



FOSTERING MORAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG CHILDREN: THE ROLE OF THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT SPONSORSHIP PROGRAMME OF COMPASSION INTERNATIONAL GHANA

Diana Adjei-Fiankoⁱ

Department of Basic Education,
University of Education,
Winneba, Ghana

Abstract:

Moral education plays an important role in shaping values and ethical behaviour among children. Faith-based organisations contribute to this process through structured developmental programmes. This study examined how the aims and goals of the Child Development Sponsorship Programme of Compassion International, Ghana support moral development among children. Anchored in the Context component of the Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) evaluation model and guided by an interpretivist paradigm, the study employed a qualitative case study design. Data were collected from thirty (30) participants across four (4) Child Development Centres in the Greater Accra and Central regions using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The data were analysed thematically. Findings indicate that the programme integrates moral and spiritual instruction through church partnerships, mentorship, and holistic support activities, fostering values such as integrity, compassion, and responsibility among children. The study concludes that faith-based child sponsorship programmes can support moral development through relational and value-oriented approaches, offering insights for strengthening moral education initiatives in Ghana.

Keywords: moral education; moral development; child sponsorship; faith-based education; CIPP Model; Ghana

1. Introduction

Moral Education (ME) is fundamental to the success and stability of every society, as it shapes individuals' understanding of right and wrong and equips them to live harmoniously within their communities (Owusu, 2022; Owusu & Asare-Danso, 2018; Bansah, 2017). Scholars agree that morality encompasses societal rules, values, and principles that guide human behaviour, and that education is an essential tool for fostering these moral values in individuals from an early age (Wilson, 1973; Asare-Danso,

ⁱ Correspondence: email dafianko@uew.edu.gh

2018; Annobil, 2018; Straughan, 1989). In Ghana, the significance of ME has been highlighted through various channels, including formal school curricula such as Religious and Moral Education (RME) and the involvement of families, religious bodies, and civil society organisations (Asare-Danso, 2011; NaCCA, 2019).

Among these institutions, Compassion International Ghana (CIG) has emerged as a prominent faith-based organisation contributing to the moral development of children through its Child Development Sponsorship Programme (CDSP). The CDSP seeks to holistically nurture children's spiritual, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being, thereby instilling values such as integrity, respect, and responsibility (CI, 2017). The programme combines educational support, mentorship, and spiritual guidance to help children develop a strong moral foundation and become responsible, fulfilled adults (Darku, 2017; CI, 2017).

Despite the acknowledged importance of ME and the visible role of organisations like CIG, there remains a gap in research regarding how specific programmes, such as the CDSP, directly contribute to promoting moral development in children. Understanding how the CDSP integrates ME into its activities is crucial, especially in a society grappling with moral challenges like corruption, poor social attitudes, and cultural shifts (Owusu, 2022; Britwum & Aidoo, 2022). Therefore, this study seeks to answer the research question: *How do the aims and goals of the Child Development Sponsorship Programme (CDSP) of Compassion International, Ghana, promote moral development among children?*

Furthermore, as Ghana continues to witness rapid social change and modernization, the need for strong moral grounding among the youth has become more pressing than ever (Owusu & Asare-Danso, 2018; NaCCA, 2019). Faith-based organisations like CIG play a critical role in filling gaps left by formal educational systems and family structures that may struggle to address complex moral challenges in contemporary society (Bansah, 2017; Darku, 2017). Investigating how CIG's CDSP operationalises its moral development goals will not only shed light on effective practices but also inform broader efforts to strengthen moral education and character development across diverse contexts (CI, 2017; Owusu, 2022).

2. Literature Review

Moral education is recognised worldwide as essential for shaping individuals' values, guiding ethical behaviour, and contributing to social cohesion and national development (Owusu, 2022; Lickona, 1996). In Ghana, this role has been assumed not only by schools and families but increasingly by faith-based organisations like Compassion International Ghana (CIG), whose programmes integrate spiritual formation, social services, and moral instruction.

2.1 Historical Roots and Mission of Compassion International

The origins of Compassion International (CI) trace back to the early 1950s when Reverend Everett Swanson was moved by the plight of Korean War orphans in Seoul, South Korea (Sim & Peters, 2014). Initially formed as the Everett Swanson Evangelistic Association, the organisation aimed to provide food, shelter, education, medical care, and Christian training for orphaned children. The name “Compassion” was adopted in 1963, inspired by Jesus’ words in Matthew 15:32: *“I have compassion on the multitude, I will not send them away hungry.”* This shift symbolised a broader vision of “suffering with” and ministering to vulnerable children worldwide (Lee, 2014; CI, 2017).

