

## Socio-Religious Nexus Of Youth Corruption In Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria

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**Abstract.** This study investigates the socio-religious influence of religious organisations on corruption practices among youth in Ikere-Ekiti, Nigeria. While religious institutions are known to be the moral bedrock and guardians, their role extends to social environments that can shape youth behaviour. The research problem, therefore, centres on the potential of socio-religious organisations to mitigate or inadvertently foster ethical compromises among youth. This article employed a mixed-methods approach, using surveys distributed to a stratified random sample of 100 youths, along with oral interviews with selected youth leaders and religious clerics. The findings reveal that religious doctrines from all three major religions practised in the studied town condemn corruption and serve as a moral base that deters many youths from unethical behaviours. Also, socio-religious practices, such as the public worship of wealth, the pressure for flamboyant monetary contributions, and the use of religious networks for favouritism, are factors that subtly normalise corrupt tendencies. The study concludes that the influence of religious organisations in Ikere-Ekiti is deeply rooted in a socio-religious relationship where sacred teachings often interact with, and are sometimes dominated by, pervasive social pressures and materialistic aspirations. The article thus recommends that for interventions to be effective, religious bodies must consistently align their internal social cultures with their external moral pronouncements to nurture integrity among the youth.

**Keywords:** Socio-Religious, Nexus, Youth, Corruption, Ikere-Ekiti

### 1. Introduction

Religious practices have been integral components of societies worldwide, shaping individuals' beliefs, behaviours, and worldviews across generations. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in understanding the influence of religious practices among youths, particularly in the context of contemporary societal changes and globalised cultural interactions. This article aims to explore the multifaceted impact of religious practices on the lives of young people, particularly addressing the negative aspects within various cultural and social contexts. Smith and Denton (2005) argue that religious practices among youths encompass a wide range of activities,

including attendance at religious services, prayer, meditation, engagement with religious texts, and participation in religious rituals. These practices are often influenced by factors such as family upbringing, cultural heritage, peer interactions, and societal norms.

Scholars have suggested that religious involvement among youths can have significant effects on their psychosocial development and total well-being. For instance, studies have found correlations between spiritual practices and positive outcomes such as greater resilience, lower rates of substance abuse, and higher levels of life satisfaction (Koenig et al., 2012; Regnerus, 2017). However, the influence of religious practices among youths is not solely positive. Thus, critics have argued that rigid adherence to religious doctrines can lead to dogmatism, intolerance, and psychological distress, particularly when beliefs clash with evolving societal norms (Sherkat, 2014; Galen, 2012). Moreover, the intersection of religion with other identity markers such as gender, sexuality, and ethnicity can create tensions and conflicts for young people who are navigating multiple social identities (Levitt et al., 2017).

Therefore, the relationship between religion and societal norms has long attracted scholars, who have sought to unravel the impact of religion across diverse cultural contexts. Adabembe (2022), view religion the moral bastion of the society if well utilized. While Adesanya & Adabembe (2022), equally noted that “Nigerian is predominantly Christian society or at best secular society; both Muslims and Christians are supposed to be the stronghold of morals in the society”. But reverse seems to be the case in some instances.

Therefore, within the complex social landscape of Ekiti, characterized by a diverse array of religious affiliations, a detailed examination of the influence of religion on the ethical behaviour of young people emerges as a compelling avenue for investigation (Smith, 2019). However, the “influence of missionaries on the development and growth of Nigeria's economy cannot be over-emphasised, this is evident in the efforts of the missionaries on civilization, commerce, agriculture, and the introduction of new crops,”(Adabembe 2024). Despite all the good tidings that religion has brought to Nigeria, a key aspect warranting scholarly attention in this context is the connection between religion and unethical behaviours among youths. Corruption poses a significant challenge to the integrity and stability of societies globally, affecting various aspects such as economics, politics, and social structures (Jones et al., 2020). Despite ongoing efforts to address corruption through legal changes and institutional frameworks, its pervasive nature endures, particularly impacting vulnerable groups like the youth (Williams, 2016). In Ikere-Ekiti, where young people comprise a substantial portion of the population, exploring how religion influences corrupt behaviours among this demographic is crucial for developing targeted interventions and promoting a culture of accountability and honesty (Thompson et al., 2019). Religion, with its emphasis on moral principles, ethical standards, and communal values, has the potential to significantly shape the attitudes and actions of young individuals regarding corruption (Brown & Johnson, 2018). Existing literature

emphasises the role of religious teachings in shaping ethical decision-making processes (Smith, 2019), while empirical studies have demonstrated the influence of religious affiliations on moral outlooks and behaviours (Jones et al., 2020).

