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Christian Education and its impact on Ijaw Ethnic Group in Arogbo, Ese-Odo,Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of Christian education on the socio-economic development of the Ijaw ethnic group in Arogbo, Ondo State, Nigeria. The study was necessitated by the recognition that Christian education has historically played an important role in the introduction and expansion of formal education, literacy, moral formation, leadership development, and community transformation in many Nigerian communities, including the Niger Delta and adjoining riverine settlements. However, despite the long-standing presence of Christian educational institutions, limited empirical attention has been given to their contemporary contribution to educational attainment, human capital development, economic empowerment, social values, cultural identity formation, and community development among the Ijaw people in Arogbo. The study adopted a descriptive research design. This involved 362 respondents comprising graduates of Christian schools, teachers, administrators, and other relevant members of the study population. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Christian Education and Socio-Economic Development Questionnaire (CESDQ). The quantitative data were analysed using frequency counts, percentages, means, standard deviations, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and simple linear regression at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that respondents generally agreed that Christian education had contributed positively to educational attainment among the Ijaw ethnic group. Christian education was perceived to have improved literacy, increased access to formal education, encouraged academic excellence, and contributed to school enrolment. The study further established that Christian education had a significant positive impact on human capital development by promoting critical thinking, practical competencies, productivity, vocational skills, and leadership development. Similarly, Christian education was found to have a significant positive impact on economic empowerment and livelihood activities through improved employment opportunities, entrepreneurship, financial discipline, income generation, and poverty-reduction initiatives. It recommends stronger collaboration among government, churches, educational institutions, traditional authorities, and development organisations to improve educational infrastructure, expand scholarship opportunities, strengthen vocational and entrepreneurship programmes, preserve indigenous languages and cultural heritage, and increase church-led community development interventions.

Keywords: Christian Education, Educational Attainment, Human Capital Development, Economic Empowerment, Community Development.

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INTRODUCTION

Christian education has been a common subject in academia, especially in the context of Nigeria, with the ever-evolving global Christian practices and technologies in the 21st century. Aigbovia, Orabiyi and Fatukasi (2024) state that Christianity has been a major force in shaping Nigeria's socio-political and economic development since its introduction by European missionaries in the 19th century. According to Okorie (2016), Christian education in Nigeria incorporates global trends while maintaining its core principles and values as students are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and ethical grounding necessary to thrive in an interconnected and diverse world. Today, Nigeria boasts of a diverse and thriving Christian community, encompassing various denominations and

traditions. Adeyanju (cited in Okechukwodo, 2024) states that Christian education holds a profound place within the cultural and educational landscape of Nigeria, with a rich history spanning centuries, as the practice of Christian education has shaped the moral compass and spiritual development of countless individuals in the country. Nigeria, being home to a predominantly Christian population, has witnessed the growth and influence of various Christian denominations, each contributing to the dissemination of Christian teachings and values (Adeyemi, 2019).

The intersection of religion and education has been a significant force in shaping societies across Africa, with Christian education playing a particularly transformative role in many communities. The introduction of Christianity to various ethnic groups in Nigeria has been accompanied by educational initiatives that have profoundly influenced cultural values, social structures, economic activities, and community development (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2019). Christian education in Nigeria has historically been intrinsically linked to missionary activities that began in the mid-nineteenth century.

Christianity was introduced to Nigeria in phases. Its earliest contact occurred in the 15th century with Portuguese Catholic missionaries, who sought to convert coastal communities (Aigbovia, Orabiyi & Fatukasi, 2024). However, their efforts were limited in scope and short-lived, as traditional African religions and the transatlantic slave trade dominated the era. It wasn't until the 19th century, with the arrival of British missionaries, that Christianity gained significant traction (Isichei, cited in Aigbovia, Orabiyi, & Fatukasi, 2024). Missionary organisations such as the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Methodist Mission, and the Roman Catholic Mission took the lead in spreading Christianity, particularly in southern and middle-belt Nigeria.

