

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS PARENTING IN PROMOTING CHRISTIAN–MUSLIM PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: The study examined the role of religious parenting in promoting peaceful coexistence between Christian and Muslim families.

Statement of the problem: Although parenting shapes children's values and relationships, its contribution to Christian–Muslim coexistence has received limited attention in the context examined.

Research methodology: The study reported the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches, purposive sampling, questionnaires and interviews. It also described a systematic literature review and thematic analysis using NVivo.

Findings: Respondents associated religious parenting with discipline, moral teaching, prayer and respect. All respondents agreed that parenting contributes to peaceful coexistence, while more than 90% rated its influence on interfaith relations as high or very high.

Conclusion: The study concludes that respondents viewed religious parenting as an important foundation for peaceful coexistence. Shared parental commitments to moral behaviour and respect offer opportunities to strengthen relationships between Christian and Muslim families.

Recommendations: Parents should combine discipline with mentorship. Government agencies should integrate religious and parental guidance into child development programmes. Schools and colleges should involve parents and religious educators in approaches to youth discipline.

Keywords: *Religious parenting, parental beliefs, religious upbringing, religious teaching, parental guidance, peaceful coexistence*

INTRODUCTION

Christianity and Islam provide an important context for examining the relationship between religious upbringing and social coexistence. Both traditions shape family practices, moral expectations and relationships within communities. For this study, the relevance of religious affiliation lies in how parents interpret and communicate values to children, rather than in the relative numerical size of religious populations. The discussion therefore focuses on the everyday practices through which Christian and Muslim parents encourage discipline, respect and responsibility. Within this context, religious parenting provides a useful starting point for exploring how family relationships may support engagement across religious differences. The study situates this concern within Christian–Muslim relations in Kenya, where questions of religious identity and coexistence are relevant to understanding interactions between families and their wider communities (Wesonga, 2017).

Parenting practices in Christian and Muslim families illustrate the interaction between religion, culture and family life. Parents negotiate religious identity, role modelling and expectations about upbringing within communities characterised by religious diversity. Therrien (2022) discusses how children in mixed families develop their identities while navigating the expectations associated with the dominant religion in their surroundings. This perspective directs attention to the relationship between parental guidance and the social environments in which children grow up. It also raises questions about how families create spiritually supportive settings while respecting differences in belief. In the present study, Christian and Muslim families are considered within a shared community context; this does not necessarily mean that each household combines both religions. This distinction helps clarify the relationship between family identity and interfaith coexistence.

Kenya provides a relevant setting for examining Christian–Muslim coexistence because families interact within a religiously diverse society. The manuscript situates these interactions in communities where religious identity intersects with everyday social relationships, shared neighbourhoods and local concerns. Understanding coexistence therefore requires attention to both religious differences and the practices through which people sustain cooperation. For parents, these issues concern the values communicated at home and the examples children encounter in their wider social environment. The study approaches parenting as one possible influence on these relationships, recognising that family guidance operates alongside other community experiences. This contextual emphasis connects the discussion of religious identity

to the central question of how Christian and Muslim parents understand their contribution to peaceful relations between families in the setting examined (Wesonga, 2017).

Parenting is a fundamental part of children's development in every community because it shapes values, identity and relationships. In culturally and religiously diverse settings, parenting practices also influence how children understand people whose beliefs differ from their own (Christopher & Xu, 2015). Positive parenting includes nurturing, guidance, encouragement, recognition, empowerment and the avoidance of violence. These practices can support children's sense of security, confidence, belonging and respect for others. They also provide a context for learning self-regulation, cooperation and responsibility within the family. For the present study, these dimensions help explain why religious parenting is considered relevant to peaceful coexistence. The emphasis is on how guidance is expressed through everyday relationships, including the way parents communicate expectations and demonstrate respect, rather than on religious affiliation alone.