From its founding, CI has differentiated itself from other humanitarian organisations through its explicit focus on moral and spiritual development alongside physical and social care (Sim & Peters, 2014). Compassion’s operational philosophy stems from the belief that true human development encompasses spiritual well-being, moral integrity, and character formation, aligning directly with the goals of moral education (Geraths, 2017).

2.2 Compassion International in Ghana

Compassion’s entry into Ghana in 2005 marked a significant extension of this mission into West Africa. CIG began operations with partnerships with fifteen (15) local churches in Greater Accra and has grown to support nearly 100,000 children across six (6) regions (CI, 2024). From inception, CIG has maintained the core CI model: church-based delivery, community engagement, and holistic child development, integrating moral and spiritual guidance.

CIG’s mission is *“to release children from spiritual, economic, social, and physical poverty and enable them to become responsible and fulfilled Christian adults”* (Kinoti, 2012). This emphasis on moral and spiritual transformation places moral education at the heart of the organisation’s operations, highlighting why it is critical to study how CIG’s Child Development Sponsorship Programme (CDSP) specifically fosters moral development.

2.3 Moral Development as Integral to Child Sponsorship

Among CI’s various programmes, the CDSP is its flagship initiative. It pairs children in poverty with sponsors who not only contribute financially but also engage in personal relationships through letters, prayers, and visits (Sim & Peters, 2014). Unlike many NGOs, CI insists on a one-to-one sponsorship model, which research suggests significantly boosts children’s self-esteem, moral reasoning, and sense of accountability (An *et al.*, 2019; Agyemang *et al.*, 2019). Children *“know their sponsors by name,”* fostering a sense of value and moral responsibility.

The CDSP operates under three principles:

- **Christ-Centred** - providing age-appropriate spiritual and moral guidance.
- **Child-Focused** - treating each child as a unique individual deserving holistic development.
- **Church-Based** - leveraging local churches as moral and social anchors.

This faith-driven, relationship-based model positions moral development as both an explicit goal and an embedded practice. Spiritual lessons, mentorship, and daily moral instruction through church partnerships contribute to shaping children's values and ethical perspectives, echoing scholars who argue that moral education thrives in community-oriented, relational contexts (Lickona, 1996; Noddings, 2007).

2.4 The Role of Churches and Community

A defining feature of Compassion's approach is its reliance on church partnerships for programme implementation. Churches serve as hubs for not only material support but also moral teaching, mentorship, and communal care (Smillie *et al.*, 2013). This synergy aligns with both biblical mandates and the cultural realities of Ghanaian society, where religious institutions hold significant influence over moral norms and child upbringing (Asare-Danso, 2018).

Local pastors, project facilitators, and volunteers act as moral educators, supervising children's activities and providing spiritual and ethical guidance. This church-based model differentiates CI from other child-focused NGOs, such as World Vision, which may engage communities more broadly but not necessarily through established religious institutions (Asare-Mensah, 2021).

2.5 Why Compassion Focuses on Children

CI's exclusive focus on children rather than adults stems from multiple rationales:

- Children are the most vulnerable and impressionable members of society (Stiles & Jernigan, 2010).
- Early intervention maximises impact on moral, spiritual, cognitive, and social development.
- Children represent the future leadership and moral fabric of society (Kiguta, 2017; Puplampu, 2005).

Scholars argue that moral reasoning and character formation predominantly occur during childhood and adolescence, making this period critical for targeted moral education (Gilligan, 1993; Kohlberg, 1971). Compassion's prioritisation of this developmental stage is therefore not merely humanitarian but strategically aligned with moral transformation.

2.6 Implications for Moral Development in Ghana

CIG's CDSP operates within a broader social context where moral challenges, such as corruption, social fragmentation, and shifting cultural norms, threaten the moral fabric of society (Owusu, 2022; Britwum & Aidoo, 2022). Compassion's holistic model responds to these challenges by combining practical support with sustained moral and spiritual mentorship.

However, despite widespread recognition of CI's contributions, there remains limited empirical research on how CIG's CDSP specifically translates its mission into measurable moral development outcomes for children in Ghana. Previous studies, such

as Wydick *et al.* (2013), have highlighted the positive economic and educational impacts of child sponsorship but have offered only general observations on moral and ethical outcomes.