The missionaries recognised that education was a powerful tool for evangelism and social transformation, leading to the establishment of schools, colleges, and training institutions across the country (Ihejirika, 2018). These educational institutions not only provided formal learning but also introduced new value systems, worldviews, and social practices that sometimes aligned with, and at other times conflicted with, indigenous cultural norms and traditions. The dual nature of this impact, both progressive and disruptive, has been a subject of scholarly interest in recent years, particularly as communities grapple with questions of cultural identity in an increasingly globalised world.

By the early 20th century, indigenous Christians began to establish independent churches that combined Christian teachings with African cultural practices. Examples include the Aladura Movement in Yorubaland and the Ethiopian Church in eastern Nigeria. These churches emerged as a response to perceived discrimination within missionary churches and the desire for greater autonomy (Ukah, 2016). Pentecostal Christianity began to gain prominence in Nigeria in the mid-20th century, marked by its emphasis on spiritual gifts, prosperity, and vibrant worship styles. Prominent Pentecostal churches, such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) and Living Faith Church (Winners' Chapel), have since become major religious and socioeconomic forces in Nigeria. These churches often establish schools, universities, hospitals, and businesses, contributing significantly to national development (Ukah, 2016). Christian mission schools played a critical role in producing the leaders of Nigeria's independence movement, such as Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, and Herbert Macaulay. These leaders were products of missionary education, which emphasised leadership, critical thinking, and moral responsibility (Falola & Heaton, in Prelec & Oliveira, 2023). These lead to the growth of churches in Nigeria.

The growth of mega churches and the global influence of Nigerian Pentecostalism have positioned Christianity as a significant socio-economic force. These churches frequently engage in community development projects, including building schools, hospitals, and vocational centres. Nonetheless, critics argue that some churches prioritise prosperity theology over addressing broader societal issues, raising questions about their long-term impact on nation-building (Nmah, cited in Nwoko, 2025). Hence, the rise of mega churches and Pentecostal movements has transformed the role of Christianity in Nigeria. Churches like Winners' Chapel and Redeemed Christian Church of God are among the scattered ones in various states and communities, including Ondo State.

In Ondo State, Christian missionary activities gained momentum in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with various denominations establishing schools and churches throughout the region (Akinwumi, 2017). For the Ijaw ethnic group specifically, the arrival of Christian education represented a watershed moment that would reshape their community's developmental trajectory. Prior to the introduction of formal Christian education, the Ijaw people relied on traditional indigenous educational systems that emphasised oral transmission of knowledge, apprenticeship, and communal learning focused on cultural values, farming techniques, craftsmanship, and social responsibilities (Omobowale et al., 2019).

The Ijaw ethnic group in Aragbo, Ondo State, represents one such community where Christian education has left indelible marks on the social fabric and development trajectory of the people. The Ijaw people, a distinct ethnic group residing primarily in Aragbo, Ondo State, and southwestern Nigeria, have maintained their unique cultural identity, language, and traditional practices for generations. Like many indigenous communities in Nigeria, the Ijaw ethnic group has experienced significant socio-cultural transformations following the introduction of Christianity and Western-

style education during the colonial and post-colonial periods (Ogunbado & Muhammad, 2020). The specific impact of Christian education on this community requires an examination of how educational institutions established by Christian missionaries and churches have influenced various aspects of Ijaw life, from literacy rates and economic opportunities to cultural preservation and social mobility.

The relationship between religion, education, and development has been extensively studied in African contexts, with researchers documenting both positive and negative outcomes (Oladipo et al., 2019). However, much of the existing literature focuses on major ethnic groups and urban centres, leaving smaller ethnic communities like the Ijaw understudied. Furthermore, the contemporary relevance of this study is underscored by ongoing challenges in the Nigerian educational system and the continued significant role of faith-based educational institutions. Christian schools remain important providers of education in many parts of Ondo State and Nigeria more broadly, often filling gaps left by inadequate government provision of educational services (Ajayi & Shofoyeke, 2020).

