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Multi Religious Activities and its Influence on Campus Security in Selected Colleges of Education in Kogi State, Nigeria

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Highlights:

Revealed that multiple religious organisations are active within the Colleges of Education in Kogi State, but their independent operations often foster competition and tension rather than collaboration.

Call attention on religious freedom as constitutionally guaranteed, unchecked rivalry among groups has sometimes led to conflict, threatening campus peace, security, and institutional welfare.

Suggests that management should promote inter-faith programmes, strengthen conflict-mediation, early-warning systems, and implement policies that encourage cooperation among religious communities for positive institutional development.

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Abstract: Higher institutions in Nigeria are becoming replete with diverse religious activities, driven by a growing number of religious organisations operating within the various campuses. While the authorities of these institutions are to uphold the constitutionally guaranteed religious freedom, there is also a need to uphold the peace and security of these campuses, which are themselves prerequisites for teaching and learning. Available literature shows that tertiary institutions in Nigeria have at various times been forced to close, with individual and institutional property destroyed, because of religious intolerance. This study examines three Colleges of Education in Kogi State Nigeria; Federal College of Education Okene, Kogi State College of Education Mopa, and Kogi State College of Education Ankpa: to determine how the prevalence of diverse religious activities has affected students' and staff's perceptions of peace, security and overall institutional welfare. The study employs a descriptive survey design; a sample of 190 respondents was drawn from the three institutions using a multi-stage, stratified sampling procedure (stratified by sex, religious affiliation, students and institutions). Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, mean scores and ranking. Findings show that various religious organisations and their activities are available on the campuses, but their positive influence is limited because they largely operate independently, with attendant competition and rivalry that breed tension. The study recommends that College managements encourage inter-faith programmes, prioritise the conflict-mediation and early-warning measures and operate policies that bring religious communities together for the institutions' positive development.

Keywords*:* Multi-religious activities; Campus security; Interfaith relations; Colleges of Education

Introduction

Campus environments of tertiary educational institutions have traditionally been hubs of intellectual exchange, cultural diversity, and social interaction, attracting students from varied ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. In contemporary higher education contexts, several religious organisations have dominated school campuses, carrying out religious activities; prominent among these are Christianity and Islam. Religion, as a fundamental dimension of human identity and social organisation, plays a significant role in shaping values, interpersonal relationships, and community participation among students. Ibrahim and Abdulrahman (2022) add that in Nigerian higher institutions, where plurality among religious adherents, predominantly Christianity, Islam, and indigenous faiths is extensive, religious activities are not merely spiritual practices but also social institutions that inform students' worldviews and

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behavioural patterns. In Colleges of Education particularly, multi-religious activities manifest through formal worship services, inter-faith dialogues, religious student unions, and informal gatherings. These activities, while nurturing spiritual growth and mutual support, intersect with broader social dynamics that influence the daily rhythms of campus life.

According to Dilger and Schulz (2013), the expansion of religious engagement in educational institutions reflects the continuing significance of religion in African societies. Christian and Muslim religious organisations, in particular, have maintained and expanded their involvement in educational settings, creating spaces in which individuals from these religious backgrounds interact and negotiate religious differences. Writing on the psychology of multi-religious practices on school campuses, Owusu-Agyeman and Pillay (2023) note that religious participation on campus can provide students with opportunities for social interaction, psychological coping, ethical reflection and a sense of belonging, particularly where institutions promote religious diversity and freedom of religious expression. It also fosters spiritual development among young people pursuing academic achievements. However, the simultaneous coexistence of multiple faith systems in a confined space like the Colleges of Education also raise complex questions about inter-group relations, power hierarchies, and collective security.

Nigeria is a deeply religious and multi-faith country, primarily divided between Christianity, Islam and the indigenous African Traditional Religions. In most Nigerian educational institutions, particularly Colleges of Education, religious traditions are dominated by Christianity and Islam, with a minimal presence of other traditions. Through their teachings and practices, these religious groups are meant to serve as agents of positive change in the moral and social order of the academic environment. However, the growing number of religious activities on campuses, and the attendant competitions and rivalries, have become a matter of concern: the institutional harmony required for academic excellence now coexists with vulnerability to discord and chaos. In these higher-education spaces, religion is no longer isolated from socio-political engagement; it shapes leadership formation, particularly during Student Union Government elections, peer-group activities, and informal governance structures that bear on students' sense of safety and institutional order.