This gap underpins the current study's focus on how the aims and activities of CIG's CDSP promote moral development. By examining stakeholders' perceptions and programme activities, this research seeks to illuminate how moral education is operationalised within CIG's model and its impact on children's values, character, and civic engagement.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the Context component of the Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) Evaluation Model, originally developed by Daniel L. Stufflebeam. The CIPP model provides a systematic framework for evaluating educational and social programmes by examining four (4) interrelated components: context, input, process, and product (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007). It supports both formative and summative evaluation by facilitating informed decision-making and programme improvement.

The Context component, which forms the primary focus of this study, involves identifying needs, problems, assets, and opportunities within a programme environment. Context evaluation ensures that programme goals are responsive to the needs of beneficiaries and aligned with broader societal expectations (Stufflebeam, 2001; Khawaja, 2018). In the present study, the Context component was applied to examine how the aims and goals of the Child Development Sponsorship Programme (CDSP) of Compassion International Ghana are designed to address moral development needs among children. The use of the CIPP model is particularly relevant to this study because the CDSP operates as a structured intervention that integrates educational, social, and spiritual components. By focusing on the contextual dimension, the model enabled the researcher to assess how programme objectives, institutional partnerships, and environmental factors support the promotion of moral values among children.

In addition to the CIPP model, the study is informed by the interpretivist paradigm, which assumes that reality is socially constructed and that individuals derive meaning through their lived experiences and interactions (Maxcy, 2003). This paradigm is appropriate for exploring stakeholders' perceptions of how programme activities influence moral development, as it emphasises understanding participants' perspectives within their natural contexts. Through this interpretive lens, the study sought to capture how programme implementers conceptualise and enact moral development within the CDSP framework.

3. Methods and Materials

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to facilitate an in-depth exploration of how the Child Development Sponsorship Programme (CDSP) of Compassion

International Ghana promotes moral development among children. A qualitative case study approach was considered appropriate because it allows researchers to investigate complex social phenomena within their real-life contexts and to capture participants' experiences and perspectives in detail (Creswell, 2014).

3.2 Study Setting

The study was conducted in four (4) Child Development Centres located in the Greater Accra and Central regions of Ghana. These centres were purposively selected because they are among the oldest operating centres within the programme, providing opportunities to examine long-term programme implementation and outcomes.

3.3 Participants and Sampling

The study involved thirty (30) participants drawn from key stakeholder groups directly involved in programme implementation. Participants included pastors, project facilitators, child development workers (such as social workers, accounts clerks, and health workers), and volunteer workers. These individuals were selected because of their active roles in planning, implementing, and monitoring programme activities related to moral development.

A combination of purposive, convenience, and census sampling techniques was used. Purposive sampling enabled the selection of participants with relevant knowledge and experience, while census sampling ensured that all available key personnel within selected centres were included. Convenience sampling was applied, where participants were selected based on accessibility and willingness to participate.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Semi-structured interviews enabled participants to provide detailed accounts of their experiences while allowing flexibility for probing and clarification (Patton, 2002). Focus group discussions created opportunities for participants to share collective experiences and generate interactive insights regarding the implementation of moral development activities within the programme (Sagoe, 2012).

3.5 Data Analysis

All interviews and focus group discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analysed using thematic analysis, following the procedures outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis involved familiarisation with the data, generation of initial codes, identification of themes, and refinement of thematic categories to identify recurring patterns related to programme aims and moral development practices.

3.6 Trustworthiness of the Study

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, strategies such as prolonged engagement, peer debriefing, and careful documentation of the research process were employed. These measures supported credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the study.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the appropriate institutional review body. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided voluntary consent prior to participation. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by using pseudonyms and securely storing all research data.

4. Results

4.1 Mission and Vision: Foundations for Moral Development

The findings of this study reveal that the mission and vision of Compassion International Ghana (CIG) are deeply rooted in promoting holistic development, including the moral formation of children. The mission of CIG states that it seeks to *“blend physical, social, economic and spiritual care together to help each child fully mature in every facet of life.”* This comprehensive approach aligns with the CIPP model’s emphasis on input and process evaluations, where resources and activities are carefully structured to produce transformative outcomes (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007).