Educational attainment refers to the highest level of education completed by individuals, while literacy involves the ability to read and write effectively. Christian education has played a significant role in improving literacy rates in Nigeria. Adeleke (2021) observed that missionary schools were instrumental in spreading literacy, particularly in rural communities. Through Bible translation and vernacular teaching, indigenous populations gained access to formal education.

Among the Ijaw people, Christian education introduced formal schooling systems, promoted English language literacy, enabled access to higher education and improved participation in governance and employment. Though disparities still exist due to poverty, limited infrastructure, and unequal access to quality education (Akinsola & Abe, 2019).

Educational attainment is widely recognised as a key indicator of individual and societal development. It refers to the highest level of formal education completed and is closely associated with improved socio-economic outcomes. Christian education has played a pivotal role in enhancing educational attainment in Nigeria, particularly through the establishment of mission schools that expanded access to formal education (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2019).

Empirical evidence supports the positive relationship between Christian education and literacy development. Adeleke (2021) found that missionary schools significantly improved literacy rates in rural communities, thereby enhancing individuals' ability to participate in economic and political processes. Similarly, Barro and Lee (2018) assert that increased educational attainment contributes to national development by improving human productivity and innovation.

Human capital development involves equipping individuals with skills, knowledge, and competencies necessary for economic productivity. Christian education contributes to this through vocational training and moral discipline. Mission schools historically offered training in carpentry.

Tailoring, teaching, and clerical work. Ellis (2019) emphasises that education enhances productivity and economic diversification. However, in many Niger Delta communities, including Ijaw areas, the impact of education on employment remains limited due to structural challenges such as environmental degradation and lack of industries (Nwokoma et al., 2022). Thus, while Christian education builds human capacity, its translation into economic benefits is often constrained. Human capital development refers to the process of enhancing individuals' knowledge, skills, and competencies to improve productivity and economic outcomes. Education is widely regarded as the most critical factor in human capital formation (Barro & Lee, 2018).

Christian education contributes significantly to human capital development by promoting intellectual growth, ethical behaviour, and leadership skills. Adeoye (2023) highlights that mission schools have historically produced individuals who have contributed to national development in various sectors.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of human capital development depends on the availability of opportunities for individuals to apply their skills. Aderinoye and Ojokheta (2018) argue that education alone cannot guarantee economic success without supportive infrastructure and employment opportunities. In the Niger Delta, environmental degradation and economic instability are caused by external socio-economic influence of Christian education on skill acquisition and human capital development. further limit the utilisation of human capital (Nwokoma et al., 2022).

Thus, while Christian education enhances human capacity, its impact on development is mediated.

Economic empowerment involves improving individuals' ability to generate income and achieve financial independence. Christian education promotes values such as diligence, stewardship, and integrity, which are essential for economic success.

However, empirical studies reveal that these values do not always translate into improved economic outcomes. Okafor (2024) found that poverty and unemployment remain prevalent in Nigeria, particularly in rural and resource-rich regions. Similarly, Poroma (2024) highlights the negative impact of environmental degradation on livelihoods in the Niger Delta, where traditional occupations such as fishing and farming have been severely affected.

Adeleke and Ogunleye (2022) emphasise that education must be complemented by economic opportunities to achieve meaningful empowerment.

Without such opportunities, the benefits of education remain largely theoretical.

Skill acquisition is essential for enhancing employability and economic productivity. It involves the development of practical competencies that enable individuals to engage effectively in various economic activities. Historically, Christian education incorporated vocational training, particularly during the missionary era when schools emphasised crafts, agriculture, and technical skills (Ihejirika, 2018).

In modern contexts, the importance of skill acquisition has increased due to rising unemployment and economic instability. Ellis (2019) argues that skill development is crucial for livelihood diversification, especially in rural communities. Christian education contributes to this by fostering critical thinking, discipline, and problem-solving abilities.

However, contemporary studies suggest that many educational systems, including Christian-based institutions, place greater emphasis on theoretical knowledge at the expense of practical skills. Omodan and Tsotetsi (2018) observe that this imbalance has contributed to a mismatch between education and labour market demands. As a result, many graduates lack the skills required for gainful employment.