Religious freedom is a fundamental human right that permits individuals to adopt, practise, express, change, or reject a religion or belief without coercion, intimidation, discrimination, or persecution. In Nigeria, this right also permits religious communities to establish places of worship, organise activities, teach their beliefs, and participate in public life, subject to lawful provisions protecting public order, health, morality, and the rights of others (Meje & Ujummadu, 2026). Consequently, religious organizations and activities are common within tertiary institutions, including Universities, Polytechnics, and Colleges of Education. Despite the constitutional protection of religious freedom, religious tensions have periodically threatened life, property, psychological well-being, and educational stability. Oyeleye and Belo (2022) observed that religious crises have hindered efforts to develop a stable educational system because some Nigerian higher institutions have experienced conflicts arising from religious hostility. Daniel, Ajetumobi and Ajayi (2021) reported a confrontation between Muslim and Christian students at the University of Ibadan in May 1986 following the burning of a religious symbol. Although no death occurred, property was damaged,

psychological distress was reported, and the institution temporarily closed to prevent further confrontation.

Nasidi (2023) documented another incident at Bayero University, Kano, in 1996, when Muslim Eid prayers coincided with Christian worship in a nearby lecture theatre. The reported interference of Christian music with Muslim prayers created tension and almost resulted in confrontation. Nasidi (2023) further associated recurring incidents with perceived differences in institutional standing between the two faiths, although this interpretation represents a researcher's account of a contested institutional history.

Asamu (2010) identified 30 instances of Christian-Muslim religious violence in Nigeria between 1980 and 2006, including incidents at the College of Education, Kafanchan, in 1987 and Kaduna Polytechnic in 1988. Agbo, Yaro and Ayuba (2019) also reported a religiously influenced clash during a Student Union Government election at Federal College of Education, Zaria, which resulted in injuries and reported deaths. More recently, the National Human Rights Commission (2022) documented the killing of Deborah Samuel Yakubu, a student of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto, in May 2022 following an allegation of blasphemy. The incident demonstrates the potential consequences of religious intolerance for campus safety and academic continuity. Recent empirical research has increasingly employed inferential statistics. Akapo, Akeusola, Shekoni and Amida (2026), studying 200 respondents in Lagos State, used descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA and multiple regression to examine interfaith relationships and found significant differences in tolerance and trust across religious groups. Similarly, Otuenu (2011) and Agbo (2019), studying NCE students in Kaduna State, employed independent-samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA to examine demographic differences. These studies provide methodological support for examining differences across sex, religious affiliation, student status, and institutional context in the present study.

International evidence also emphasises structured engagement. Aune *et al*. (2025), using longitudinal data from 1,000 UK university students, found that positive engagement with religious diversity was associated with perceived campus diversity, safe spaces for spiritual expression, and structured encounters that challenged assumptions. Conversely, experiences of religious insensitivity or coercion were associated with declining pluralism. This suggests that religious activities alone may not reduce campus tension unless institutions deliberately promote constructive interfaith interaction. In the present Nigerian economic situation, where funding of educational programmes is already a significant burden on governments at various levels, the added risk of campus destruction arising from religious crises places further strain on institutional management and security personnel; resources that should improve teaching and learning facilities are instead diverted into crisis management. Compounding this, Colleges of Education in Nigeria face a peculiar enrolment challenge: while Universities and Polytechnics register steadily growing student numbers, the Colleges of Education have faced a dearth of applicants, to the point that many now introduce incentives to attract students. A campus perceived as religiously hostile or discriminatory would therefore become even less attractive to prospective students, compounding an already difficult situation. Despite this reality, there is limited empirical research specifically examining how multi-religious activities intersect with campus security dynamics within the Colleges of studies. Thus, the present study situates itself within these intersecting academic and practical concerns, aiming to generate

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empirical insight into the dynamics of multi-religious activities and their implications for campus security at Colleges of Education in Kogi State.