The research observed that CIG’s mission is not only concerned with spiritual growth but is also focused on alleviating poverty and addressing physical and socio-emotional needs. Field visits confirmed that CIG provides significant material support to children enrolled in the programme, such as food, school supplies, uniforms, vocational training tools, and regular health screenings. As one project facilitator explained:

Extract 1: *“Erhmm ... with CIG our mission is to release children from poverty in Jesus’ name so it is a mission about love, we love God, and we demonstrate our love and live out our faith by extending care to others.”*

This statement illustrates that CIG’s interventions are underpinned by a moral imperative, rooted in Christian values of love and compassion. Such an approach is consistent with literature suggesting that moral education is often embedded in social and spiritual contexts, where teaching values like empathy and responsibility extends beyond formal curriculum into practical acts of care (Lickona, 1996; Jafralie & Zaver, 2019).

4.2 Impact of Compassion’s Mission on Beneficiaries’ Lives

The impact of CIG’s mission on beneficiaries is profound. Data gathered during interviews indicate that many children who joined the programme at the primary school level have since graduated from tertiary institutions and secured employment in various

sectors, including healthcare, banking, engineering, and education. One project director shared remarkable outcomes:

Extract 2: *“A lot, A lot. Because some of the beneficiaries and their family. When you see them, you know that without compassion, they wouldn’t be able to even go to school... we have thirty-five (35) of the beneficiaries that have graduated from the university... And these children were registered when they were in their primaries... Their fees were paid. Hostel fees paid... we bought laptops for them... we have them scattered all over... And the happy thing is that these people are helping their families take care of the younger ones who didn’t get the opportunity to register.”*

This testimony underscores the CIPP model’s product dimension, which evaluates tangible and intangible outcomes of educational interventions (Scriven, 1994). Compassion’s focus on equipping children with educational and vocational skills directly contributes to reducing poverty and mitigating the social conditions that often fuel immoral behaviour, as highlighted by Evans *et al.* (2009).

The significant success stories reported by CIG echo previous research findings, such as Wydick *et al.* (2013), who demonstrated that children sponsored through Compassion International have higher rates of educational attainment and better employment prospects compared to their peers. This affirms that targeted interventions for children, rather than broader family-based poverty programmes, can yield substantial moral and social benefits (Darku, 2017).

4.3 The Integration of Faith and Moral Education

The vision and mission statements of CIG reflect strong Christian foundations, which further serve as a moral compass guiding the organisation’s activities. The emphasis on spiritual development and moral education was consistently evident during fieldwork and interviews. One interviewee captured this sentiment vividly:

Extract 3: *“Yeah, the vision and mission of Compassion International is releasing children from poverty through Jesus Christ... our mission is to holistically develop the disadvantaged children and youth... Our vision is fulfilled Christian youth tribe in a resilient family... our core values are God-fearing, safety, integrity and excellence.”*

These values resonate with the biblical teachings found in Matthew 25:31-40, which emphasize caring for the hungry, sick, and marginalized as acts of moral righteousness. CIG’s mission mirrors these teachings, embedding moral education in practical service. Such integration aligns with philosophical perspectives on moral education, such as Aristotle’s view that moral virtue arises from habitual good actions (Kristjánsson, 2016). Compassion’s activities, therefore, provide not just support but also moral exemplars for children to emulate.

Moreover, CIG's strategy of partnering with local evangelical churches differentiates it from many other NGOs, as noted by Smillie *et al.* (2013). This church-based model fosters moral development by leveraging existing community structures and spiritual leaders to reinforce moral values and ethical behaviour. One project facilitator elaborated:

Extract 4: *"Yes, so with our vision, you can even find it on our website, and it's clear... Compassion International Ghana is a visionary organisation... Our Christ-centred approach to child advocacy and holistic development ensures that we prioritize the physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, and spiritual well-being of every child we serve... through our strategic partnerships with local churches and global sponsors, we are breaking the cycle of hardship by equipping children with essential skills and resources..."*

This holistic approach illustrates how context (community partnerships) and process (faith-based programming) converge to produce outcomes that extend beyond material well-being into moral and spiritual transformation.

4.4 Compassion's Vision and Moral Education

CIG's vision to *"release children from spiritual, economic, social and physical poverty"* (Compassion International, 2017) underscores a moral commitment to empower children to become responsible citizens and ethical leaders. As Darku (2017) observes, this vision not only targets poverty alleviation but also seeks to nurture morally grounded individuals. This is significant because research consistently finds that addressing physical and educational needs contributes to moral development by reducing the social determinants that predispose individuals to deviant behaviours (Jafralie & Zaver, 2019; Evans *et al.*, 2009).