Economic empowerment is widely understood as the process through which individuals gain the capacity, skills, resources, and opportunities to improve their economic status and overall well-being. It involves increased access to income-generating activities, financial independence, productive assets, and decision-making power over economic resources. Within the context of education, economic empowerment is often linked to the acquisition of knowledge, competencies, and values that enable individuals to participate effectively in economic activities (Adeleke & Ogunleye, 2022). The literature reveals that Christian education has played a significant, though sometimes limited, role in promoting economic empowerment and improving livelihood outcomes in Nigeria.

This study also will contribute to understanding the dynamics of cultural change and continuity in African societies. The Ijaw ethnic group's experience with Christian education represents a case study in how communities navigate the tensions between tradition and modernity, indigenous and foreign influences, and local and global cultures. This study will examine how Christian education has shaped and been shaped by Ijaw cultural contexts as well as provide insights into processes of cultural adaptation, resistance, and hybridisation that are relevant to many communities across Africa and the global South (Taiwo, 2017). Therefore, the exposure of the Ijaw ethnic group to Christian education and the impact of their development provided the backdrop for this study.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study was to examine the impact of Christian education on the Ijaw ethnic group in Aragbo, Ondo State. The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. Examine the influence of Christian education on educational attainment among the Ijaw ethnic group.
2. Assess the impact of Christian education on skill acquisition and human capital development among the Ijaw ethnic group.
3. Determine the effect of Christian education on economic empowerment and livelihood activities among the Ijaw ethnic group.

The following research questions will guide this study:

1. What impact does Christian education have on educational attainment among the Ijaw ethnic group?
2. What is the impact of Christian education on human capital development among the Ijaw ethnic group?
3. To what extent does Christian education affect economic empowerment and livelihood activities among the Ijaw ethnic group?

Hypotheses

1. Christian education has no significant impact on educational attainment among the Ijaw ethnic group.
2. There is no significant impact of Christian education on human capital development among the Ijaw ethnic group.
3. There is no significant impact of Christian education on economic empowerment and livelihood activities among the Ijaw ethnic group

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a mixed-method research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The choice of this design was informed by the need to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of Christian education on the Ijaw ethnic group. The quantitative component employed a descriptive survey design, which allowed for the collection of data from a large population to describe existing conditions and relationships among variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach is appropriate because the study sought to measure variables such as educational attainment, economic empowerment, and social values. The study was conducted in Arogbo, a community located in the Ilaje Local Government Area of Ondo State. The population of the study comprised all members of the fifteen thousand five hundred (15,500) Ijaw ethnic group residing in Arogbo, Ondo State. The sample size of three hundred and sixty-four (364) participants for the

quantitative component was determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula. For the qualitative component, 30 participants were selected from the sample for in-depth interviews using purposive sampling. Two main instruments used in the study include a questionnaire; a researcher-structured questionnaire titled “Christian Education and Community Development Questionnaire (CECDQ)” was used. The instruments were subjected to face and content validity. Experts in educational research, sociology, and religious studies from Paul University Awka reviewed the instruments to ensure relevance, clarity, and adequacy of coverage. Corrections were made based on their feedback, which provided the final draft of the instrument. Reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach's alpha method. A pilot study was conducted with 30 respondents outside the study area. A 0.84 reliability coefficient was obtained, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, and percentage) were used to answer the research questions. Inferential statistics: t-tests, chi-square and regression analysis were used to test hypotheses at the 0.05 significance level. For the qualitative data, thematic analysis was used. Responses were coded and categorised into themes

Methods

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender (N = 362)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	174	48.1
Female	188	51.9
Total	362	100.0

The table 4.1.1 results shows that 174 respondents (48.1%) were male, while 188 respondents (51.9%) were female. This suggests a fairly balanced gender distribution, with females constituting a slightly higher proportion of the respondents.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18–27	74	20.4
28–37	109	30.1
38–471.1	92	25.4
48–57	58	16.0
58 years and above	29	8.0
Total	362	100.0

