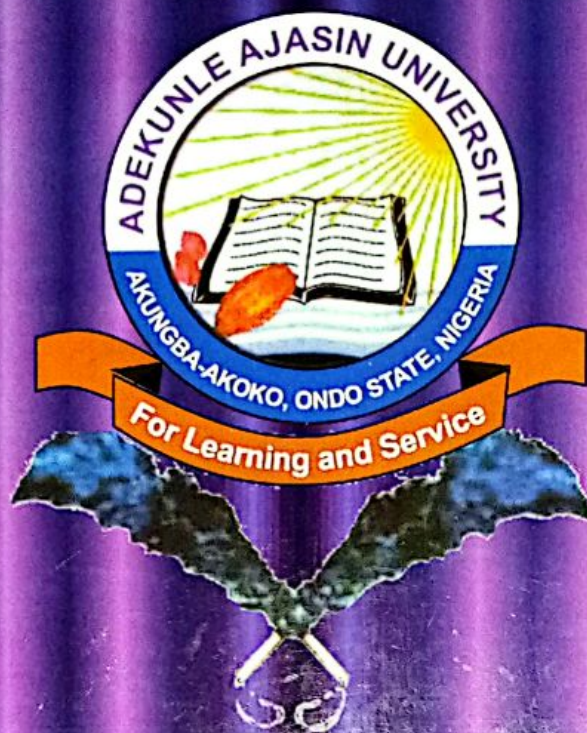




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A Comparative Study of Christian Religious Studies Students' Academic Performance in NECO SSCEs in Ekiti State, Nigeria

By

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Abstract

Examination has remained a major means of measuring and assessing students' performance and skills in school system across all levels of learning not only in Nigeria but in many parts of the world. Therefore, the main purpose of this study was designed to examine general academic performance of CRS students in external examination conducted by NECO SSCEs and to compared performance of CRS students based on gender and school type in NECO SSCEs in Ekiti State, Nigeria from 2015-2019. This study employed ex-post-facto research type of comparative study. The population for the study was all the senior secondary school offering Christian Religious Studies in Ekiti State, Nigeria. A total number of one thousand, eight hundred and six (1,806) candidate results were used for this study employing the simple random and purposive sampling techniques. The research instrument used was a profoma tagged 'Christian Religious Studies Academic Performance Test (CRSAPT)' to collect students' results in CRS in the sampled school and the results covered a span of five years. Similarly, the results of NECO SSCEs in CRS is the product of standardized and norm-referenced examination in the country. The data collected were analysed using the percentage to describe distribution of CRS students in NECO SSCEs. Research Question 1 was answered using the percentage, while Research Questions 2 and 3 that has corresponding Hypotheses 1 and 2 were answered and tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that: general performance of CRS students was 1,138 (63.00%) had passed grade in the NECO SSCEs that is (A1 – C6) from 2015 – 2019 academic sessions. There was no significant difference in the male and female CRS students' academic performance in the NECO SSCEs in Ekiti State. More so, there was significant difference in the private and public CRS students' academic performance in the NECO SSCEs in Ekiti State, where private CRS students' performing better than public CRS students. The study concluded that general performance of CRS students in NECO SSCEs in Ekiti State, Nigeria from 2015-2019 was excellent. It was therefore recommended that: government should employed qualified and experienced teachers to teach the subject in all levels of education. Teachers and parents are to monitors the progress of students in public schools in order to make them met up with their counterparts in private schools.

Keywords: Comparative study, christian religious studies, examination, performance and NECO SSCEs.

Introduction

Education is acknowledged as an instrument for fostering the worth and development of an individual for the sake of general development of the society. The United Nations of Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2022) viewed education as a vital instrument for transformation and an affordable tool for empowerment of individual. They explained further that education builds the knowledge and skills to form an ecological world for one and all. It was stated in National Policy on Education that one of the major goals of education is that, every child shall have a right to educational opportunities irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities, each according to his/her ability (FRN, 2013). Lack of access to education or exposure to the wrong kind of education can contribute to persistent inequality, prejudice and renewed armed conflicts, a vicious cycle that is difficult to break (UNESCO, 2011). Therefore, the main purpose of education in Nigeria, is to pay great attention to it citizens, in acquiring sound education and make education free and compulsory for all citizens in the country. This is because; education is an essential tool for political, economical and social development.