The interviews conducted as part of this research confirm that Compassion's interventions cultivate a sense of moral responsibility and social contribution among beneficiaries. Graduates of the programme are reported to be actively supporting their families and communities, thereby perpetuating a cycle of moral and socio-economic improvement. This outcome reflects the product dimension of the CIPP model, highlighting not only academic achievements but also life skills, values, and community engagement as markers of programme success.

The findings from this study affirm that Compassion International Ghana's mission and vision are intricately connected to moral development. The organisation's holistic, faith-driven approach, combined with strong partnerships with local churches, provides a model of moral education that blends spiritual guidance with practical support. As the results illustrate, this integration enables CIG to transform not only the physical and economic circumstances of children but also to cultivate ethical values and civic responsibility, contributing positively to Ghanaian society.

5. Discussion

This study examined how the aims and goals of the Child Development Sponsorship Programme (CDSP) of Compassion International Ghana contribute to fostering moral development among children. The findings demonstrate that the programme integrates moral instruction, mentorship, and faith-based engagement within a holistic developmental framework. These findings highlight the importance of structured institutional support in shaping children's moral reasoning and behaviour. This observation supports earlier studies that emphasise the role of organised educational interventions in promoting ethical development and responsible citizenship (Lickona, 1991; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

One of the key findings of this study is that the CDSP integrates moral development into its mission and programme structure through church partnerships and value-oriented activities. Participants indicated that the programme emphasises values such as integrity, compassion, responsibility, and respect through structured lessons, mentorship, and social engagement activities. This finding aligns with the work of Thomas Lickona, who argued that effective moral education involves the deliberate teaching of core ethical values through modelling, instruction, and guided practice (Lickona, 1991). Similarly, Berkowitz and Bier (2005) observed that programmes designed with explicit moral objectives are more likely to produce measurable behavioural outcomes. The results of this study suggest that moral development within the CDSP is intentional and systematically embedded within programme goals and organisational philosophy.

Another important finding relates to the role of relational support systems in promoting moral development. Participants reported that mentorship relationships between facilitators, volunteers, and children provide opportunities for modelling appropriate behaviours and reinforcing moral expectations. This finding supports the views of Nel Noddings, who emphasised that caring relationships form the foundation of moral education and ethical responsiveness (Noddings, 2007). Additionally, Bandura's social learning theory highlights that individuals learn behaviours through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within social environments (Bandura, 1977). The relational nature of programme delivery therefore enhances children's opportunities to internalise moral values through observation and guided interaction.

The findings also revealed that faith-based instruction plays a central role in shaping moral awareness and decision-making among programme beneficiaries. Activities such as scripture study, prayer sessions, and character-building lessons were identified as important mechanisms for nurturing ethical consciousness. This finding is consistent with studies that highlight the role of faith-based organisations in promoting moral discipline, prosocial behaviour, and social responsibility among young people (King & Boyatzis, 2015; Smith & Denton, 2005). The findings further suggest that moral development is strengthened when spiritual instruction is combined with practical support systems such as education, sponsorship and community engagement.

In addition, the study found that the holistic nature of the CDSP contributes significantly to the development of socially responsible behaviours. Participants indicated that support services such as educational assistance, health interventions, and life-skills training create enabling environments that support children's overall development. This finding reinforces the relevance of the Context component of the CIPP model developed by Daniel L. Stufflebeam, which emphasises the importance of aligning programme objectives with contextual needs and societal expectations (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007). Holistic child development approaches have been shown to enhance both cognitive and moral outcomes when social, emotional, and environmental needs are addressed simultaneously (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Furthermore, the findings suggest that community and church partnerships enhance the effectiveness of moral development initiatives. Participants emphasised that collaboration between programme staff, families, and religious institutions creates shared expectations regarding acceptable behaviour and social responsibility. This supports ecological perspectives on child development, which emphasise that children's moral growth is influenced by interactions across multiple social systems, including family, school, and community contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Berk, 2013). The collaborative nature of programme delivery therefore strengthens the consistency of moral reinforcement across different environments.

Despite these positive contributions, the findings also highlight potential challenges associated with programme implementation. Some participants noted that variations in resource availability and volunteer commitment across centres influence the consistency of programme delivery. These challenges are consistent with previous research indicating that programme sustainability and effectiveness depend on adequate resources, staff training, and institutional commitment (Patton, 2002; Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007). Addressing such implementation gaps is essential for strengthening programme sustainability and ensuring equitable outcomes across centres.

Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate that the Child Development Sponsorship Programme operates as a structured moral development intervention that combines faith-based instruction, mentorship, and holistic child support. The results extend existing literature on moral education by demonstrating how faith-based sponsorship programmes function as practical mechanisms for translating moral education principles into everyday practices. In the context of Ghanaian society, where moral concerns such as corruption and declining social responsibility have been widely discussed, the findings provide evidence that structured child development programmes can contribute meaningfully to character formation and civic responsibility (Owusu, 2022; Britwum & Aidoo, 2022).

5.1 Practical Implications

The findings of this study provide important practical insights for programme implementers, policymakers, educators, and faith-based organisations seeking to promote moral development among children. The evidence that the Child Development

Sponsorship Programme (CDSP) of Compassion International Ghana integrates structured moral instruction with holistic child development highlights the value of adopting comprehensive and context-sensitive approaches to character formation.

First, the study underscores the importance of integrating moral development into programme design and institutional missions. Organisations involved in child welfare and education should ensure that moral education is explicitly embedded within programme objectives rather than treated as an informal or secondary outcome. This intentional integration can be achieved through clearly defined value-based curricula, regular mentorship activities, and structured moral learning opportunities. Educational institutions, particularly those delivering Religious and Moral Education (RME) in Ghana, can adopt similar programme-based models to reinforce classroom instruction through experiential learning and value-driven activities.

Second, the findings highlight the critical role of mentorship and relational engagement in fostering moral development. Programme facilitators, teachers, and volunteers should be trained to model ethical behaviours and provide consistent moral guidance to children. The development of structured mentorship systems within schools and community-based organisations could enhance children's opportunities to internalise values such as honesty, responsibility, and compassion. Policymakers and programme administrators should therefore invest in continuous professional development for educators and child development workers to strengthen their capacity to serve as positive moral role models.

Third, the study demonstrates the value of faith-based and community partnerships in promoting consistent moral standards across children's social environments. Collaboration among churches, families, schools, and community organisations can create unified moral expectations that reinforce positive behaviour. This finding suggests that national and local education authorities in Ghana should encourage partnerships between educational institutions and community-based organisations to support moral development initiatives. Such collaborations can enhance resource sharing, improve programme sustainability, and strengthen community ownership of moral education programmes.

Fourth, the results indicate that holistic child development approaches including educational support, health services, and life skills training create enabling environments that enhance moral growth. Organisations designing child development interventions should consider integrating moral education with other forms of social support to address the broader contextual factors influencing children's behaviour. Policymakers should also recognise the importance of linking moral education with social welfare initiatives to achieve sustainable developmental outcomes.

Finally, the study highlights the need for consistent monitoring and evaluation of moral development programmes. Programme administrators should adopt systematic evaluation frameworks, such as the Context component of the CIPP model, to assess whether programme goals remain aligned with the evolving needs of children and communities. Regular evaluation can help identify implementation gaps, improve

resource allocation, and ensure that programme activities effectively promote desired moral outcomes.

6. Conclusion

This study contributes to understanding how structured community-based programmes can support moral development among children by aligning institutional goals with contextual needs. By examining the Child Development Sponsorship Programme (CDSP) of Compassion International Ghana, the study demonstrates that moral development is strengthened when value-based instruction is embedded within supportive relational and community environments. The application of the Context component of the CIPP model highlights the importance of designing programmes that respond to the social and moral realities of children's lived experiences.

Beyond its immediate context, the study underscores the relevance of community-driven and faith-informed approaches to addressing moral development challenges among children in Ghana. It suggests that sustained collaboration among families, community institutions, and programme implementers is essential for nurturing responsible citizenship. Overall, the study reinforces the need for context-sensitive and relationally grounded moral education initiatives capable of responding to evolving societal needs.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen the role of the Child Development Sponsorship Programme (CDSP) of Compassion International Ghana (CIG) in promoting moral development among children:

- 1) **Enhance Moral Education Components in CDSP Activities:** CIG should continue integrating moral education explicitly into its child development activities. While spiritual teachings are central, further emphasis on practical moral education such as decision-making, empathy, and civic responsibility would deepen children's moral reasoning and life skills (Lickona, 1996; Jafralie & Zaver, 2019). Programme content should include culturally relevant moral scenarios and discussions to help children apply moral principles to everyday situations.
- 2) **Provide Continuous Training for Church Partners and Staff:** Given the central role of church leaders, project facilitators, and volunteers in delivering moral guidance, CIG should invest in ongoing capacity-building. Training should focus on modern pedagogical methods for moral education, child psychology, and handling contemporary moral dilemmas children face (Patton, 2002; Smillie *et al.*, 2013).
- 3) **Expand Collaboration with Educational Institutions:** CIG could explore closer collaboration with Ghana's formal educational system, especially in integrating

aspects of its moral education strategies into Religious and Moral Education (RME) curricula. This partnership could ensure consistency in moral values promoted across both religious and secular institutions (Owusu, 2022; NaCCA, 2019).