Research Questions

1. What types of multi-religious activities exist in the Colleges of Education?

2. How do multi-religious activities influence students' perception of campus security in the Colleges of Education?

3. To what extent do multi-religious activities contribute to harmony among students in the Colleges of Education?

4. What are the security challenges associated with multi-religious activities in the Colleges of Education?

5. What measures can be adopted to ensure that multi-religious activities promote peaceful coexistence and campus security in the Colleges of Education?

Ethical Clearance

This research was conducted ethically as the rights and welfare of participants were protected. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection; explaining the nature and duration of the research and anonymity of the respondents was strictly maintained. The research poses no physical, psychological or social harm to any of the participants.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to examine the influence of multi-religious activities on campus security in three Colleges of Education in Kogi State: Federal College of Education, Okene; Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa; and Kogi State College of Education, Mopa. The design enabled collection of students' perceptions concerning the nature of religious activities, their effects on conduct and peaceful coexistence, associated security challenges, and possible regulatory measures. The study therefore assessed perceived influence rather than independently verified security records. A multi-stage sampling procedure produced 190 respondents: 64 from Federal College of Education, Okene, 64 from Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa, and 62 from Kogi State College of Education, Mopa. Stratified sampling ensured representation by sex, religious affiliation, and student status, followed by random selection within the identified strata.

Data were collected using a structured four-point Likert questionnaire covering types of multi-religious activities, perceived influence on campus security, contributions to harmony, security challenges, and measures for effective regulation. Data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and rankings. The Likert scale was scored as Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, and Strongly Disagree = 1, with mean-score interpretations of 3.50–4.00 = High, 2.50–3.49 = Moderate, 1.50–2.49 = Some, and 1.00–1.49 = Little. Consistent with Otuenu (2011), Agbo (2019), and Akapo *et al*. (2026), chi-square may be used for categorical variables, while independent-samples t-tests or one-way ANOVA may examine differences in mean scores across relevant groups. The questionnaire was validated for face content validity by experts in Religious studies education. Additionally, independent t-test was used to compare perceptions between different religions. Reliability was assessed using Cronbanch’s Alpha yielding a coefficient of 0.85.

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Results

The research questions were addressed to determine the influence of multi-religious activities on campus security in the selected Colleges of Education in Kogi State. The results of the data analysis are presented in Tables 1–6.

Demographic Information

Table 1: Demographic information (N = 190)

Demographic Variables	Category	FCE, Okene (64)	COE Ankpa (64)	COE Mopa (62)	Total (%)
Sex	Male	30	36	33	**99 (52.11%)**
	Female	34	28	29	**91 (47.89%)**
Religion	Christians	30	32	28	**90 (47.37%)**
	Muslims	30	30	26	**86 (45.26%)**
	Traditionalists	04	02	08	**14 (07.37%)**

Table 1 shows gender and religious affiliation of the respondents. For gender distribution, the male shows 52. 11% and female 47.89%, indicating a fairly balanced gender representation as the difference is only 4.22%. The Christians are represented by 47.37% while Muslims are represented by 45. 26% and Traditionalists is 07.37% indicating an almost parity between Christians and Muslims, although there are traditionalists who are in the minority. Thus, the sample is evenly distributed across the institutions.

Research Question 1: Types of Multi-Religious Activities

Table 2: Types of multi-religious activities existing in Colleges of Education (N = 190)

S/N	Multi-religious Activity Type	Available (%)	Unavailable (%)	No Response (%)
i	Inter-faith dialogue & seminar	78.95	7.89	13.16
ii	Worship services	85.79	4.74	9.47
iii	Outreach & evangelism	48.79	11.58	42.63
iv	Prayer meeting & fellowship	95.26	1.58	3.16
v	Crisis response & peace-building	93.68	3.68	2.63
vi	Leadership & training programme	50.52	33.16	16.32
vii	Academic & social collaboration	45.79	14.74	39.47
viii	Community service	30.53	34.74	34.74
ix	Religious week & festival	36.84	42.11	21.05

Table 2 shows that multi-religious activities exist in Colleges of Education in Kogi State, although their prevalence differs. Prayer meetings and fellowships were most common (95.26%), followed by crisis response and peace-building (93.68%), worship services (85.79%), and interfaith dialogue and seminars (78.95%). Leadership

training, outreach/evangelism, and academic/social collaboration occurred moderately. Religious festivals (36.84%) and community service (30.53%) were least reported. The relatively high non-response rates for some activities suggest differences in respondents' awareness, exposure, or interpretation of multi-religious activities; the findings therefore reflect perceived availability rather than a comprehensive institutional inventory.