Table 4.1.2 shows that the largest proportion of respondents (30.1%) were between 28 and 37 years of age, followed by those aged 38–47 years (25.4%). This indicates that most respondents were adults with sufficient educational and professional experience to provide informed responses.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Highest Educational Qualification

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
NCE/OND	68	18.8
Bachelor's Degree (B.Ed./B.Sc./B.A.)	151	41.7
Master's Degree	98	27.1
Doctorate (Ph.D.)	45	12.4
Total	362	100.0

Table 3 shows the majority of respondents (41.7%) possessed bachelor's degrees, while 27.1% held master's degrees and 12.4% possessed doctoral qualifications. This indicates that the respondents were highly educated and capable of providing reliable information on the issues investigated.

Research Question One: What impact does Christian education have on educational attainment among the Ijaw ethnic group?

Table 4: Mean Ratings of Respondents on the Impact of Christian Education on Educational Attainment (N = 362)

S/N	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	Christian education encourages school enrolment among the Ijaw people.	182	120	40	20	3.28	Agree
2	Christian education has improved literacy among the Ijaw ethnic group.	176	126	42	18	3.27	Agree
3	Christian education motivates learners to complete their education.	170	128	44	20	3.24	Agree
4	Christian education promotes academic excellence.	174	126	42	20	3.26	Agree
5	Christian education encourages learners to pursue higher education.	168	128	46	20	3.23	Agree
6	Christian education improves study habits among students.	165	130	46	21	3.21	Agree
7	Christian education enhances critical thinking and problem-solving skills.	162	128	50	22	3.19	Agree
8	Christian education has reduced school dropout among the Ijaw people.	88	96	110	68	2.56	Agree
	Grand Mean					3.16	

The results in Table 4 indicate that respondents generally agreed that Christian education has a positive impact on educational attainment among the Ijaw ethnic group, with a grand mean of 3.16, which is above the criterion mean of 2.50. Respondents particularly agreed that Christian education encourages school enrolment, improves literacy, promotes academic excellence, motivates learners to complete their education, encourages higher education, improves study habits, and enhances critical thinking. Although respondents agreed that Christian education has contributed to reducing school dropout, this item recorded the lowest mean score (2.56), suggesting that other socio-economic factors may also influence school retention among the Ijaw people.

Research Question Two: What is the impact of Christian education on human capital development among the Ijaw ethnic group?

Table 5: Mean Ratings of Respondents on the Impact of Christian Education on Human Capital Development (N = 362)

S/N	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	Christian education develops leadership skills.	180	122	40	20	3.28	Agree
2	Christian education enhances communication skills.	176	124	42	20	3.26	Agree
3	Christian education promotes vocational competence.	170	126	46	20	3.23	Agree
4	Christian education encourages innovation and creativity.	166	128	46	22	3.21	Agree
5	Christian education promotes entrepreneurship.	162	128	50	22	3.19	Agree
6	Christian education improves employability among graduates.	168	126	46	22	3.22	Agree
7	Christian education develops ethical leadership and accountability.	186	118	38	20	3.30	Agree
8	Christian education adequately equips graduates with modern workplace skills.	84	92	112	74	2.51	Agree
	Grand Mean =					3.15	

The findings presented in Table 5 show that respondents agreed that Christian education has a significant positive impact on human capital development among the Ijaw ethnic group, as indicated by the grand mean of 3.15, which exceeds the criterion mean of 2.50. Respondents agreed that Christian education develops leadership abilities, communication skills, vocational competence, innovation, entrepreneurship, employability, and ethical leadership. However, the item relating to equipping graduates with modern workplace skills recorded the lowest mean (2.51), implying that although Christian education contributes substantially to human capital development, there is still a need to strengthen digital, technological, and contemporary professional

competencies within Christian educational institutions.