- 4) **Undertake Further Research on Long-Term Moral Outcomes:** While this study highlighted significant impacts of the CDSP on children's moral development, there is still a need for longitudinal research to examine how these moral values persist into adulthood and influence broader community transformation (Wydick *et al.*, 2013; Darku, 2017). Future studies could also compare outcomes between children in the programme and those outside it.

Creative Commons License Statement

This research work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>. To view the complete legal code, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode.en>. Under the terms of this license, members of the community may copy, distribute, and transmit the article, provided that proper, prominent, and unambiguous attribution is given to the authors, and the material is not used for commercial purposes or modified in any way. Reuse is only allowed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Author

Diana Adjei-Fianko, is a lecturer of Religious and Moral Education in the Department of the Basic Education, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana. She holds Doctor of Philosophy in Arts Education, (Religious and Moral Education) from the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. With a wealth of teaching experience spanning from basic education to tertiary levels, she brings a diverse educational background to her research pursuits. Her research interests encompass Religious Education, Moral Education, Comparative Religion, Curriculum Studies, Pedagogic Studies, Biblical Exegesis and Hermeneutics, and the intersection of Faith-Based Organisations and Child Development. Her ORCID number is <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5994-5257>

References

- Agyemang, C. B., Asare-Danso, S., & Owusu, A. (2019). Sponsorship and child development: Perspectives from Ghana. *African Journal of Social Work*, 9(1), 45-54.

- An, L., Wang, J., & Chen, Y. (2019). The psychological effects of sponsorship on children in poverty. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 36(1), 61-75.
- Annobil, S. (2018). Religious and moral education in Ghana: An analysis. *Ghana Journal of Education*, 12(1), 55-68.
- Asare-Danso, S. (2011). Teaching religious and moral education effectively in Ghanaian schools. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 2(3), 23-32.
- Asare-Danso, S. (2018). Religion and moral education in contemporary Ghana. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 6(7), 101-114.
- Asare-Mensah, A. (2021). NGOs and child welfare in Ghana: Faith-based versus secular approaches. *NGO Journal of Development Studies*, 19(4), 55-72.
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Prentice Hall. Retrieved from <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Social-learning-theory-Bandura/c12d255529c6b9abdbc18af264d678df84375049>
- Bansah, K. J. (2017). Moral education and development in Ghanaian schools. *Ghana Social Science Review*, 9(2), 39-58.
- Berk, L. E. (2013). *Child development* (9th ed.). Pearson. Retrieved from https://books.google.ro/books/about/Child_Development.html?hl=id&id=QIRkuQAACAAJ&redir_esc=y
- Berkowitz, M. W., & Bier, M. C. (2005). *What works in character education: A research-driven guide for educators*. Character Education Partnership. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1108/CE-02-2007-0002>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Britwum, A., & Aidoo, R. (2022). Moral decay and youth development in Ghana. *Ghana Journal of Sociology*, 11(1), 17-32.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press. Retrieved from https://books.google.ro/books/about/The_Ecology_of_Human_Development.htm?id=OCmbzWka6xUC&redir_esc=y
- Clark, C. M., & Peterson, P. L. (1997). Teachers' thought processes. In P. W. Jackson (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Teaching* (pp. 255-296). Macmillan. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED251449>
- Compassion International (CI). (2017). *Annual report*. Compassion International.
- Compassion International (CI). (2024). *Ghana operations report*. Compassion International Ghana.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage. Retrieved from https://books.google.ro/books?id=PVIMtOnJlLcC&printsec=frontcover&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false
- Darku, D. K. (2017). Faith-based organizations and development in Ghana. *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 32(2), 123-141.