In addition, the ultimate goal of education is to prepare the learners to be useful and productive citizens who will contribute willingly for their country's progress and prosperity. One way to achieve this is to make sure that the curriculum content is well explained and understood by the students. Also, acquiring sound education can be accomplished through Christian Religious Studies, since Christian Religious Studies is not only a comprehensive religion but a complete way of life. The teaching of Religious Studies in Nigerian schools was necessitated based on the need to stimulate and assist the recipients in their quest for personal sense of meaning in life with a view to understanding the belief and the liking of others (Ajidagba, 2009). Lawal (2010) asserted that Christian Religious Studies is one of the subjects that missionaries bequeathed to the Nigerian educational system through the establishment of schools in the 19th century. He explained further that, Christian Religious Studies as an academic discipline that is included in the Nigeria secondary school curriculum, aims at creating students that will have God fearing, moral sound, high discipline, useful to themselves and respect for elders. One of the objectives is to motivate students to see themselves and others as children of God, thereby growing up in peaceful, harmonious and truthful relationship with God and humanity (Lawal, 2010).

Ojo (2011) asserted that Christian Religious Studies in Nigeria schools, whether primary or secondary, is the study of an aspect of the whole educational system which aims at teaching religious and moral instructions using the curriculum that is not only Bible-based and Christ centered but related to life experience. Ojo (2011) explained further that, Christian Religious Studies plays an important role in human moral development as the subject provides a powerful motivation for right behaviour by blending spiritual, moral and social values which help in character development. Also, it is one of the school subjects that provide opportunity for the development of a child in cognitive and affective domains. Similarly, Oyedeko (2013) stated that Christian Religious Studies serves as a fountain of moral and spiritual guidance to students and gives them a sense of direction and the ability to differentiate between right and wrong or good and bad. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) in the National Policy on Education recognises Christian Religious Studies as part of the school curriculum at all levels of the Nigeria educational system. More so, in the current 9-3-4 system of education, Christian Religious Studies is among the core subjects offered at the Upper Basic (Junior Secondary) level and an elective subject at the Senior Secondary level (FRN, 2013). The senior secondary school curriculum contains all learning activities that take place right from the Junior Secondary One up to the end of the Senior Secondary Three. Some of the objectives of teaching Christian Religious Studies in Nigeria senior secondary school are following:

- (a) To provide more opportunity for the Nigeria youth to learn more about God and thereby develop their faith in God;
- (b) To enable the youth to accept Christ as their Saviour and Redeemer;
- (c) To enable the youth to recognise Jesus as founder and sustainer of the Christian Church;
- (d) To enable the youth to accept the guidance of the Holy Spirit in their daily lives and activities;
- (e) To help the youth to understand the basic teachings of Christ and to apply these to their daily life and work;
- (f) To help develop in the youth Christian attitudes and moral values such as humility, respect, love, kindness, justice, fair play, spirit of forgiveness, obedience, orderly behaviour or discipline, hard work and devotion to duty, selfless service to God and humanity (FRN, 2013).

Examination has remained a major means of measuring and assessing students' performance and skills in a school system across all levels of learning not only in Nigeria but in many parts of the world. In other words, examination is a generic name for written exercises, oral questions or practical tasks, set to test a students' knowledge in a particular skills (Adeboye, 2020). This examination may be inform of objectives or an essay, oral or written, internal or external. In Nigeria, an internal examination is a form of examination whereby students' continuous assessment tests, terminal, semester, annual or promotional examinations are evaluated by the teachers within the school. While external examinations are those examinations conducted by the examination agencies. According to Kpolovie (2002), examination agencies were set up to promote education, co-ordinate educational programmes, control and monitor the quality of education in the educational institutions. This implies that external examinations are known as public examination that provide uniform assessment to all candidate who were exposed to a given curriculum. Ojo and Adeboye (2022) asserted that public examinations was conducted by examination bodies in Nigeria, they are charged to conducts examination for all Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCEs) which include the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), the National Examinations Council (NECO), the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), the Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB), among others.

