religions.

In today's society, religion still has a big influence on social norms. In contemporary society, religions function as a source of cultural identity and a moral compass, claim Grillo, Van Klinken, and Ndzovu (2019). According to the study, both Islamic mosques and Christian churches provide advice on appropriate conduct regarding community duties, dress codes, gender roles, family life, and sexuality. Sermons, religious instruction, and outreach initiatives frequently serve to reinforce these standards, which have an impact on public perceptions as well as individual behavior. Religious leaders continue to have influence in public debates and are regularly consulted on social issues like family dissolution, youth behavior, and corruption, even in the face of modernization and the rise of secularism.

According to Wangila (2023), tensions can occasionally arise from the interplay between religion and shifting social values, particularly among younger, urban populations. These groups are increasingly exposed to global ideas that may challenge traditional norms. The study identified religion as a key factor in regulating and legitimizing social behavior in Kenya. It concluded that the influence of religion on culture in Kenya is undeniable. Being Kenyan traditionally means being religious; being African also means being religious. This includes participating in the religious rituals of one's society and respecting the values and beliefs of your community. Therefore, the idea that to be African is "notoriously religious" holds true, as religion deeply influences everyday life.

According to Simiyu and Stephen (2021), the biggest challenge today is living a virtuous life. The study found that education plays a crucial role in guiding the young to become responsible citizens. These citizens contribute to the economic, social, and political development of the state. In Kenya, the educational system has concentrated on offering Religious Education for major religions like Christianity and Islam and Hinduism to cultivate sound

morals and religious values. The study concluded that religious education shapes social norms and moral beliefs. These values can be centered not just in schools but also promoted by other influences, including religion.

3. Methodology

This study used two research designs; desk top and case study research designs. A case study tells a unique, special, or interesting story about individuals, organizations, processes, programs, neighborhoods, institutions, or events (Yin, 2003). This approach was chosen because it reveals how religion shapes social norms in contemporary society. The case study design is suitable in this study since there is a compelling story to tell about religion and its role in society. Desktop research design was also adopted as this is the process of gathering and analyzing existing data from secondary sources, like reports, articles, and online sources

so as to gain a broad understanding of a topic before conducting primary research.

The target population

The target population for this study was 20 respondents drawn from among the students at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. The inclusion criteria were based on the willingness to express the views on the role of religion and the availability due to time constraints.

The sample size

The sample size for this study was determined by saturation method. Data saturation according to Ahmed (2025), is a cornerstone concept in qualitative research, ensuring that data collection ceases once no new themes, insights, or patterns emerge. In this study, saturation was achieved after interviewing 15 respondents

Table 1: Sample distribution

RESPONDENTS	No
Student leadership (CUEASU)	5
Sisters	5
Fathers	5
Total	15

Source; researcher,2025

Total population sampling (census method) was used because there were few respondents. Secondary data came from online sources, journals, and articles and the data sampled was between 2000-2025 which speaks to the topic of study. Primary data was collected through face-to-face interviews and one focus group discussion with five participants. The research data was analyzed after it was transcribed, coded, grouped into themes, and analyzed thematically using content analysis.

Secondary data was analyzed after determining the trustworthiness, reliability, and adequacy of the sources for the data. The researcher then cleaned and organized the data for consistency, as well as noting any limitations of the dataset. The researcher finally used the analytic method to assess the findings.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results from the data collected through face-to-face interviews, along with secondary data from various published sources. The collected data was

coded and analyzed thematically. In terms of socio-demographic information, most respondents were pursuing undergraduate degrees in the faculty of arts, which included some staff members from the philosophy department. Their religion was based on two categories: Christian Catholics and Muslims. Most respondents were male, and many identified as Catholic Christians.

On the Secondary data findings, this study looked at research articles published between 2020 and 2025. It focused on those that used qualitative secondary data analysis. The study assessed the context, purpose, and methods related to how religion influences social norms in contemporary society. Implications of the findings are herein below discussed.

4.1 The role of religion in society

The interviews revealed that religion plays a crucial role at every stage of life. Most respondents believed that despite extensive research on how religion shapes social norms in modern society, there is still a gap that only the gospel can fill. One respondent shared this perspective:

"Most churchgoers attend because they grew up in religious families and don't want to disappoint their parents. So, they follow the rules to avoid upsetting their parents."