Religious parenting practices can influence children's behaviour within the household and the wider community (Samuel & Changwony, 2019). Some parents regard religious beliefs as a foundation for upbringing and a source of guidance for themselves and their children. This perspective draws attention to the practical interpretation of belief through parental expectations, communication and example. It also suggests that the significance of religious parenting depends on the relationship between what parents teach and how they conduct themselves. Within the present study, the relevant concern is whether these practices encourage respectful relationships across religious differences. Religious guidance is therefore considered alongside discipline, moral instruction and prayer as part of the family environment through which children encounter expectations about responsibility, social conduct and relationships with other people.

African hospitality provides a useful context for discussing Christian–Muslim relations in Kenya because it emphasises shared social responsibilities and neighbourly relationships. The manuscript describes Christians and Muslims as neighbours who respond to local concerns, including drought, violence and crime. It also identifies grassroots interfaith initiatives as settings in which communities can discuss coexistence and cooperation. These examples connect the study's focus on parenting with the wider relationships through which children encounter religious difference. Dialogue, in this context, can be understood as an opportunity to communicate and cooperate while retaining distinct beliefs. This understanding is relevant to parental guidance because the messages communicated at home may influence how children

interpret encounters with neighbours and participate in shared community activities across religious boundaries.

Religious parenting may provide opportunities to strengthen relationships between Christian and Muslim families through moral instruction and everyday example. The manuscript identifies religious teachings as a foundation for discussing peaceful coexistence and the values associated with respect for neighbours. These shared concerns offer a basis for exploring how parents communicate expectations about conduct without assuming that the two traditions are identical. The central issue is how beliefs are translated into practices that children can recognise and apply in their relationships. This includes the language parents use when discussing other communities and the behaviour they model during disagreement. In this sense, the study treats religious parenting as a practical process of guidance through which family values may become relevant to cooperation and mutual respect.

The manuscript identifies interfaith activities as opportunities for Christian and Muslim communities to strengthen relationships through dialogue and shared participation. It refers to religious communication, youth engagement and entrepreneurship initiatives as examples of approaches intended to support cooperation. These activities are relevant to the study because they connect family guidance with the social settings in which young people build relationships. Participation in shared activities may provide occasions for parents to discuss responsibility, respect and differences in belief. Similarly, learning about one another's religious celebrations can create opportunities for communication without requiring agreement on doctrine. The significance of these examples lies in their connection to the study's central concern: how values communicated within families relate to the practical conditions for peaceful coexistence in the wider community.

Christian and Muslim communities can support peaceful coexistence by encouraging respect for human life and recognition of each person's dignity. For parents, this involves helping children distinguish religious differences from reasons for hostility or exclusion. The study's emphasis on moral guidance makes these everyday conversations relevant to understanding relationships between families. Respectful engagement does not require parents to abandon their own beliefs; it requires attention to how those beliefs inform conduct towards others. Within this framework, peaceful coexistence concerns the ability to maintain distinct religious identities while participating in shared community life. The discussion therefore connects parenting with cooperation, dialogue and the management of disagreement, providing a basis

for examining respondents' views about the contribution of family guidance to interfaith relations.

This study is important because it examines religious parenting as a possible foundation for peaceful coexistence between Christian and Muslim families. Its focus connects questions of upbringing with the everyday relationships through which religious communities interact. Rather than treating coexistence only as a matter of institutional dialogue, the paper directs attention to the family as a setting where values are communicated and behaviour is modelled. This approach provides a basis for discussing the contribution of parents to children's understanding of religious difference. It also helps connect the study's objectives with the reported findings on discipline, moral teaching, prayer and interfaith relations. The value of this focus lies in examining how respondents understand parental influence within the social context addressed by the study.