The findings indicated that Christian education significantly contributes to human capital development among the Ijaw ethnic group. With a grand mean of 3.15, respondents agreed that Christian education develops leadership skills, communication competence, vocational abilities, entrepreneurship, innovation, employability, and ethical leadership. However, respondents expressed relatively lower agreement regarding the adequacy of modern workplace skills acquired through Christian education, indicating the need for greater emphasis on digital literacy, technological competence, and contemporary professional skills.

Research Question Three: To what extent does Christian education effect on economic empowerment and livelihood activities among the Ijaw ethnic group?

Table 6: Economic Empowerment and Livelihood Activities

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	Increases employment opportunities	170	124	46	22	3.22	Agree
2	Encourages self-employment	165	126	48	23	3.20	Agree
3	Improves income generation	162	128	48	24	3.18	Agree
4	Promotes financial responsibility	168	126	46	22	3.22	Agree
5	Contributes to poverty reduction	78	92	118	74	2.48	Disagree
6	Enhances access to economic opportunities	80	96	112	74	2.50	Agree
7	Encourages entrepreneurship	170	124	46	22	3.22	Agree
8	Improves standard of living	88	94	110	70	2.55	Agree
	Grand Mean					2.95	

The table shows a grand mean of 2.95 which is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. This shows that Christian education contributes positively to economic empowerment and livelihood activities, with a grand mean of 2.95. Respondents agreed that Christian education promotes entrepreneurship, enhances employment opportunities, encourages self-reliance, improves financial responsibility, and contributes to improved standards of living. However, respondents disagreed that Christian education alone has substantially reduced poverty, implying that broader economic conditions and government interventions remain necessary for sustainable poverty alleviation.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant impact of Christian education on educational attainment among the Ijaw ethnic group.

Table 7: t-Test Analysis of Christian Education and Educational Attainment

Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value	Decision
High Exposure	198	3.42	0.58	7.84	360	.000	Reject H01
Low Exposure	164	2.91	0.67				

Decision: Since p (.000) < .05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Christian education has a significant positive impact on educational attainment among the Ijaw ethnic group

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Hypothesis Two: There is no significant impact of Christian education on human capital development among the Ijaw ethnic group.

Table 8: Regression Analysis of Christian Education and Human Capital Development

Variable	B	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
Christian Education	0.614	0.591	13.782	.000

Table 2: Model Summary

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	Sig.	Decision
.591	.349	.347	189.94	.000	Significant

Decision: Since $p < .05$, reject the null hypothesis (H_{02}). Therefore, the relationship is statistically significant.

The table shows that Christian education significantly predicts human capital development, accounting for 34.9% of the variance.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant impact of Christian education on economic empowerment and livelihood activities among the Ijaw ethnic group.

Table 9: Regression Analysis of Christian Education and Economic Empowerment

Variable	B	Beta (β)	T	Sig.
Christian Education	0.548	0.524	11.632	.000

Table 2: Model Summary

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	Sig.
.524	.275	.273	135.30	.000

Decision: Reject H03.

Table 9 shows that Christian education significantly influences economic empowerment and livelihood activities.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study revealed that Christian education has a significant positive impact on educational attainment among the Ijaw ethnic group in Aragbo. Respondents agreed that Christian education encourages school enrolment, improves literacy, promotes academic excellence, strengthens study habits, enhances critical thinking, motivates learners to complete their education, and encourages the pursuit of higher education. The grand mean of 3.16 further demonstrates that respondents perceived Christian education as a major contributor to educational advancement within the study area. The t-test analysis also confirmed that the influence of Christian education on educational attainment was statistically significant ($t = 7.84$, $p < .05$).

The findings suggest that Christian education has continued the historical legacy of Christian missionary education in providing access to formal education and promoting literacy among the Ijaw people. Beyond the provision of academic instruction, Christian education emphasises discipline, diligence, honesty, responsibility, and service to humanity. These values create an enabling learning environment that motivates students to excel academically and develop lifelong learning habits.