This finding matches a study by Khalil (2024) that looks at how religion and secularism affect social values, norms, and identities in different societies and communities. It offers important insights into the connection between religious beliefs and conservative social values.

Another respondent had a different viewpoint, stating that;
" non-adherence is not punishable since digitalization and globalization have affected the complex relationship between religious beliefs and social norms. Many religions now offer online sermons and services"

This insight highlights the role of digitalization and presents a different context. Khalil (2024), citing Li and Sharma (2020), explored how religion influences environmental attitudes in several countries. To address the geographical research gap, future studies should look at the differences in environmental awareness within and among religious groups across various global regions.

Most respondents shared their views on the roles of religion and how it varies around the world. One staff member stated that;

"Religion, whether Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, or even traditional beliefs in Kenya, plays a role in social control. He mentioned that religion effectively manages social behavior and promotes good habits while discouraging bad ones. It gives society a sense of shared values. Religion influences the way its followers think, make decisions, express their tastes, form opinions, develop habits, and exercise their freedom"

Another respondent discussed the protective aspects of religion. She said;

"It helps people cope with anxiety and aggression. For us Gen Zs, school and life after graduation can be filled with uncertainty, a sense of helplessness, and insecurity. Our faith, rooted in religion, provides reassurance in these challenging times. Thus, religion offers emotional, spiritual, and material support during stress and hardship"

This supports the teachings in Van Der Horst's (2019) book on how the poor are blessed. It explains that the impoverished should receive help from the wealthy, stressing that those affected by natural disasters or wars deserve aid and that their lives should be respected as sacred. Peaceful coexistence in society is crucial. Most respondents agreed that religion has the power to reform non-believers. One respondent pointed out that;

"Religion can call sinners to repent and help them reintegrate into society. She added that religion addresses fundamental issues in human life that prevent people from acting in morally and socially accepted ways. In this sense, religion helps lift people out of despair and rebuild their confidence".

In a focused group, most participants agreed that religion can foster social solidarity and friendships. One participant said,

"When the church condemned the government's atrocities, the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB) spoke in unison against the government. This shows that religion, specifically the church, plays a powerful role in uniting its members."

This finding aligns with a study by Rashid (2023), which found that nearly all major social institutions have emerged from religion. Religion regulates societal life by creating a structure for its members to coexist. It encourages solidarity, consensus, harmony, cooperation, unity, stability, security, and peaceful living.

Another respondent in the focus group had a different view. She said,

"Religious institutions have historically been key in shaping individuals' beliefs, behaviors, and values, especially concerning gender. They not only teach religious concepts but also reinforce societal norms related to gender."

This observation aligns with a study by Ali (2023) that found religious rituals, practices, and communal gatherings often convey appropriate behavior for men and women.

Most respondents shared the belief that religion can promote social change. One respondent said,

"Today in our country, the church and the youth are the loudest voices against the government. No politicians are allowed in the pulpit. This started in the Catholic Church, then the Anglican Church, and now almost all churches keep politics out. This by itself is change."

Another respondent added that, in addition to fostering social change, religion acts as a form of "social glue." She continued,

"Religion serves as a bond that unites society. It strengthens the core beliefs and values of the community and emphasizes cohesion among its members to live in unity and peace."

This finding supports the study by Hervieu-Léger (2006), which states that religion plays a role in building social cohesion. Hervieu-Léger argues that with the expansion of the European Union on the horizon, and during a time when a strong European voice is needed on the global stage, it is important to examine religion's role in fostering social unity and developing a European identity. The study shows

that the issue of religion affects many areas beyond just religion itself.

Majority of the respondents were of the view that religion plays a key role in moral guidance and values. One of the respondents had this to say;

“For me, religion has always been a compass. It teaches us right from wrong, things like being honest, treating others kindly, and helping those in need. These values guide how I live and interact with others in and out of school

Another respondent added and said;

As a Christian, my decisions are based on Biblical principles. Whether it's in my work or family life, religion influences how I behave and what I consider morally acceptable.