The study examines how religious parenting relates to children's beliefs, values and conduct, with attention to the implications for relationships between Christian and Muslim families. It considers discipline and moral guidance as aspects of upbringing that respondents associate with respectful behaviour. These concerns are relevant to peaceful coexistence because family expectations may shape how children understand cooperation and disagreement. At the same time, parenting is examined as one influence within a wider social environment, rather than as a complete explanation of community relations. This distinction helps maintain a clear connection between the study's focus and the limits of its evidence. The discussion therefore considers the contribution attributed to parents while avoiding the assumption that religious guidance alone determines the quality of interfaith relationships.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Kenya's cultural and religious diversity provides opportunities for cooperation, but Christian and Muslim communities may also experience misunderstanding. Interfaith dialogue programmes address peaceful coexistence, yet the contribution of parenting to these relationships remains insufficiently articulated in the problem identified by this study. Parents communicate values, shape expectations and influence children's understanding of identity, making the family a relevant setting for examining interfaith relations. The problem concerns how these everyday processes are understood in relation to peaceful coexistence between Christian and Muslim families. The study therefore examines respondents' views on religious parenting, youth behaviour and relationships across faiths. By connecting these concerns, it

seeks to clarify the role attributed to parental guidance in the setting examined, rather than assuming that shared residence necessarily produces mutual understanding.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- i. To examine the perceived influence of religious parenting on the behaviour of young people in Christian and Muslim families.
- ii. To examine the role of religious parenting in promoting peaceful coexistence between Christian and Muslim families.
- iii. To assess the perceived extent to which religious parenting influences interfaith relations between Christian and Muslim communities.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development provides the theoretical perspective used in the paper. Drawing on Jean Piaget's work on children's moral judgement, Kohlberg developed a stage-based account of the reasoning involved in deciding whether conduct is right or wrong. The emphasis is on how individuals justify their responses to moral dilemmas, rather than on the decision alone. This distinction is useful for considering the relationship between parental instruction and children's understanding of moral expectations. It directs attention to the reasons communicated through guidance, discipline and discussion within families. For this study, the theory offers a way to interpret religious parenting as a setting for moral reasoning while recognising that explanations of what is right do not, by themselves, establish how people behave (Kendra, 2025).

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

The literature discussed in this paper connects parenting with children's wellbeing, behaviour and relationships. One concern is the quality of the parent–child relationship and its relevance to adjustment, self-regulation and resilience. Another is the relationship between religious identity and dialogue across faith communities. These areas are relevant to the present study because they locate parenting within both the household and the wider social environment. However, their relationship requires careful interpretation: evidence about children's wellbeing does not automatically establish an effect on interfaith coexistence. The review therefore uses these areas to frame the study's questions about parental guidance and respectful relationships. This approach provides a connection between the broader parenting discussion and the specific concern with Christian–Muslim relations examined in the paper.

The manuscript describes a parenting study involving 2,256 parents of children in fifth and seventh grades. Children in fifth grade accounted for 48.8% of the sample, while those in seventh grade accounted for 51.2%. Their reported mean age was 11.58 years, with a standard deviation of 1.41 and an age range of 10–16 years; 46.2% were boys and 53.8% were girls. The discussion associates the quality of the parent–child relationship with children's development and health-related behaviour. It also identifies adjustment, self-regulation and resilience as relevant dimensions of positive development. These observations provide a basis for considering parenting beyond the enforcement of rules. Their relevance to this paper lies in the attention given to relationships, communication and the developmental context in which children encounter parental expectations.

A useful distinction emerging from this discussion is between the content of parental guidance and the relationship through which it is communicated. Moral instruction concerns what parents ask children to value, whereas the quality of interaction concerns how those expectations are explained and demonstrated. For the present study, this distinction helps connect discipline with the broader question of respect across religious differences. A parent may communicate a rule, but the meaning a child attaches to that rule also depends on examples and explanations encountered at home. The literature discussion therefore provides a basis for examining religious parenting as both instruction and interaction. This interpretation supports the study's focus on guidance while avoiding the assumption that the presence of religious teaching necessarily indicates how children understand or apply it.