The National Examinations Council (NECO) was established in April, 1999. It was formally known as National Board for Educational Measurement (NBEM) but later it was transformed to National Examination Council (NECO). The events that led to the establishment of NECO dated back to 1997 when there was widespread leakage in the West African School Certificate Examination (WASCE). Then the Federal Government, in 1997, set up a committee, headed by EtsuNupe, to re-examine the Nigeria educational system and the vision 2010 committee to propose a path of development for the country. The National Council on Education upheld this recommendation at its 46th meeting held in Abeokuta, Ogun State in March, 1999. Hence, by April, 1999, the Federal Government promulgated decree establishing the National Examinations Council (NECO), with its headquarters in Minna, Niger State. The body was seen by many as an attempt to reduce the burden of WAEC and it was charged with the responsibility of conducting the Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCEs) twice in a year which is June/July and November/December and the first of which was conducted by the body in May/June, 2000. Performance in each subject either June/July or November/December SSCEs Ordinary Level are graded as thus: A1 = Distinction; B2 = Very Good; B3 = Good; C4, C5 and C6 = Credit; D7 and E8 = Pass.

In addition, this examination body conducts test for both public and private organization that may require for their services, they accredited many schools for the JSCEs and SSCEs. They are responsible for test development, marking, scoring, awarding of grades and grant certificate to candidates to obtain admission into any higher institutions of learning in the country. Similarly, the council has been receiving encomiums from all works of life concerning the admission exercise into Unity Schools. The council was also appointed as a consultant to conduct employment examinations for organisation (Adeogun, 2002). Following are some functions of the Council which include:

- i. General control and conduct of the National Common Entrance Examinations (NCEE) for admission into Federal Government Colleges and Allied Institutions;
- ii. General control of the conduct of the Junior School Certificate Examination (JSCE) in all Federal Government Colleges and other Allied Institution;
- iii. General control of the conduct of Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE) in the Country;
- iv. Conducting researches leading to National improvement of testing and Examination procedures at Junior and Senior Secondary School Levels;
- v. Conducting a standard National Assessment of Educational Performance at Junior Secondary School Level; and
- vi. Carrying out such other activities as are expedient for the discharge of all or any of the functions conferred on the Council under or pursuant to the act establishing the Council (NECO, 2007).

Performance is very important in human life and every society has its own goals and aspiration because it provides information about the learning abilities and capabilities of the learners (Adeboye, 2020). Academic performance or achievement is a pedagogical term used to determine students' success in a formal school setting (Abdullahi, 2011). Academic performance is the student's accomplishment in terms of grades or scores obtained in a given test (Lawal, Murtala, & Sadiq 2016). They explained further that, academic performance is determined by the individual scores in relation to a given standard or sometimes in relation to the performance of other students in the class as a result of failure experienced. As noted by Ijaduola (2008), academic performance cannot be obtained in students if they are discouraged. Therefore, academic performance generally is an outcome of all academic tasks or rigor of a person which could be poorly or successfully stated and teachers are expected to meaningfully contribute to students' academic performance.

Statement of the problem

Despite the moral inculcation and importance of Christian Religious Studies to the individual and the society at large. It seems that academic performance of CRS students over the years have not improved as expected in both the internal and external examinations in Nigeria. Reports from NECO showed that performance of students in CRS in Nigeria secondary schools is not consistent/declining (NECO, 2007). The poor performance of students in Christian Religious Studies has been attributed to a number of factors which include, negative attitude of students towards the subject, poor method of teaching used by the teachers, lack of qualified teachers teaching the subjects, lukewarm attitude of the parents, lack of infrastructures and learning resources such as classrooms, chairs, libraries and instructional materials, among others. Some of these factors are said to be responsible for the poor performance and low enrolment of students in the subject.

The performance of the students may however be influenced by gender and school type which is concerned in this study. Many studies have been conducted on comparative analysis of students'

academic performance in external examinations in different disciplines. For instance, Ibrahim (2008) investigated the relationship between students' academic performance in Arabic and Islamic Studies in the Senior School Certificate Examinations in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State. His study revealed a low relationship. The researcher concluded that there was a low relationship between NECO SSCEs Arabic scores and the NECO Islamic Studies scores. Lawal (2010), carried out research on factors affecting academic achievement of students in Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCEs) in Christian Religious Studies in Ogun State, Nigeria. His findings showed a low relationship and there was no significant difference in CRS students' academic achievement based on gender and school type. It was therefore held that there was no significant difference in gender and school type of academic achievement scores in Christian Religious Studies.