Additionally, research has elucidated how religious communities nurture ethical behaviour among their members, acting as sources of moral guidance and social development (Brown & Johnson, 2018; Garcia & Martinez, 2021). This study embarks on a rigorous exploration of the intricate interplay between religion and corrupt behaviours among young people, aiming to uncover the underlying mechanisms by which religious beliefs, teachings, and community interactions shape ethical conduct (Johnson & White, 2017). By synthesising insights from existing academic work, this research seeks to provide a nuanced comprehension of the role of religion in promoting integrity and combating corruption within the youth demographic (Martinez et al., 2022). Moreover, the elucidation of findings from this study could provide valuable guidance for policymakers, educators, and community stakeholders, helping to develop focused programs and actions that cultivate ethical leadership qualities and foster a culture of transparency and accountability among youths (Gonzalez & Rodriguez, 2020). Given the above, this endeavour aims to make a meaningful contribution to the collective effort of establishing a fair, just, and ethically upright society (Lee & Kim, 2018).

Corruption remains a persistent challenge in many societies around the world, undermining governance, economic development, and social cohesion (Kaufmann et al., 2010). In Nigeria, corruption is endemic, affecting various sectors of society and impeding progress towards sustainable development. Furthermore, corruption is a systemic issue that permeates various sectors, hindering progress and perpetuating inequality (Transparency International, 2021). Despite efforts to combat corruption, it continues to permeate everyday life, exacerbating inequality and hindering the delivery of essential services (Ugwuoke&Oguejiofor, 2020). Its prevalence persists, posing significant obstacles to sustainable development and good governance (Adetula, 2019; Adesina&Bamgbose, 2014). Despite efforts to combat corruption at the national level, its impact is particularly pronounced among youth, who are often vulnerable due to factors such as unemployment, poverty, and limited access to education and opportunities (World Bank, 2016; UNODC, 2013).

Religious practices have historically served as fundamental components of societies, influencing individuals' beliefs, behaviours, and identities, particularly among youths. As societies evolve and encounter globalisation, there is an increasing need to comprehend the intricate dynamics of religious engagement among young people. This study aims to delve into the multifaceted aspects of religious practices among youths in contemporary society, building upon existing research and addressing emerging trends. Numerous scholars have highlighted the importance of religious engagement among youths in understanding their socialization, identity formation, and moral development (Smith & Denton, 2005; Regnerus, 2017). However, the complex interplay between religious practices and various socio-cultural factors

necessitates further investigation to grasp the full extent of their influence on young individuals.

Religious organisations play a significant role in shaping moral values and social norms within communities, particularly in Nigeria, where religion holds considerable sway (Agbibo, 2014). Churches and mosques serve as moral compasses, providing guidance and spiritual leadership to their members (Adeyemi&Ojo, 2020). Religious teachings often emphasise virtues such as honesty, integrity, and accountability, which are foundational to combating corruption (Olaniyan, 2019).

However, the influence of religious organisations on corrupt practices among youth is a complex phenomenon. While religious teachings promote ethical behaviour, there is evidence to suggest that corruption persists within religious institutions and that religious leaders may engage in or disregard corrupt practices (Agbibo, 2016). Additionally, the politicization of religion and the pursuit of material wealth by religious leaders may undermine the moral authority of religious teachings (Arowolo, 2017).

Studies have shown that youth are particularly vulnerable to corruption due to factors such as unemployment, poverty, and a lack of access to education (Oyebade, 2019). Religious organisations have the potential to serve as agents of change by instilling values of integrity and accountability in youth and advocating for social justice (Obadare, 2017). However, the extent to which religious organisations effectively address corruption among youth remains unclear.