Research Question 2: Influence on Campus Security

Table 3: Students' perception of the influence of multi-religious activities on campus security

S/N	Campus Security Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
i	Sense of security	2.73	Moderate influence
ii	Promotion of discipline and good behaviour	2.85	Moderate influence
iii	Reduction in violence and vices	2.54	Moderate influence
iv	Building mutual understanding and peace	2.27	Some influence
v	Fostering tolerance and cooperation	2.36	Some influence
vi	Reduction of negative behaviour	1.47	Little influence

Table 3 shows that students perceived multi-religious activities as having an overall some-to-moderate influence on campus security, with means ranging from 1.47 to 2.85. The strongest influence was on discipline and good behaviour (2.85), followed by sense of security (2.73) and reduction of violence and vices (2.54). Tolerance and cooperation (2.36) and mutual understanding and peace (2.27) showed some influence. Reduction of negative behaviour recorded the lowest mean (1.47), indicating little impact. The approximate grand mean of 2.37 suggests that religious activities alone are insufficient and require complementary counselling, discipline, security and conflict-management measures.

Research Question 3: Contribution to Harmony

Table 4: Extent of contribution of multi-religious activities to harmony among students

S/N	Indicator of Campus Harmony	Mean	Rank	Extent
i	Peaceful co-existence	3.35	1	Moderate
ii	Promotion of mutual respect	2.47	5	Some
iii	Cooperation among religious groups	2.39	7	Some
iv	Conflict resolution	3.26	2	Moderate
v	Inter-religious competition & rivalry	2.48	4	Some
vi	Mutual understanding	2.68	3	Moderate
vii	Brings out values of religion	2.44	6	Some

Table 4 shows that multi-religious activities contribute moderately to harmony among students. Peaceful co-existence ranked highest (M = 3.35), followed by conflict resolution (M = 3.26), indicating that such activities support peaceful interaction and tension management. Mutual understanding recorded a moderate contribution (M = 2.68),

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while inter-religious rivalry (M = 2.48), mutual respect (M = 2.47), and religious values (M = 2.44) showed a more limited influence. Cooperation among religious groups ranked lowest (M = 2.39). Overall, the findings suggest that multi-religious activities promote peaceful co-existence more effectively than deeper interfaith cooperation, mutual respect, and sustained integration.

Research Question 4: Security Challenges

Table 5: Security challenges associated with multi-religious activities

S/N	Security Challenge	Undecided (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
i	Creation of security concern	6.31	42.11	51.58
ii	Crowd control problems	5.27	71.05	23.68
iii	Disruption of academic activities	2.1	80.53	17.37
iv	Interfaith conflict	4.81	49.66	45.53
v	Intolerance and insecurity	5.79	40.00	54.21
vi	Managing religious gatherings	10.00	36.84	53.16

Table 5 shows respondents' perceptions of security challenges linked to multi-religious activities. Disruption of academic activities emerged as the major concern, with 80.53% agreeing, followed by crowd-control problems at 71.05%. Perceptions of interfaith conflict, security concerns, intolerance, and insecurity were mixed, with disagreement generally exceeding agreement. Managing religious gatherings recorded the lowest agreement (36.84%), suggesting limited concern as a major security threat. Overall, the findings indicate that academic disruption and crowd management are the principal concerns, rather than widespread religious conflict or intolerance.