The relationship between parenting and interfaith coexistence also involves a distinction between conduct within the family and relationships beyond it. Respectful behaviour at home is relevant to upbringing, but coexistence concerns encounters with people who may hold different beliefs. The connection between these settings is therefore an analytical question rather than an outcome that can be assumed. In this paper, that connection is explored through respondents' views about discipline, peaceful coexistence and interfaith relations. Reading these dimensions together helps clarify the study's contribution: it examines the social significance participants attribute to parenting. This approach also identifies a useful boundary for interpretation, since agreement about parental influence does not reveal every process through which family guidance might shape relationships in the wider community.

The review further suggests the importance of distinguishing shared moral concerns from identical religious practices. Christian and Muslim parents may discuss respect, responsibility and discipline while explaining those concerns through different teachings and traditions. For

an enquiry into coexistence, the relevant issue is whether differences can be acknowledged alongside opportunities for cooperation. This perspective allows the paper to examine common parental priorities without reducing either tradition to the other. It also gives a clearer meaning to the study's emphasis on peaceful relationships: coexistence involves engagement across difference, rather than the disappearance of difference. Within this framework, parental guidance is relevant because it offers a setting in which children encounter explanations of both their own religious commitments and their responsibilities towards people outside their immediate family.

Taken together, the parenting and interfaith concerns discussed in the paper indicate a need to connect family processes with clearly defined social outcomes. Discipline, moral teaching and prayer describe practices or priorities, while peaceful coexistence and interfaith relations describe broader relationships. Maintaining this distinction helps prevent the discussion from treating the presence of a parenting practice as equivalent to evidence of a community outcome. The present study addresses this connection by reporting participants' assessments of parental influence. Its findings can therefore contribute to understanding the meanings respondents associate with parenting, while leaving room for further investigation of everyday practices and experiences. This synthesis provides a focused transition from the literature discussion to the research questions and the interpretation of the reported response patterns.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study described the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine religious parenting and peaceful coexistence. Questionnaires and interviews were identified as data collection methods, while the analysis section described thematic interpretation. The reported findings also included percentages summarising respondents' views. These components indicate the range of evidence presented in the manuscript, although they should be distinguished when interpreting the results. The percentages describe response patterns, whereas thematic analysis concerns the interpretation of qualitative material. This distinction is relevant to the study because numerical agreement and explanations of experience answer different aspects of the research questions. The methodological account below retains the procedures reported by the authors and presents them in relation to the study's focus on parental guidance and interfaith relationships.

Study Design

The manuscript identified a systematic literature review as part of its research design. A systematic review involves locating and assessing studies that address a defined question and bringing their findings together in a structured way (Vergnes et al., 2010). In this paper, the review component provides context for the discussion of parenting and peaceful coexistence. The manuscript also reports primary data collection through questionnaires and interviews. These activities should be understood as distinct components of the methodological account, because reviewing published studies differs from collecting participants' responses. The present description preserves both components as reported, without assuming unreported search procedures, eligibility criteria or stages of data collection. This distinction supports a clearer reading of the relationship between the literature discussed and the findings attributed to respondents.

Sampling Technique

The study used purposive sampling to select participants relevant to its focus on Christian and Muslim families (Etikan, 2016). This approach was intended to identify people able to contribute information about religious parenting and peaceful coexistence. The manuscript also highlighted participant and researcher safety as considerations when discussing interfaith relationships and conflict resolution. Purposive selection should be interpreted in relation to the study's focus, since it does not establish that every member of the wider population had an equal chance of inclusion. Accordingly, the reported response patterns describe the participants included in the study. This interpretation allows the findings to inform discussion of their experiences and views without treating the sample as evidence of the prevalence of those views throughout all Christian and Muslim communities.