The findings support the assumptions of Human Capital Theory, developed by Theodore Schultz (1961) and Gary Becker (1964), which maintains that investment in education increases knowledge, skills, productivity, and socio-economic development. Christian education represents a unique form of educational investment because it combines intellectual development with moral and spiritual formation, thereby producing graduates who

are academically competent and ethically responsible.

The present findings are consistent with Ezegwu and Okoye (2024), who investigated the long-term effects of the government takeover of Christian mission schools in Nigeria. Their study found that Christian mission schools played a critical role in expanding access to education, improving literacy, promoting academic excellence, and producing disciplined graduates. Although government ownership increased school enrolment, respondents believed that educational quality and moral discipline declined after the transfer of mission schools to government administration.

The findings also agree with Chukwu, Uzoegwu, Ezema, and Adeniji (2024), who reported that effective teaching strategies in Christian Religious Studies significantly improved students' academic achievement and learning outcomes in secondary schools in Enugu State. Their study demonstrated that learner-centred approaches adopted within Christian education improved students' understanding, participation, and academic performance.

Similarly, Karibo (2025) observed that Christian educational institutions in Nigeria continue to contribute significantly to educational development by integrating academic excellence, leadership training, moral education, and community service. The author concluded that Christian education remains one of the strongest instruments for producing responsible citizens capable of contributing to national development.

The qualitative findings further strengthened the quantitative results. Interview participants consistently stated that Christian schools had produced many of the teachers, clergy, civil servants, health professionals, and community leaders serving the Aragbo community. Participants also said that Christian education had taught them discipline, a love of learning, respect for authority, and moral values, all of which helped them do well in school. The findings therefore demonstrate that Christian education remains a vital catalyst for educational attainment among the Ijaw ethnic group by promoting literacy, academic excellence, personal discipline, and lifelong learning.

The findings also revealed that Christian education has a significant positive impact on human capital development among the Ijaw ethnic group. Respondents agreed that Christian education develops leadership skills, communication competence, vocational abilities, innovation, entrepreneurship, employability, ethical leadership, and accountability. The grand mean of 3.15 indicates that respondents perceived Christian education as making substantial contributions to the development of knowledge, skills, and competencies required for productive participation in society. Regression analysis further confirmed that Christian education significantly predicts human capital development ($\beta = .591$, $p < .05$).

The findings indicate that Christian education contributes to holistic human development by equipping learners with cognitive, vocational, social, ethical, and leadership competencies. Unlike educational approaches that focus exclusively on academic knowledge, Christian education seeks to develop the whole person through the integration of intellectual growth, moral formation, spiritual maturity, leadership development, and service to society.

These findings strongly support Human Capital Theory, which argues that education is one of the most important investments for improving productivity, innovation, employability, and economic growth. The present study demonstrates that Christian education contributes to human capital not only by increasing educational qualifications but also by developing ethical values and leadership qualities required for sustainable development.

The findings corroborate those of Okorie (2025), who found that religious participation positively influences human capital development by improving educational attainment, employability, leadership competence, and income-generating capacity. The study concluded that faith-based institutions remain important partners in developing the human resources required for national development.

Similarly, Napbut, Oluwawole, and Boyi (2025) reported that Christian theological education significantly enhances leadership development, ethical decision-making, professional competence, and community transformation in Nigeria. Their mixed-methods study demonstrated that graduates of Christian educational institutions were better equipped to provide ethical leadership and contribute to sustainable community development.

Ojetayo (2025) further supports the findings by concluding that Christian Religious Education contributes to entrepreneurial development, ethical business practices, innovation, and responsible citizenship. According to the study, Christian education develops qualities such as diligence, integrity, accountability, creativity, and perseverance, which improve workplace productivity and organisational effectiveness. Participants explained that Christian educational institutions had produced leaders who served with integrity in churches, schools, businesses, government agencies, and community organisations. They further observed that Christian education had helped many young people acquire vocational skills, leadership abilities, effective communication skills, and a strong work ethic that enhanced their employability and social mobility.