In another study by, Aburime, Jekanyinfa and Saidu (2016) examined relationship between performance in Terminal Examination and West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) in Christian Religious Studies in Ogbomosho South Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. Their findings showed that there was a positive relationship between students' performance in Terminal and WASSCE in Christian Religious Studies. Also, their finding revealed that there was significant difference exist in students' performance in terminal and SSCE in Christian Religious Studies on the basis of gender. More so, Adeboye (2020) investigated difference in the influence of teaching methods on CRS students' academic performance based on teacher gender and school type in some selected senior secondary schools in Ado LGA of Ekiti State, Nigeria. Her findings revealed that teachers' gender and school type has no significant influence on students' academic performance but may be influenced by other factors. However, to the best of researcher's knowledge, none of the above mentioned researchers based their studies on "A Comparative study of Students' Academic Performance in Christian Religious Studies in External Examination conducted by NECO SSCEs in Ekiti State, Nigeria from 2015 to 2019". This therefore, create research gap in the body of knowledge which the present study intends to fill.

Purpose of the study

The general purpose of this study is to compare senior secondary school students' performance in external examination conducted by NECO SSCEs results in CRS, Ekiti State, Nigeria from 2015-2019. Specifically, the study aimed to examine:

- a. general performance of CRS students in the National Examinations Council (NECO) in senior school certificate examinations (SSCEs), in Ekiti State, Nigeria from 2015-2019.
- b. difference in the male and female CRS students' academic performance in the NECO SSCEs in Ekiti State from 2015-2019
- c. difference in the CRS students' academic performance in the NECO SSCEs based on school type from 2015-2019.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in this study:

- a. what is the general performance of CRS students in the NECO SSCEs in Ekiti State, Nigeria from 2015-2019?
- b. is there any difference in the male and female CRS students' academic performance in the NECO SSCEs in Ekiti State from 2015-2019?
- c. is there any difference in the CRS students' academic performance in the NECO SSCEs based on school type in Ekiti State from 2015-2019?

Research Hypotheses

Based on the research questions raised, the following null hypotheses were generated and would be tested:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the male and female CRS students' academic performance in NECO SSCEs in Ekiti State from 2015-2019?

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the CRS students' academic performance in NECO SSCEs based on school type in Ekiti State from 2015-2019?

Methodology

This study adopted ex-post facto research design. Bello (2016) defined ex-post facto research as design in which pre-existing groups are compared to see whether some independent variables has caused a change in a dependent variable. The population for this study comprised all the senior secondary school students offering CRS in Ekiti State, while the target population of this study consisted all candidates that sat for CRS in NECO SSCEs in Ekiti State from 2015 to 2019. A total number of one thousand eight hundred and six (1,806) candidate results constitute the study sampled using multi-stages. In the first stage Simple random were used to select 50% of the Local Government Areas in the State. Two (2) LGAs was selected in each senatorial district. To do this, the names of the sixteen (16) LGAs were written on pieces of paper divided by three (3) based on senatorial districts, wrapped, put in a container and properly mixed up. A student was asked to pick up any six (6) out of sixteen (16) pieces of paper, one after the other. The paper were opened and the names of six (6) LGAs found in them were selected.

At the second stage, purposive sampling techniques was used to select five (5) senior secondary schools in each LGAs where students registered for Christian Religious Studies (CRS) in NECO SSCEs. The last stage was selection of candidates' results. Logically, only the results of candidates that sat for Christian Religious Studies (CRS) in NECO SSCEs in Ekiti State from 2015-2019 were sampled. Purposive and stratified sampling techniques were employed to select one thousand, one hundred and two (1,102) male candidate results and seven hundred and four (704) female candidate results. Therefore, a total number of one thousand and eighty-six (1,806) candidate results were involved in this study. The instrument used for the data collection was a proforma tagged Christian Religious Studies Performance Test (CRSPT) to collect data in CRS from the sampled schools. The instrument had columns for gender of the students as well as their grades in the NECO SSCEs results and the results covered a pan of five (5) years. Data collected were analysed using the percentage to describe distribution of CRS students' results in NECO SSCEs. Research Question 1 was answered using the percentage and mean score. While Research Questions 2 and 3 that has corresponding Hypotheses 1 and 2 were answered and tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance.

Data Analysis and Results

The data collation, analysis and interpretation of results of NECO SSCEs in Ekiti State from 2015-2019 was collected from the sampled schools based on the purpose of the study, research questions and hypotheses postulated earlier.