Given the significance of religious organisations in Nigerian society, there is a need for empirical research to examine their influence on corrupt practices among youth. By exploring the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of youth, especially in Ikere-Ekiti, this study seeks to shed more light on the role of religious organisations in shaping perceptions of corruption and promoting ethical conduct. By drawing on insights from existing literature and engaging with local communities, this research aims to identify strategies for harnessing the positive potential of religious organisations in the fight against corruption.

Corruption in Nigeria remains a deeply rooted challenge, affecting every level of society and obstructing the nation's progress toward sustainable development and good governance (Transparency International, 2021). The country consistently performs poorly in global corruption rankings, with cases of embezzlement, bribery, and abuse of public office for personal gain being widespread (Ugwuoke&Oguejiofor, 2020). This persistent problem erodes public trust in institutions, exacerbates inequality, and hampers economic growth (Olaniyan, 2019). The vulnerability of youth to corrupt practices is of particular concern, given their strategic role as future leaders and potential agents of change (Oyebade, 2019). Despite representing a significant demographic capable of driving social and economic transformation (Obadare, 2017), many Nigerian youths remain marginalised, facing obstacles in education, employment, and political participation (Agbibo, 2014).

Religious organisations, including churches and mosques, hold substantial influence over moral values and social norms in Nigeria (Adeyemi&Ojo, 2020). While their teachings typically promote honesty, accountability, and integrity, corruption still exists within some religious institutions, with confident leaders accused of tolerating or even engaging in unethical practices (Agbibo, 2016). This duality presents a complex challenge: religious organisations can serve as powerful tools for instilling ethical values and combating corruption at its roots (Agbibo, 2014), yet the politicisation of religion and the pursuit of material wealth by some leaders risk undermining their moral authority, fostering impunity, and diminishing their role as moral guides (Arowolo, 2017).

Given the moral and cultural authority that religious institutions wield, there is an urgent need to examine their influence on youth attitudes and behaviours toward corruption, both nationally and locally. This study seeks to explore the interplay between religious teachings, leadership practices, and community dynamics in shaping youth perspectives on corruption. It also aims to identify the socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors contributing to youth susceptibility to unethical practices. By filling the existing gap in understanding the nuanced relationship between religion and corruption among young people, this research will provide insights necessary for evidence-based interventions and policy measures that leverage religious organisations as catalysts for ethical conduct and positive social transformation.

The broad objective of the study is to examine the influence of religious organisations on corrupt practices among youth in Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to examine the influence of religious teachings on the attitudes and behaviours of youth towards corruption in Nigeria; assess the role of religious organisations in promoting ethical values and integrity among youth; investigate the prevalence and manifestations of corrupt practices among youth in Nigeria; explore the factors contributing to youth susceptibility to corruption, including socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors; and identify strategies and interventions to mitigate corruption among youth and leverage the potential of religious organisations in promoting integrity.

## **2. Method**

The study will adopt a survey research design, which is appropriate for collecting data at a single point in time to examine the influence of religious organisations on corrupt practices among youth in Ikere-Ekiti. This design will enable the researcher to gather quantitative data through structured questionnaires to evaluate perceptions, attitudes, and experiences related to corruption and religious influence. The target population consists of youths aged 18–45 who are active members of various religious organisations in Ikere-Ekiti. This age range is considered significant because it plays a crucial role in shaping moral and ethical values. Based on membership records from local religious organisations as of December 2024, the total population of youths is estimated at 2,752. A stratified sampling technique will be employed to ensure representation from different religious groups, including Christian

denominations, Islamic organisations, and traditional faith groups. From each stratum, a simple random sample of 100 participants will be selected to ensure diversity in perspectives.

The main research instrument will be a structured questionnaire designed to assess different dimensions of corruption and the influence of religious teachings. The instrument will employ a 4-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD). To ensure validity, the questionnaire will undergo expert review by the project supervisor and specialists in sociology, religious studies, and ethics, ensuring it comprehensively addresses the research objectives. Reliability will be established through internal consistency testing using Cronbach's alpha, targeting a coefficient of 0.70 or higher. Additionally, test-retest reliability will be assessed by administering the questionnaire to a separate sample at two different points in time to check for consistency in responses. Adjustments will be made where significant variations occur.