This finding is true to a study by Elsayed et al. (2023) which opines that religion can be understood as a system of beliefs, practices, and values that relate to the nature of existence and the universe, and that often involve a belief in one or more supernatural or divine entities. Different religions have various beliefs, practices, and values. There is also a lot of diversity within each religion. The study showed that many religions offer a set of moral and ethical principles. These principles guide behavior and decision-making. They help individuals deal with complex ethical issues and make choices that match their values.

All the respondents were in agreement that religion fosters Social Cohesion. One of the respondents had this to say;

Our mosque brings people together. It doesn't matter if you're rich or poor there's a sense of unity and brotherhood. That sense of belonging is something we need more of in today's world.

He went on to say;

Here in school for instance, we have been given a space to conduct our prayers, yet it is a Christian institution. When a Muslim student is admitted to the institution, we all welcome him and show him the place to pray from and this bring cohesion among us.

Another respondent had this to say;

Religion helps bind us. Every Sunday and Thursday we go for mass here in school, we pray, we talk it's more than spiritual; it's social support.

Another respondent had this to say;

Religion motivates me to stand up for others. I believe my faith commands me to fight for the rights of the poor and oppressed.

On Psychological Well-being, majority of the respondents were in agreement that religion comes in handy in times of need. One of them said;

My faith gives me strength during difficult times. When I lost my job, it was prayer that kept me going and gave me hope.

These findings are true to a study by Riviş-Tipei (2023), which views religion's impact on society as broadly positive particularly in parts of Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

4.2 Role of religion in shaping social norms in contemporary society

On the secondary findings, the researcher ensured that the information collected was what the document was talking to. According to Johnston (2014) it is vital for the secondary researcher to have access to adequate documentation from the primary research, including protocols and procedures followed in the collection of the data.

In this study, the researcher acknowledged the primary method of data collection, and the secondary data below was through; the survey instruments and published articles and journals were consulted. The secondary data was collected for the articles, books, journals and online publications of not more than five years old. The findings are as follows;

Rashid (2023) studied the role of religion in shaping social attitudes and values. He found that religion still significantly influences social norms in the contemporary society, even with the rise of secularism and individualism in many parts of the world. The study also showed that there is a connection between religion and modernity that goes beyond belief and practice. Social norms and values are impacted by this relationship. According to the study's findings, people from different religious backgrounds coexist in the diverse cultural landscape that modernity has produced. This research implies that religion promotes harmony.

Khalil (2024) investigated how religion and secularism influenced Egyptian social norms, identities, and values. He proved that religion has always played a significant role in forming social norms and practices, providing a sense of identity and belonging, and influencing people's moral and ethical beliefs. Many people all across the world have found solace, direction, and inspiration in religion.

Religion is a potent force in tackling modern social issues, such as poverty, inequality, and human rights, according to Alshehri's (2024) study on the role of religion in addressing contemporary social and political issues. Numerous religious institutions take the lead in initiatives to provide social services and combat poverty. For instance, religious organizations such as the Salvation Army and Catholic Charities offer food, shelter, and assistance to underprivileged communities. They demonstrate a dedication to social justice grounded in their faith. Religion

can foster peace and harmony, but it can also occasionally sow discord among its radical adherents. Religion has a big impact on political views and governance.

Religious leaders and organizations have a significant influence on public policy and political decisions in many nations. The Religious Right has been instrumental in influencing conservative policies in the US regarding marriage, abortion, and education. This group, which is composed of conservative Catholics and evangelical Christians, has influenced legislation and mobilized voters, underscoring the role of religion in politics. By emphasizing compassion, forgiveness, and the pursuit of peace, many religious traditions provide strategies for resolving disputes. Buddhist teachings, for instance, promote compassion and mindfulness when handling interpersonal disputes. Comparably, the Quaker tradition encourages communication and nonviolence as means of settling disputes.

In their study on how religion shapes moral values and ethics among young people in Athens, Greece, Elsayed, Lestari, and Brougham (2023) found that religions offer a set of moral and ethical principles that direct behavior and decision-making, assisting people in navigating difficult moral dilemmas and coming to morally sound decisions. Religion shapes young people's moral values. For young people, religion offers a caring and supportive environment as well as direction and assistance in navigating difficult moral and ethical dilemmas.