Table 1: Gender Distribution of CRS Students in NECO SSCEs

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	1,102	61
Female	704	39
Total	1,806	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

Table 1 above shows the gender distribution of CRS students in NECO SSCEs. The table indicates that 1,806 CRS students NECO SSCEs results was collated, out of which 1102 (61%) were males CRS students and 704 (39%) were female CRS students that enrolled for Christian Religious Studies in NECO SSCEs. This shows that more male CRS students enrolled in NECO SSCEs than their female counterparts.

Table 2: Distributions of the CRS Students' NECO SSCEs Result by Years

Years	Frequency	Percentage (%)
2015 Academic Session	503	27.85
2016 Academic Session	253	14.01
2017 Academic Session	476	26.36
2018 Academic Session	408	22.59
2019 Academic Session	166	9.19
Total	1,806	100.00

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

Table 2 shows the distribution of CRS students' NECO SSCEs result by years. The table indicates that in the year 2015 academic session, 503 (27.85%) students sat for CRS in NECO, while 253 (14.01%) sat for the examination in the year 2016 academic session. In the year 2017 academic session, 476 (26.36%) students sat for CRS, while 408 (22.59%) students sat for the examination in 2108 academic session. Lastly, in the 2019 academic session, 166 (9.19%) students sat for CRS in WAEC. This implies that the 2015 academic session recorded the highest number of students that sat for CRS in NECO, while the 2019 academic session recorded the lowest number of students that sat for CRS in NECO. In addition, there is a drop in the number of students that sat for CRS in NECO from 2017 – 2019 academic session.

Answering of Research Questions

Three (3) research questions are raised. The percentage is used to answer research question 1. research questions 2 and 3 that has corresponding hypotheses 1 and 2 is answered and tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question 1: What is the general performance of CRS students in the NECO SSCE in Ekiti State from 2015 - 2019?

To answer the Research Question 2, NECO SSCE result of CRS students from 2015 – 2019 in Ekiti State are summed and subjected to percentage. The result is presented in table 3

Table 3: Performance of CRS students in the NECO SSCE in Ekiti State from 2015 – 2019

Year	A1 – B3 (%)	C4 – C6 (%)	D7 – E8 (%)	F9 (%)	Total %
2015	23 (4.6%)	343 (68.2%)	108 (21.5%)	29 (5.7%)	503 (100%)
2016	19 (7.5%)	123 (48.6%)	83 (32.8%)	28 (11.1%)	253 (100%)
2017	14 (2.9%)	272 (57.1%)	169 (35.5%)	21 (4.5%)	476 (100%)
2018	17 (4.2%)	228 (55.9%)	100 (24.5%)	63 (15.4%)	408 (100%)
2019	7 (4.2%)	92 (55.4%)	47 (28.3%)	20 (12.1%)	166 (100%)
Total	80 (4.4%)	1058 (58.6%)	507 (28.1%)	161 (8.9%)	1,806 (100%)

Table 3 shows the performance of CRS students in the NECO SSCEs in Ekiti State from 2015 – 2019. The table indicates that out of 1,806 students that sat for CRS in the National Examination Council (NECO) between 2015 – 2019 academic session, 161 (8.9%) failed; 507 (28.1%), D7 – E8; 1058 (58.6), C4 – C6; and 80 (4.4%) had A1 – B3. This implies that the CRS students 1,138 (63.00%) had passed grade in the NECO SSCEs that is (A1 – C6) from 2015 – 2019 academic sessions.

Hypotheses Testing

The t-test is used to test hypotheses 1 and 2 at 0.05 level of significance. Hypotheses 1 and 2 took care of Research Questions 2 and 3.

Ho₁: *There is no significant difference in the male and female CRS students' academic performance in the NECO SSCEs.*

In order to test hypothesis 1, CRS male and female students results in NECO SSCEs are coded and analysed using the t-test statistics. The result of the t-test are coded and analysed using independent t – test statistical analysis, while the result of the test is reported in table 4.