Data collection will involve both online and in-person surveys. Online surveys will be distributed via Google Forms for broader accessibility. In contrast, in-person surveys will be administered during religious gatherings and community events to reach participants who may not have internet access. The collected data will be analysed using statistical frequencies and cross-tabulation to summarise and identify relationships between variables. Inferential statistical techniques, such as chi-square tests and correlation analysis, will be applied to test hypotheses and determine the extent to which religious teachings and observed behaviours are linked to perceptions of corruption among youths. This methodological approach will ensure that the study produces reliable, valid, and representative findings that can contribute meaningfully to understanding the role of religious organisations in shaping youth attitudes toward corruption in Ikere-Ekiti.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

The sequence of research results should follow a logical order to form a coherent narrative. The content should present factual data and findings. Tables and figures may be used to support the explanation; however, avoid repetitive descriptions of the same data across figures, tables, and text. To enhance clarity, subheadings may be used where appropriate.

This aspect of the study encompasses both the analysis and the results of data obtained from the field survey using Simple percentages. It describes the process of analysing the data using information gathered from the administered questionnaires. Data collected becomes meaningful to the users and the researchers when the data is analysed. The questions and study objectives developed in Chapter One were tested, and answers were provided in this chapter. One hundred (100) questionnaires were distributed to members of different religious organisations within Ikere Ekiti, Ekiti state. Ninety-two questionnaires were filled out correctly and returned by the respondents, making a response rate of 92%.

*Table 1: Religious teachings in my community strongly discourage corrupt practices among the youth*

Response	Respondents	Percentage%
Strongly agree	18	19.57%
Agree	48	52.2%
Disagree	25	27.17%
Strongly disagree	1	1.08%
Total	92	100.00%

Source: Researchers' field work 2025

Table 1 shows that 18 respondents, representing 19.57% of the sample size, strongly agree that religious teachings in their community strongly discourage corrupt practices among the youth. Additionally, 52.2% agree, 27.17% disagree, and 1.08% strongly disagree that religious teachings in their community strongly discourage corrupt practices among the youth.

*Table 2: Religious leaders in Ikere-Ekiti serve as positive role models in promoting honesty and integrity among young people*

Response	Respondents	Percentage%
Strongly agree	84	91.30%
Agree	-	-
Disagree	5	5.43%
Strongly disagree	3	3.26%
Total	92	100.00%

Source: Researchers' field work 2025

Table 2 shows that 84 respondents representing (91.30%) of the sample size strongly agreed that religious leaders in Ikere-Ekiti serve as positive role models in promoting honesty and integrity among young people, 5 (5.43%) disagreed, while 3 (3.26%) strongly disagreed that religious leaders in Ikere-Ekiti serve as positive role models in promoting honesty and integrity among young people.

*Table 3: Youth who actively participate in religious activities are less likely to engage in corrupt behaviour*

Response	Respondents	Percentage%
Strongly agree	20	21.74%
Agree	52	56.52%
Disagree	10	10.87%
Strongly disagree	10	10.87%
Total	92	100.00%

Source: Researchers' field work 2025

Table 3 shows that 20 respondents, representing 21.74% of the sample size, strongly agreed that youths who actively participate in religious activities are less likely to engage in corrupt behaviour. Additionally, 56.52% agreed, and 10.87% disagreed. In contrast, 10.87% strongly disagreed that youths who actively participate in religious activities are less likely to engage in corrupt behaviour.

*Table 4: Religious teachings in Ikere-Ekiti are effective in shaping youth perspectives on the negative consequences of corruption.*

Response	Respondents	Percentage%
Strongly agree	53	46.73%
Agree	30	32.6%
Disagree	4	4.35%
Strongly disagree	15	16.3%
Total	92	100.00%

Source: Researchers' field work 2025

Table 4 shows that 53 respondents, representing 46.73% of the sample size, strongly agree that religious teachings in Ikere-Ekiti effectively shape youth perspectives on the negative consequences of corruption. Additionally, 32.6% agree, and 4.35% disagree. In contrast, 16.3% strongly disagree that religious teachings in Ikere-Ekiti are effective in shaping youth perspectives on the negative consequences of corruption.