Islamic religious education is crucial in forming children's character in today's society, according to Irpan & Sain's (2024) study, *The Crucial Role of Islamic Religious Education in Shaping Children's Character*. The purpose of this study was to investigate the potential effects of Islamic education on children's moral and spiritual growth. It required a thorough examination that took into account both spiritual and psychological perspectives. The results demonstrate how Islamic education fosters children's spiritual awareness, emotional fortitude, and ethical strength. These qualities are essential for facing life's challenges with integrity and purpose. The study also found that Islamic education encourages moral reasoning, empathy, and self-control in children while fostering a deep sense of spiritual connection and personal growth.

Wilk-Mhagama (2022), Tanzania's cultural, ethnic, and linguistic variety goes along with religious diversity. The relationships between different religions and between religion and politics are complex. These relationships occur at both the individual and social levels. The study found that religious groups have influenced almost every part of Tanzanian society by addressing various development issues in the country. Among these groups are interfaith organizations that have improved their communities' welfare. They began with education and

health but later expanded into areas like conflict resolution, public health, poverty reduction, and civic and voter education. Today, interfaith organizations are also addressing many challenges related to women's political, social, and economic equality, which is seen as a crucial aspect of development.

Msoka (2013) in the study when Religion Becomes a Source of Conflict established that the social functions of religion in a society are well known in the academia and policy making circles, and thus it is expected that the society would embrace them. The study established that religions are meant to not only bring people together but also motivate believers to keep going and work hard to reach their goals. Religion is also expected to improve the mindset of the general population and help them live healthy social lives. In Tanzania, a new reality regarding inter-faith relations is emerging. Recently, the relationship between Christians and Muslims has faced setbacks in inter-faith tolerance, creating a new trajectory.

Edward, Athanansio & Momanyi (2025) on the adoption of Positive Spirituality and Religiosity to Strengthen the Well-being of Students in Universities in Uganda established that the intersection of positive psychology, spirituality, and religiosity in enhancing the well-being of university students in Uganda is a welcomed move. The study explored positive psychology interventions; strategies which are aimed at enhancing positive emotions, cognitions and happiness among students in higher education institutions through religiosity. The book concludes by outlining the implications for clinicians and practitioners in higher education, emphasizing the need for supportive environments that foster spiritual well-being.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study after reviewing literature and analysis of the interview findings, affirms the enduring significance of religion as a central pillar in shaping social norms, moral values, and individual behaviors in contemporary societies. Religion still serves as a moral compass, promotes community identity, and aids in the development of ethical frameworks in spite of the growing influence of individualism and secularism.

This conclusion is supported by research by Rashid (2023), Khalil (2024), and Alshehri (2024), which shows that religion actively participates in sociopolitical issues, fosters peace and unity, and organizes efforts toward social justice in addition to meeting spiritual needs. Religion's versatility as a social force and a personal guide shows how relevant and adaptive it is in a world that is changing quickly. Additionally, the results of research done in a variety of sociocultural contexts—from Egypt to Greece

and Islamic communities showcase the significant influence that religious institutions and teachings have on young people's character development, ethical reasoning, and growth.

Irpan & Sain (2024) and Elsayed et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of religious education in forming young people's moral and spiritual foundations by encouraging self-control, empathy, and resilience. The idea that religion is still a potent force for socialization and change is supported by the secondary data examined in this study. Therefore, recognizing and incorporating religious values into current discussions about governance, education, and social development can provide comprehensive and culturally sensitive solutions to societal issues.

According to Emile Durkheim's theory, religion serves as a source of moral principles and a collective conscience. It encourages appropriate behavior and assists people in embracing society's norms. Religion continues to play a vital role in identity, development, and governance in many African societies. Understanding the complex role of religion is important for policymakers, educators, and community leaders.

From the study findings herein, it is recommended that the stakeholders in education and community members should encourage religious activities in learning institutions but also censor the social institutions in order to avoid exposing youth to programmes that erode their moral values.

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