Research Instruments

The study used questionnaires and interviews to collect information about religious parenting and peaceful coexistence. The manuscript described the use of open-ended questions and semi-structured questioning to obtain participants' views. These approaches were intended to allow respondents to discuss parental guidance and relationships between Christian and Muslim families. The instruments are relevant to the study's objectives because they address perceptions of parenting, youth behaviour and interfaith relations. In interpreting the findings, responses should be understood as accounts provided by participants rather than as direct observations of every aspect of family conduct. This distinction helps connect the reported

evidence with the questions examined and supports an appropriately focused discussion of what participants associated with religious parenting in the setting of the study.

Data Analysis

The study reported the use of thematic analysis to interpret qualitative material (Hammond, 2019). This approach concerns identifying and examining patterns of meaning within participants' responses. The abstract also identified NVivo as the software used to support the analysis. In addition, the findings were presented as percentages describing respondents' views about discipline, peaceful coexistence and interfaith relations. These numerical summaries are distinct from thematic interpretation and should be read as descriptive accounts of the reported responses. The presentation therefore separates the proportions shown in the figures from the broader discussion of their meaning. This distinction helps align the interpretation with the evidence available and avoids treating descriptive agreement as a statistical demonstration that religious parenting caused the outcomes discussed in the paper.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Religious Parenting and Youth Discipline

The findings indicated that respondents associated Christian and Muslim parenting with shared values in raising children. Almost all respondents (97.1%) reported an emphasis on discipline, moral teaching and prayer, while the manuscript reported that 3% did not identify this emphasis. These percentages are retained as reported, although they total 100.1%. The pattern suggests that respondents regarded respect and morality as important features of parenting across the two traditions. Figure 1 presents the reported distribution. The finding concerns respondents' accounts of parental priorities and should therefore be interpreted as evidence of perceived common values. It does not, on its own, establish the consistency with which these values were practised or demonstrate a causal relationship between religious parenting and young people's behaviour.

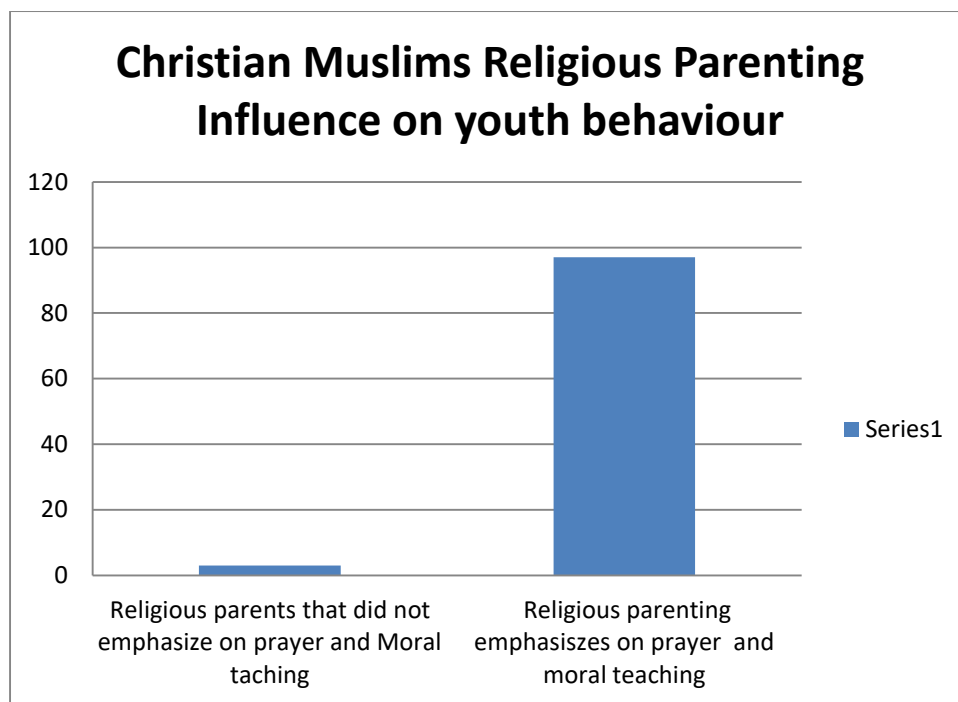


Figure 1: Perceived Influence of Christian–Muslim Religious Parenting on Youth Behaviour