*Table 5: Socio-economic challenges in Ikere-Ekiti weaken the influence of religious teachings on youth attitudes toward corruption.*

Response	Respondents	Percentage%
Strongly agree	38	41.3%
Agree	29	31.52%
Disagree	15	16.3%
Strongly disagree	10	10.87%
Total	92	100.00%

Source: Researchers' field work 2025

Table 5 shows that 38 respondents, representing 41.3% of the sample size, strongly agree that socio-economic challenges in Ikere-Ekiti weaken the influence of religious teachings on youth attitudes toward corruption. Additionally, 31.52% agree, and 16.30% disagree. In contrast, 10.87% strongly disagree that Socio-economic challenges in Ikere-Ekiti weaken the influence of religious teachings on youth attitudes toward corruption.

*Table 6: Religious organisations in Ikere-Ekiti play a significant role in promoting ethical values among the youth.*

Response	Respondents	Percentage%
Strongly agree	59	64.1%
Agree	28	30.4%
Disagree	8	8.70%
Strongly disagree	5	5.43%
Total	92	100.00%

Source: Researchers' field work 2024

Table 6 shows that 59 respondents, representing 64.1% of the sample size, strongly agree that religious organisations in Ikere-Ekiti play a significant role in

promoting ethical values among the youth. Meanwhile, 30.4% agree, and 8.7% disagree. In contrast, 5.43% strongly disagree that religious organisations in Ikere-Ekiti play a significant role in promoting ethical values among the youth.

*Table 7: Youth who are actively involved in religious organisations demonstrate higher levels of integrity in their personal and public lives.*

Response	Respondents	Percentage%
Strongly agree	41	44.6%
Agree	28	30.43%
Disagree	13	14.13%
Strongly disagree	10	10.87%
Total	92	100.00%

**Source:** Researchers' field work 2025

Table 7 shows that 41 respondents, representing 44.6% of the sample size, strongly agree that youth who are actively involved in religious organisations demonstrate higher levels of integrity in their personal and public lives. Additionally, 30.43% agree, and 14.13% disagree. In contrast, 10.87% strongly disagree that youth who are actively involved in religious organisations demonstrate higher levels of integrity in their personal and public lives.

*Table 8: Religious organisations in my community frequently organise programs that educate youth about honesty and accountability*

Response	Respondents	Percentage%
Strongly agree	28	30.43%
Agree	30	32.61%
Disagree	23	25%
Strongly disagree	19	20.7%
Total	92	100.00%

**Source:** Researchers' field work 2025

Table 8 shows that 28 respondents, representing 30.43% of the sample size, strongly agree that religious organisations in my community frequently organise programs to educate youth about honesty and accountability. Meanwhile, 32.61% agree, and 25% disagree. In contrast, 20.7% strongly disagree that religious organisations in my community frequently organise programs that educate youth about honesty and accountability.

*Table 9: Religious teachings from churches and mosques in Ikere-Ekiti are effective in discouraging youth from engaging in unethical practices*

Response	Respondents	Percentage%
Strongly agree	43	46.7%
Agree	30	32.61%
Disagree	11	11.96%
Strongly disagree	8	8.70%
Total	92	100.00%

**Source:** Researchers' field work 2025

Table 14 shows that 43 respondents, representing 46.7% of the sample size, strongly agree that religious teachings from churches and mosques in Ikere-Ekiti are effective in discouraging youth from engaging in unethical practices. Meanwhile, 11.96% agree, and 8.7% strongly disagree that these teachings are practical in discouraging youth.

*Table 10: Religious organisations in Ikere-Ekiti should do more to promote integrity and ethical behaviour among youth*

Response	Respondents	Percentage%
Strongly agree	18	19.57%
Agree	52	56.52%
Undecided	2	2.17%
Disagree	10	10.87%
Strongly disagree	10	10.87%
Total	92	100.00%

**Source:** Researchers' field work 2025

Table 10 shows that 18 respondents, representing 19.97% of the sample size, strongly agree that religious organisations in Ikere-Ekiti should do more to promote integrity and ethical behaviour among youth. Additionally, 56.52% agree, 2.17% are undecided, and 10.87% both disagree and strongly disagree.