Table 4: T – test on difference in the male and female CRS students' academic performance in the NECO SSCEs in Ekiti State

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	p-value	Remark
Male	1102	43.63	6.21	1.43	12	0.08	NS
Female	704	42.96	5.09				

Table 4 shows the result of the t – test on difference in the male and female CRS students' academic performance in the NECO SSCEs in Ekiti State. The table shows a t – value of 1.43 and p – value of 0.08 which is greater than 0.05 ($0.08 > 0.05$). Since 0.08 is greater than 0.05 alpha level of significance, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference in the male and female CRS students' academic performance in the NECO SSCEs in Ekiti State.

Ho₂: *There is no significant difference in the CRS students' academic performance in NECO SSCEs based on school type.*

In order to test hypothesis 4, CRS private and public students results in NECO SSCEs are coded and analysed using the t-test statistics. The result of the t-test are coded and analysed using independent t – test statistical analysis, while the result of the test is reported in table 5.

Table 5: T – test on difference in the CRS students' academic performance in NECO SSCEs based on school type

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	p-value	Remark
Private	1306	59.08	6.78	1.14	92	0.01	S
Public	500	41.64	6.14				

Table 5 shows the result of the t – test on difference in the private and public CRS students' academic performance in the NECO SSCEs in Ekiti State. The table shows a t – value of 1.14 and p – value of 0.01 which is lesser than 0.05 ($0.01 < 0.05$). Since 0.01 is less than 0.05 alpha level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there was significant difference in the private and public CRS students' academic performance in the NECO SSCEs in Ekiti State, in which private CRS students' performing better than public CRS students.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of the result showed that majority of the CRS students' academic performance had passed grade in the NECO SSCEs 1,138 (63.00%) that is (A1 – C6) from 2015 – 2019 academic sessions. This study implies that students' general performance of Christian Religious Studies in NECO SSCEs was excellent. The result, also revealed that there was no significant difference in the male and female CRS students' academic performance in NECO SSCEs in Ekiti State, Nigeria. This is in agreement with Lawal (2010) and Adeboye (2020) who found that gender has no significant difference on students' academic performance scores in Christian Religious Studies. The result of this study, contradict the findings of Aburime, Jekayinfa and Saidu (2016) who revealed that there was existed gender difference in CRS students' academic performance in the school.

More so, the result of this study shows that there was a significant difference in the private and public CRS students' academic performance in the NECO SSCEs. This is similar with the findings of Amuche, Amuche, Bello and Marwan (2014) who revealed that there was a significant difference in the performance of Physics students between public and private schools. This was attributed to fact that private schools are better organized in term of human and material sources. Afolabi (2018) concluded in his findings that students who attended private school performed better in most subjects including Christian Religious Studies because of the use of relevant instructional materials to aid their teaching. Learning activities.

Summary of the Finding

1. The CRS students 1,138 (63.00%) had passed grade in the NECO SSCEs that is (A1 – C6) from 2015 – 2019 academic sessions.
2. There was no significant difference in the male and female CRS students' academic performance in the NECO SSCEs in Ekiti State.
3. There was significant difference in the private and public CRS students' academic performance in the NECO SSCEs in Ekiti State, with private CRS students' performing better than public CRS students.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that students' general performance in Christian Religious Studies in external examination conducted by NECO SSCEs in Ekiti State, Nigeria from 2015-2019 academic session was found to be 63% which is a good performance. In addition, the outcome of this study showed that academic performance of CRS students in NECO SSCEs based on students were not influenced by gender but influenced by school type in which students who attended private school performed better than their counterparts. The study therefore, concluded that apart from school type there might be other factors responsible for poor performance of secondary school students. This highlights the need for the further researchers.

Recommendation

In line with the conclusion of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made,

1. Teachers in public school should educate their students on how their performance in NECO SSCEs could determine their eventual performance in private school.
2. Teachers and parents are to monitor students in public schools to make them meet up with their counterparts in private schools.
3. Christian Religious Studies students were encouraged to show adequate preparation for the external examination by ensuring that they cover all the topics in the syllabus. They should work harder in order to get distinction in their academic performance.
4. Students of Christian Religious Studies should show sufficient enthusiasm in the learning of the subject matters.
5. Government should employ qualified and experienced CRS teachers for effective teaching and learning of Christian Religious Studies in Senior Secondary Schools
6. Government should pay more attention to public school and equip them with modern facilities in order to make school environment conducive for the students
7. Government should create more schools because the number of private schools in Ekiti State is more than public school and not all parents can afford payment of private schools.

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