Parental Support for Peaceful Coexistence

All respondents (100%) agreed that parenting contributes to peaceful coexistence in Kitui Central, as shown in Figure 2. This agreement indicates that participants viewed the family as an important setting for promoting community harmony. The result complements the emphasis on discipline, moral teaching and prayer by connecting parental guidance with relationships beyond the household. It also provides a direct response to the objective concerning the role of parenting in peaceful coexistence. However, unanimous agreement reflects the views of the respondents included in the study and should not be interpreted as proof that parenting alone produces peaceful relations. The finding is most appropriately understood as strong support among participants for the perceived relevance of family guidance to coexistence between Christian and Muslim communities.

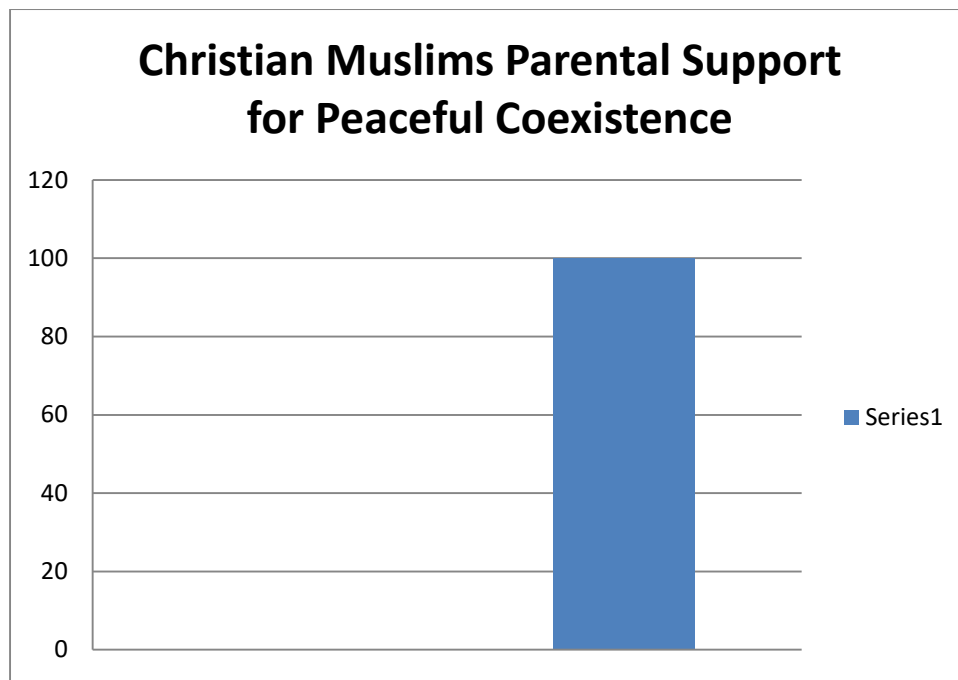


Figure 2: Parental Support for Peaceful Coexistence

Perceived Influence on Interfaith Relations

More than 90% of respondents rated the influence of religious parenting on interfaith relations as high (73.5%) or very high (17.6%), while 8.8% rated it as moderate. Figure 3 presents this distribution. The reported percentages total 99.9%, so they are retained without adjustment. The pattern indicates that most participants associated parenting with a substantial influence on relationships across faiths. This finding extends the discussion beyond youth discipline to the wider social significance attributed to family guidance. It also supports an interpretation centred on perceptions rather than verified effects: the responses indicate how participants evaluated parental influence, but they do not establish its magnitude independently. Within that scope, the findings suggest that respondents considered parenting relevant to the way children understand and engage with religious difference.