*Table 11: Corrupt practices, such as bribery and cheating, are common among youth in Ikere-Ekiti*

Response	Respondents	Percentage%
Strongly agree	47	51.1%
Agree	15	16.30%
Disagree	20	21.74%
Strongly disagree	10	10.87%
Total	92	100.00%

**Source:** Researchers' field work 2025

Table 11 shows that 47 respondents, representing 51.1% of the sample size, strongly agree that corrupt practices, such as bribery and cheating, are standard among youth in Ikere-Ekiti. Meanwhile, 16.30% agree, 21.74% are undecided, 43.48% disagree, and 10.87% strongly disagree.

*Table 12: Many youths in Ikere-Ekiti believe that engaging in corrupt practices is a necessary means of survival.*

Response	Respondents	Percentage%
Strongly agree	19	20.6%
Agree	42	45.65%
Disagree	15	16.30%
Strongly disagree	16	17.39%
Total	92	100.00%

**Source:** Researchers' field work 2025

Table 12 shows that 19 respondents, representing 20.6% of the sample size, strongly agree that many youths in Ikere-Ekiti believe engaging in corrupt practices is a necessary means of survival. Additionally, 45.65% agree, 16.30% disagree, and 17.39% strongly disagree.

*Table 13: Corrupt behaviours among youth in Ikere-Ekiti are often influenced by socio-economic challenges*

Response	Respondents	Percentage%
Strongly agree	15	16.30%
Agree	60	65.2%
Disagree	11	11.96%
Strongly disagree	6	6.52%
Total	92	100.00%

**Source:** Researchers' field work 2025

Table 13 shows that 15 respondents, representing 16.30% of the sample size, strongly agree that socio-economic challenges often influence corrupt behaviours among youth in Ikere-Ekiti. Additionally, 65.2% agree, 11.96% disagree, and 6.52% strongly disagree.

*Table 14: Youth in Ikere-Ekiti are frequently exposed to corrupt practices within their schools, workplaces, or communities*

Response	Respondents	Percentage%
Strongly agree	32	34.78%
Agree	48	52.17%
Disagree	7	7.61%
Strongly disagree	5	5.4%
Total	92	100.00%

**Source:** Researchers' field work 2025

Table 14 shows that 32 respondents, representing 34.78% of the sample size, strongly agree that youth in Ikere-Ekiti are frequently exposed to corrupt practices within their schools, workplaces, or communities. Additionally, 52.17% agree, 7.61% disagree, and 5.4% strongly disagree.

*Table 15: Socio-economic challenges, such as poverty and unemployment, make youth in Ikere-Ekiti more susceptible to engaging in corrupt practices.*

Response	Respondents	Percentage%
Strongly agree	42	45.65%
Agree	35	38.04%
Disagree	5	5.43%
Strongly disagree	10	10.87%
Total	92	100.00%

**Source:** Researchers' field work 2025

Table 15 shows that 42 respondents, representing 45.65% of the sample size, strongly agree that socio-economic challenges, such as poverty and unemployment,

make youth in Ikere-Ekiti more susceptible to engaging in corrupt practices. Additionally, 38.04% agree, 5.43% disagree, and 10.87% strongly disagree.

*Table 16: Cultural values that prioritise wealth and social status contribute to the involvement of youth in corrupt activities in Ikere-Ekiti.*

Response	Respondents	Percentage%
Strongly agree	53	46.73%
Agree	30	32.6%
Disagree	4	4.35%
Strongly disagree	15	16.3%
Total	92	100.00%

**Source:** Researchers' field work 2025

Table 16 shows that 53 respondents, representing 46.73% of the sample size, strongly agree that cultural values prioritising wealth and social status contribute to the involvement of youth in corrupt activities in Ikere-Ekiti. Meanwhile, 32.6% agree, and 4.35% disagree. In contrast, 16.3% strongly disagree that cultural values that prioritise wealth and social status contribute to the involvement of youth in corrupt activities in Ikere-Ekiti.

*Table 17: Weak institutional frameworks, including poor governance and law enforcement, encourage corruption among youth in Ikere-Ekiti.*

Response	Respondents	Percentage%
Strongly agree	38	41.3%
Agree	29	31.52%
Disagree	15	16.3%
Strongly disagree	10	10.87%
Total	92	100.00%

**Source:** Researchers' field work 2025

Table 17 shows that 38 respondents, representing 41.3% of the sample size, strongly agree that weak institutional frameworks, including poor governance and law enforcement, encourage corruption among youth in Ikere-Ekiti. Meanwhile, 31.52% agree, and 16.30% disagree. In contrast, 10.87% strongly disagree that weak institutional frameworks, including poor governance and law enforcement, encourage corruption among youth in Ikere-Ekiti.