Research Question 5: Measures for Peaceful Coexistence

Table 6: Measures for ensuring that multi-religious activities promote peaceful co-existence and campus security

S/N	Measure	Mean	Rank	Interpretation
i	Security presence at gatherings	2.82	9	Moderate influence
ii	Regulation of religious activities	3.06	7	Moderate influence
iii	Using inter-faith programmes for unity	2.98	8	Moderate influence
iv	Establishment of clear policy	3.19	3	Moderate influence
v	Collaboration with security personnel	3.29	2	Moderate influence
vi	Establishment of inter-faith council	3.15	5	Moderate influence
vii	Joint peace rallies & orientation	3.16	4	Moderate influence
viii	Monitoring and approval of gatherings	3.08	6	Moderate influence
ix	Conflict mediation & early-warning system	3.32	1	Moderate influence

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Table 6 shows respondents' views on measures for promoting peaceful coexistence and campus security. All nine measures recorded moderate influence under the bands. Conflict mediation and early-warning systems ranked first (M = 3.32), followed by collaboration with security personnel (M = 3.29), clear policies (M = 3.19), joint peace rallies and orientation (M = 3.16), and inter-faith councils (M = 3.15). Monitoring of gatherings (M = 3.08), regulation of activities (M = 3.06), inter-faith unity programmes (M = 2.98), and security presence (M = 2.82) followed. Respondents therefore favoured preventive, collaborative and institutional strategies over reliance on security personnel alone — a finding carried through explicitly into the Recommendations below.

Discussion

Demographic information shows an almost even distribution of the 190 respondents across the three Colleges of Education. The gender distribution shows a slightly male dominance of 52.11% which is adequate for security related research. The religious distribution reveals a religious pluralistic nature of the campus environment, with Christians constituting 47. 37%, and Muslims 45.26% while traditionalists constitute 7.37%. This confirms the multi-religious nature of the Colleges of Education in Kogi State and justifies the investigation into its influence on campus security. The findings show that multi-religious activities are important components of religious and social interaction in Colleges of Education (COEs) in Kogi State. Prayer meetings and fellowships had the highest availability (95.26%), indicating strong religious expression, although this may largely occur within separate faith groups rather than through interfaith engagement. Crisis response and peace-building (93.68%) similarly demonstrate institutional recognition of religion's potential for promoting peaceful relationships. This agrees with Odey *et al*. (2024), who found that religious and peace-building education can promote tolerance, conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence among tertiary students, and with UNESCO (2023), which emphasises education that develops values and behaviours, preventing violence and promoting peaceful societies.

Worship services (85.79%) were widely available, while interfaith dialogue and seminars (78.95%) were also relatively common. However, worship becomes genuinely multi-religious only when different faiths interact constructively; UNESCO (2023) stresses that intercultural dialogue is essential for building trust, cooperation and social cohesion, and Hackett (2023) observes that Nigerian educational institutions can either reinforce intolerance or provide opportunities for religious tolerance. This aligns closely with Aune *et al.*'s (2025) UK finding that pluralism grows specifically through structured, safe encounters across religious difference rather than through the mere co-presence of separate faith communities; suggesting that Colleges of Education should invest deliberately in structured interfaith dialogue rather than assuming that parallel worship activity will, by itself, produce the same benefit. Outreach and evangelism (48.79%) and leadership and training programmes (50.52%) showed moderate availability, although the former had a high no-response rate (42.63%). Faith-specific evangelism should therefore be distinguished from collaborative outreach based on mutual respect. Nageri (2026) identifies inclusive curricula, interfaith initiatives and teacher training in religious ethics as important for tolerance and peaceful coexistence. Academic and social collaboration (45.79%) and community service (30.53%) were relatively low, suggesting missed opportunities for practical cooperation; joint humanitarian, academic and community-

service projects could strengthen trust, while religious festivals (36.84%) could promote cultural understanding when deliberately designed as inclusive activities. Ajibola and Musa (2024) likewise advocate pluralistic religious education in Nigerian Colleges of Education to strengthen dialogue and national unity.