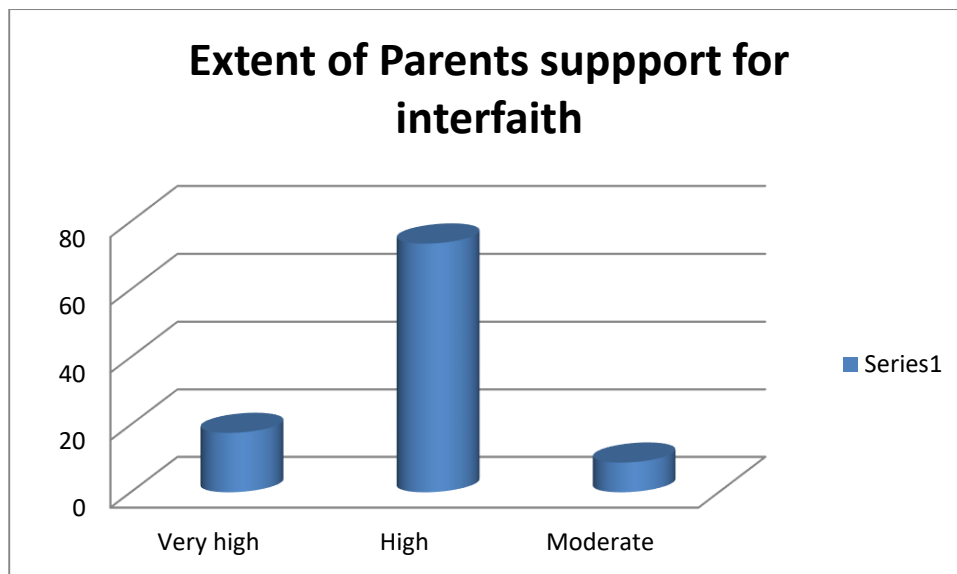


Figure 3: Perceived Influence of Religious Parenting on Interfaith Relations

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that respondents viewed religious parenting as an important contributor to peaceful coexistence between Christian and Muslim families. Their responses associated parental guidance with discipline, prayer, moral behaviour and respect. The findings also indicated broad agreement that parenting is relevant to community harmony and relationships across faiths. Together, these results highlight the family as a setting in which expectations about conduct and social responsibility are communicated. The conclusion concerns the perceptions reported by participants and should be read within that scope. It does not establish that religious parenting alone determines interfaith relations or that the same response patterns apply to all communities. The paper's central contribution is to connect parental guidance with respondents' understanding of peaceful coexistence in the setting examined.

The findings further suggest that discipline, moral instruction and prayer are interconnected elements of the parenting practices described by respondents. Their relevance lies in how families communicate expectations and provide examples of respectful conduct. This interpretation places attention on the relationship between parental messages and everyday interactions, rather than on religious identity alone. It also provides a basis for considering mentorship alongside discipline when discussing young people's relationships with others. The study therefore supports continued attention to parenting as part of broader conversations about coexistence. Within the limits of the reported evidence, the emphasis on shared values offers a useful starting point for dialogue between Christian and Muslim families while preserving the distinct beliefs and practices through which they understand their responsibilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Parents should combine discipline with mentorship and explain how religious teachings relate to respect for people from other faith communities. Government agencies should consider incorporating parental guidance and religious sensitivity into child development programmes. Schools and colleges should involve parents and religious educators in discussions of youth conduct, with attention to cooperation and mutual respect. These recommendations follow the study's focus on the contribution participants attributed to family guidance. Future research should examine how Christian and Muslim parents apply religious teachings and parenting practices in everyday relationships, using qualitative and quantitative approaches suited to clearly specified questions. Such work would help distinguish reported parental intentions from observed practices and provide a stronger basis for understanding how children's attitudes towards other religious groups develop.

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