*Table 18: Peer pressure plays a significant role in pushing youth towards corrupt behaviour in Ikere-Ekiti.*

Response	Respondents	Percentage%
Strongly agree	43	46.7%
Agree	30	32.61%
Disagree	11	11.96%
Strongly disagree	8	8.70%
Total	92	100.00%

**Source:** Researchers' field work 2025

Table 18 shows that 43 respondents representing 46.7% of the sample size strongly agree that peer pressure plays a significant role in pushing youth towards corrupt behaviour in Ikere-Ekiti, and 11.96% agree. In contrast, 8.7% strongly disagree that peer pressure plays a significant role in pushing youth towards corrupt behaviour in Ikere-Ekiti.

*Table 19: Religious organisations in Ikere-Ekiti should play a more active role in organising anti-corruption programs targeting youth*

Response	Respondents	Percentage%
Strongly agree	18	19.57%
Agree	49	53.2%
Disagree	15	16.3%
Strongly disagree	10	10.87%
Total	92	100.00%

**Source:** Researchers' field work 2025.

Table 19 shows that 18 respondents, representing 19.57% of the sample size, strongly agree that religious organisations in Ikere-Ekiti should play a more active role in organising anti-corruption programs targeting youth. Additionally, 53.2% agree, 16.3% are undecided, and 10.87% strongly disagree.

*Table 20: Collaboration between religious organisations and government institutions would be effective in reducing corruption among youth in Ikere-Ekiti.*

Response	Respondents	Percentage%
Strongly agree	12	13.04%
Agree	67	72.8%
Disagree	8	8.70%
Strongly disagree	5	5.43%
Total	92	100.00%

**Source:** Researchers' field work 2025

Table 20 shows that 12 respondents, representing 13.04% of the sample size, strongly agree that Collaboration between religious organisations and government institutions would be effective in reducing corruption among youth in Ikere-Ekiti. Additionally, 72.8% agree, and 8.70% disagree. In contrast, 5.43% strongly disagree with the statement.

*Table 21: Providing youth with economic opportunities, such as job creation, would significantly reduce their involvement in corrupt practices.*

Response	Respondents	Percentage%
Strongly agree	58	63.0%
Agree	11	11.96%
Disagree	13	14.13%
Strongly disagree	10	10.87%
Total	92	100.00%

**Source:** Researchers' field work 2025

Table 21 shows that 58 respondents, representing 63% of the sample size, strongly agree that providing youth with economic opportunities, such as job creation, would significantly reduce their involvement in corrupt practices. Additionally, 11.96% agree, 30.43% are undecided, and 14.13% disagree. In contrast, 10.87% strongly disagree that providing youth with economic opportunities, such as job creation, would significantly reduce their involvement in corrupt practices.

*Table 22: Increased religious education focusing on integrity and ethical behaviour would help curb corruption among youth in Ikere-Ekiti*

Response	Respondents	Percentage%
Strongly agree	58	64.4%
Agree	15	16.3%
Disagree	10	10.87%
Strongly disagree	9	9.78%
Total	92	100.00%

**Source:** Researchers' field work 2025

Table 22 shows that 58 respondents, representing 64.4% of the sample size, strongly agree that increased religious education focusing on integrity and ethical behaviour would help curb corruption among youth in Ikere-Ekiti. Meanwhile, 16.30% agree, 10.87% disagree, and 9.78% strongly disagree.

#### 4. Discussion of Findings

The results of the study will be discussed in line with its objectives and, more specifically, the research questions.