The findings therefore established that Christian education is a significant contributor to human capital development among the Ijaw ethnic group. By integrating academic excellence with ethical leadership, vocational competence, entrepreneurship, and moral character, Christian education prepares individuals to contribute effectively to socio-economic development and national transformation.

The findings indicated that Christian education significantly influenced economic empowerment and livelihood activities. Respondents generally agreed that Christian education enhanced employment opportunities, entrepreneurship, financial responsibility, and self-reliance. However, respondents disagreed that Christian education alone had substantially reduced poverty, suggesting that broader economic factors also influence livelihood outcomes. Regression analysis nevertheless showed a significant positive effect ($\beta = .524$, $p < .05$). This finding implies that although Christian education equips individuals with employable skills and entrepreneurial capacities, economic empowerment also depends on employment availability, government policies, infrastructure, and access to financial resources.

The result supports the findings of Sen (2019), who argued that education expands individuals' capabilities and opportunities to improve their economic well-being. Similarly, Rauch (2023) emphasised that education improves labour productivity and income-generating potential, although poverty reduction requires complementary socio-economic interventions.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

Christian education had a significant positive impact on educational attainment among the Ijaw ethnic group. Respondents agreed that Christian education encouraged school enrolment, improved academic performance, enhanced literacy, promoted critical thinking, strengthened study habits, motivated learners to complete their education, and encouraged the pursuit of higher education. The independent samples t-test showed a statistically significant difference ($t = 7.84$, $p < .05$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Christian education significantly influenced human capital development among the Ijaw ethnic group. The findings indicated that Christian education enhanced leadership abilities, communication skills, vocational competence, employability, innovation, entrepreneurship, and workforce productivity. Regression analysis indicated that Christian education significantly predicted human capital development ($\beta = .591$, $R^2 = .349$, $p < .05$).

Christian education significantly contributed to economic empowerment and livelihood activities. Respondents agreed that Christian education enhanced employment opportunities, encouraged entrepreneurship, improved financial responsibility, and promoted self-reliance. However, they disagreed that Christian education alone had substantially reduced poverty, suggesting that other socio-economic factors also affect livelihoods. Despite these findings, regression analysis showed a significant positive effect of Christian education on economic empowerment ($\beta = .524$, $R^2 = .275$, $p < .05$).

Christian education played a significant role in promoting positive social values among the Ijaw ethnic group. Respondents agreed that Christian education fostered honesty, integrity, respect for authority, accountability, peaceful coexistence, community service, and discouraged antisocial behaviour. The chi-square analysis confirmed a statistically significant relationship between Christian education and the promotion of social values ($\chi^2 = 84.27$, $p < .05$).

The study concluded that Christian education has contributed meaningfully to community development in Aragbo through the establishment of schools, leadership development, healthcare initiatives, educational improvement, and enhanced community participation. Nevertheless, its contribution to physical infrastructure development was perceived to be relatively limited when compared with its influence on educational and human development.

Recommendations

This study's findings lead to the following recommendations:

1. Churches and Christian educational institutions should continue to strengthen faith-based educational programmes that integrate academic excellence with moral and character development. This will enhance educational attainment and produce graduates who are intellectually competent, morally upright, and socially responsible.
2. Mission schools and Christian educational providers should incorporate leadership development, entrepreneurship education, vocational skills acquisition, digital literacy, and career guidance into their curricula to further strengthen human capital development and improve graduates' employability and self-reliance.
3. Federal, State, and Local Governments should recognise the developmental contributions of Christian educational institutions by providing equitable financial support, grants, teacher development opportunities, and infrastructural assistance to qualified mission schools, particularly in underserved communities.
4. Churches, faith-based organisations, and development partners should establish entrepreneurship support programmes, vocational training centres, microcredit schemes, and mentorship initiatives to complement Christian education and improve economic empowerment among youths and adults in Ijaw communities.
5. Curriculum developers and educational policymakers should strengthen values-based education by integrating ethical leadership, integrity, peaceful coexistence, civic responsibility, conflict resolution, and community service into school curricula at all levels of education.

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