Regarding campus security, multi-religious activities had generally positive but moderate effects. Promotion of discipline and good behaviour ranked highest (M = 2.85), consistent with Ugwu and Chukwuma (2021), who found that campus fellowships could discourage cultism and promote positive values. Sense of security (M = 2.73) was also moderate, supporting Peacock et al. (2023), who found that intentional relationship-building across religious and worldview differences can improve campus relationships. Reduction of violence and vices (M = 2.54), mutual understanding (M = 2.27), and tolerance and cooperation (M = 2.36) were moderate or low, indicating that separate fellowships do not automatically produce meaningful interfaith understanding; Odey *et al*. (2024), Ummaru (2023) and Uroko (2023) therefore support stronger dialogue and peace-building education. The very low score for reduction of negative behaviour (M = 1.47) further indicates that religious activities alone cannot address campus insecurity. For peaceful coexistence, peaceful co-existence (M = 3.35) and conflict resolution (M = 3.26) ranked highest. Aune et al. (2025) similarly found that positive engagement with religious and worldview diversity can strengthen pluralistic orientations, and UNESCO and the Institute for Economics and Peace (2022) emphasise dialogue and inclusive interaction as foundations for peace. However, mutual understanding (M = 2.68), mutual respect (M = 2.47), cooperation (M = 2.39), and religious values (M = 2.44) were lower, confirming Badriyah's (2025) observation that positive attitudes do not necessarily result in active interfaith participation. Religious competition (M = 2.48) therefore remains a concern. Security concerns were mainly disruption of academic activities (80.53%) and crowd-control problems (71.05%). Hackett (2023) identifies Nigerian educational institutions as both sites of religious tension and opportunities for tolerance, while Lichtenheld and Ogbudu (2021) caution against attributing Nigerian violence solely to religion. Although perceptions of interfaith conflict were divided, Adenuga *et al*. (2023) demonstrate its potential implications for national security.

Consequently, conflict mediation and early warning (M = 3.32), security collaboration (M = 3.29), clear policies (M = 3.19), peace rallies and orientation (M = 3.16), and an interfaith council (M = 3.15) should be prioritised; these findings agree with UNDP (2024), the UN Alliance of Civilizations (2019), and the United Nations (2024) on early warning, collaboration and interfaith dialogue. Monitoring and approval (M = 3.08), regulation (M = 3.06), interfaith unity programmes (M = 2.98), and security presence (M = 2.82) remain useful; UNESCO (2024) and Nwashili (2025) further emphasise education, dialogue and shared values. It is also worth noting that a very similar, more recent Nigerian study (Akapo et al., 2026) found statistically significant differences in interfaith tolerance and trust across religious groups when it tested for them directly. Overall, Colleges of Education should move beyond faith-specific activities towards structured dialogue, joint service, peace education, collaborative projects, leadership training, early-warning systems and impartial policies to transform religious diversity into a resource for cohesion and sustainable campus security.

Conclusion

It is pertinent to summarise that multi-religious activities are present on College of Education campuses, reflecting the various religious communities and traditions represented there. Though these religious activities can and should contribute to the peace and development of the various campuses through their teachings, these values have been limited because the activities operate variously and independently, with attendant competition, rivalry and supremacy claims between groups. This has diminished the different religious groups' capacity to contribute to the discipline and peaceful co-existence they could otherwise engender on College campuses.

Recommendations

1. The management of the Colleges of Education should establish conflict-mediation and early-warning mechanisms for religious gatherings and activities. The single measure respondents themselves ranked highest (M = 3.32) in close collaboration with campus security personnel (ranked second, M = 3.29).

2. The managements of the Colleges of Education should put in place a comprehensive management structure bringing together the leadership of different faith-based organisations on campus, to discuss school welfare, progress and challenges; this will create opportunities for students of different faiths to communicate, understand each other on matters of common interest, and develop mutual respect.

3. The managements of the Colleges of Education should, on all matters, uphold policies that recognise the freedom of all religions on their campuses and treat them as an integral part of the College community. Discriminatory school policies especially any that discriminate against a particular religion, will only heighten suspicion, promote crises and breed insecurity. Such policies should protect the rights of every student, irrespective of faith, without compromising institutional discipline or values.

4. Colleges should periodically organise combined community service and collaborative projects that bring all faith-based organisations on board; seminars, workshops and joint community projects requiring contributions from the different faith-based organisations, so that students come to own the institution and strive to protect it regardless of religious or doctrinal difference.

5. Future replications of this study should disaggregate results by sex, religious affiliation, students' status and institution, and should test for statistically significant subgroup differences (chi-square, t-test or ANOVA), following the precedent of Otuenu (2011), Agbo (2019) and Akapo *et al*. (2026) on comparable populations.

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