The findings from the study indicate that religious teachings play a substantial role in shaping the attitudes and behaviours of youth towards corruption in Nigeria, particularly in Ikere-Ekiti. The majority of respondents strongly agreed that religious teachings in their community discourage corrupt practices and that religious leaders serve as positive role models promoting honesty and integrity. Furthermore, most respondents believed that these teachings effectively shape youth perspectives on the negative consequences of corruption. These results align with Adebajo (2019) and Osagie et al. (2020), who observed that religious institutions help instil moral discipline and reduce the likelihood of youth involvement in corrupt acts. However, Ibrahim and Yusuf (2018) caution that the perceived hypocrisy of confident religious leaders involved in corruption can undermine these positive influences, highlighting the need for consistency between religious teachings and leadership conduct.

Similarly, the study revealed that religious organisations play a significant role in promoting ethical values and integrity among youth in Ikere-Ekiti. Many respondents agreed that churches and mosques are effective in discouraging unethical practices and that religious organisations generally provide moral guidance to young people. These findings support Ogundipe (2021), who emphasised the proactive engagement of religious organisations in promoting integrity through youth-oriented programs. Nevertheless, Abubakar (2017) noted that the socio-economic and educational status of

the congregation may influence the effectiveness of these efforts. In communities facing high levels of poverty and unemployment, such as Ikere-Ekiti, the moral guidance offered by religious organisations may be challenged by the pressing survival needs of the youth.

The results also shed light on the prevalent forms of corrupt practices among youth, which include bribery, cheating, and unethical behaviours within schools, workplaces, and communities. A majority of respondents linked these behaviours to socio-economic challenges and frequent exposure to corrupt practices in their immediate environment. These findings align with Nwachukwu (2016) and Adebayo & Eze (2020), who noted that corruption is often normalised in institutions such as schools, thereby creating breeding grounds for corrupt tendencies. This study adds to the literature by showing that community-level exposure reinforces such behaviours, making it necessary to address corruption not only in formal institutions but also within broader societal interactions.

Finally, the study identified several socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors that contribute to youth susceptibility to corruption. Poverty, unemployment, cultural values that prioritise wealth and status, and weak institutional frameworks were found to be key drivers of corrupt practices among youth. These results support the findings of Okeke (2018) and Fagbemi (2020), who linked poverty and poor governance structures to increased corruption risks. Interestingly, while some scholars like Adeyemi and Olagoke (2019) argue that Nigerian culture stigmatises corruption, the findings from Ikere-Ekiti suggest that cultural emphasis on wealth and social status may inadvertently encourage such behaviour. Respondents also proposed strategies to mitigate corruption, including organising anti-corruption programs, fostering collaboration between religious and governmental institutions, creating youth economic opportunities, and enhancing religious education on integrity. These align with Ibekwe (2017) and Adedokun & Adigun (2021), who advocate for a multi-stakeholder approach to combating corruption, while acknowledging the challenges posed by limited resources and institutional support.

## **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, religious institutions, like other social structures influencing young people's lives, hold a fundamental responsibility in positively shaping the worldview of the youth. Through teaching, preaching, guidance, and various support initiatives, these institutions can promote youth education, employment, and income generation. By engaging youths in social transformation and offering care and rehabilitation to those who are broken or wounded, religious institutions contribute significantly to building morally upright, responsible, and productive individuals who can drive societal progress.

However, despite the significant roles religious institutions have played in youth transformation, noticeable gaps remain in their approach and responsiveness to the evolving dynamics of youth life. These gaps can undermine the connection between youths and religion, risking the emergence of a generation whose values,

principles, and perspectives are detached from rich religious teachings and moral standards. To address this, religious institutions must adopt innovative, youth-centred strategies capable of building trust, fostering engagement, and aligning religious values with the realities of contemporary youth challenges. Thus, Adabembe (2022), noted that Nigeria needs a rebirth because of the vices that has penetrated all the nooks and crannies of the nation.

Based on the findings, this study recommends that governments prioritize economic growth to reduce the incentives for corruption, as improved wealth distribution can curb the tendency toward misappropriation of funds. Globalisation and open markets should be encouraged to stimulate foreign investments and enhance economic stability, while collectivist nations can integrate certain individualistic principles to promote innovation and accountability. Religious leaders should also be held accountable for the funds and doctrines under their care, ensuring transparency and moral integrity. Additionally, policymakers must consider key developmental indicators, such as vision, holistic planning, social equity, time consciousness, organised frameworks, and transparency, to foster sustainable development in ways that strengthen both moral values and socio-economic stability.

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