- Evans, D. K., Kremer, M., & Ngatia, M. (2009). The impact of distributing school uniforms on children's education in Kenya. *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 5092*. Retrieved from https://www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/res_e_arch-paper/The%20Impact%20of%20Distributing%20School%20Uniforms.pdf
- Geraths, S. (2017). Compassion in child development. *Journal of Christian Ministry*, 15(2), 23-31.
- Gilligan, C. (1993). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Harvard University Press. Retrieved from https://books.google.ro/books/about/In_a_Different_Voice.html?id=XItMnL7ho2gC&redir_esc=y
- Jafralie, S. J., & Zaver, A. (2019). Teaching ethics and religious literacy. *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 40(4), 482-496.
- Jenkins, D. (1990). The moral child. *Child Development*, 61(4), 1029-1041.
- Khawaja, M. (2018). Evaluation models for education. *Journal of Educational Evaluation*, 6(1), 45-52.
- Kiguta, S. (2017). Child development and moral formation. *African Journal of Child Welfare*, 12(1), 13-24.
- King, P. E., & Boyatzis, C. J. (2015). Religious and spiritual development. In R. M. Lerner (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology and developmental science* (7th ed., Vol. 1, pp. 975–1021). Wiley.
- Kinoti, G. (2012). Compassion and poverty alleviation. *Christian Relief Review*, 7(1), 5-11.
- Kohlberg, L. (1971). Moral Education: The Psychological View. *Encyclopaedia of Education*, 6 (45), 399–406.
- Kristjánsson, K. (2016). Aristotelian character education. *Routledge*. Retrieved from <https://www.routledge.com/Aristotelian-Character-Education/Kristjansson/p/book/9781138737945>
- Lee, S. (2014). Compassion International's Korean roots. *Asian Christian Studies*, 18(3), 56-74.
- Lickona, T. (1991). *Educating for character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility*. Bantam Books.
- Lickona, T. (1996). Eleven principles of effective character education. *Journal of Moral Education*, 25(1), 93-100. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305724960250110>
- Maxcy, S. J. (2003). Pragmatic threads in mixed methods research. In *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research*. Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781506335193.n13>
- NaCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment). (2019). *Curriculum framework for basic education*. Accra, Ghana.
- Noddings, N. (2007). The ethics of care. *Educational Theory*, 57(2), 153-170.
- Owusu, A. (2022). Moral decline and education in Ghana. *Ghana Education Journal*, 18(2), 45-57.
- Owusu, A., & Asare-Danso, S. (2018). The role of religious education in moral development. *Journal of Religious Studies*, 10(1), 72-85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305724860150205>

- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Sage. Retrieved from https://books.google.ro/books/about/Qualitative_Research_Evaluation_Methods.html?id=FjBw2oi8El4C&redir_esc=y
- Puplampu, E. (2005). *The child: The root of the nation*. Ghana Child Welfare Association. Retrieved from https://test.nypl.org/research/research-catalog/bib/hb99_008_039_1_650203941
- Sagoe, D. (2012). Precautions in focus group research. *Journal of Sociological Research*, 3(2), 1-17.
- Scriven, M. (1994). Product evaluation in educational evaluation. *Evaluation Practice*, 15(3), 223-230.
- Sim, J., & Peters, A. (2014). The story of Compassion International. *Journal of Christian Missions*, 6(2), 112-130.
- Smillie, I., et al. (2013). Partnering with local churches in development. *Faith and Development Quarterly*, 4(1), 45-60.
- Smith, C., & Denton, M. L. (2005). *Soul searching: The religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers*. Oxford University Press.
- Stiles, D. & Jernigan, B. (2010). Early childhood development. *Pediatric Journal of Africa*, 14(1), 9-15.
- Straughan, R. (1989). Moral education in a changing society. *Journal of Moral Education*, 18(3), 207-214.
- Stufflebeam, D. L. (2001). Evaluation models. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 2001(89), 7-98. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.3>
- Stufflebeam, D. L., & Shinkfield, A. J. (2007). *Evaluation theory, models, and applications*. Jossey-Bass. https://books.google.ro/books/about/Evaluation_Theory_Models_and_Application.html?id=xx6UgC6UdFMC&redir_esc=y
- Wilson, J. (1973). *Introduction to moral education*. Penguin. Retrieved from https://books.google.ca/books/about/Introduction_to_Moral_Education.html?id=IsSeAAAAMAAJ
- Wydick, B., Glewwe, P., & Rutledge, L. (2013). Does international child sponsorship work? *Journal of Political Economy*, 121(2), 393-436. <https://doi.org/10.1086/670138>