



## INFLUENCE OF INTERFAITH ENGAGEMENTS ON ACADEMIC INCLUSION OF STUDENTS TEACHERS AT METHODIST COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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### **Abstract:**

The purpose of the study was to find out the kind of interfaith activities student teachers engaged in on campus and their influence on student academic inclusion. A cross-sectional survey as a design was used for the study. A simple random sampling technique was used to sample the respondents, with a sample size of 210, and the main instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. The study revealed that interfaith activities student teachers engage in at Methodist College of Education campus were: Sunday service, morning devotion, interfaith prayer meetings, interfaith dialogue, and interfaith sports competitions. It again revealed that interfaith engagements help promote a more harmonious campus environment, help all students with different religious beliefs to feel welcome in the lecture room, help all students to freely express their religious beliefs in the lecture room and receive academic support from students of other religious faiths in the lecture room. It is recommended that the college management should sensitise student teachers to appreciate diversity and its influence on student teachers' academic and social progress.

**Keywords:** academic inclusion, engagement, interfaith, student teachers

### **1. Introduction**

Inclusive education prioritises creating a welcoming environment for students from diverse backgrounds, including different religious groups (UNESCO, 2010). One of how schools can promote religious inclusion is by recognising interfaith engagement (Interfaith Youth Core [IFYC], 2022). Interfaith programmes have increasingly become part of higher education's effort to promote social justice and inclusion (Edwards, 2018a). Christian higher education shares the responsibility of preparing graduates to engage across differences, including interfaith engagement. However, Poppinga *et al.* (2019)

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noted that many Christians may remain reluctant to build bridges between different communities and cultivate meaningful, ongoing relationships with others, particularly those from different religious traditions.

According to Basham and Hughes (2012), interfaith activities on Christian campuses require knowledge of the institution and the ability to articulate the connection between its Christian orientation and interfaith work, develop a “*theology of interfaith cooperation*” (p. 3), and embed interfaith engagement within the existing institutional programs and structures. Knoope and Chauzal (2016) have described Ghana’s educational system as a major formula for stability in the country because of the positive coexistence among various religious groups on campuses. Islam, Christianity, and the African Traditional Religions are all practiced (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012) and taught on campuses, especially in public institutions in Ghana. Korley (2024) indicated that the tertiary institutions’ academic curricula and extracurricular activities provide platforms for students to develop critical thinking and creatively explore and articulate their beliefs, contributing to a rich spectrum of cultural expression.

According to Greene (2017) and Rockenbach *et al.* (2015), religious actors, through inter-faith gatherings, have helped in building community peace and religious tolerance in communities strained by conflict. Religion, thus, strengthens the bond of friendship that exists between people of the same faith, and at the same time, it bridges the gap that subsists between groups with different religious orientations (Park & Bowman, 2015). Attributing gender to interfaith engagements and inclusive education, Korley (2024) revealed no significant gender difference in the impact of beliefs on critical thinking and academic performance, indicating that the influence of spirituality is equally felt across genders.

Methodist College of Education, being one of the mission tertiary institutions in the country, operates along the lines of accepting different religious faiths. On the basis of that, the study aimed to find out the kind of interfaith activities student teachers engaged in on campus, their influence on student academic inclusion and whether there is a difference between male and female student teachers regarding interfaith engagement on campus.

### **1.1 Objective of the Study**

The study was guided by the following objectives and hypothesis.

- 1) To find out the kind of interfaith activities student teachers engage in at Methodist College of Education campus.
- 2) To examine how interfaith engagements influence the academic inclusion of student teachers at the Methodist College of Education campus.
- 3) To determine whether there is no statistically significant difference between male and female student teachers concerning engagement in interfaith activities on campus.

## 1.2 Research Questions

- 1) What interfaith activities do student teachers engage in at Methodist College of Education campus?
- 2) In what ways do interfaith engagements influence the academic inclusion of student teachers at Methodist College of Education campus?

## 1.3 Hypothesis

**H0:** There is no statistically significant difference between male and female student teachers concerning engagement in interfaith activities on campus

**H1:** There is a statistically significant difference between male and female student teachers concerning engagement in interfaith activities on campus

## 2. Review of Related Literature

### 2.1 Theoretical Consideration

The contact hypothesis theory was used for this study. The contact hypothesis theory was proposed by Allport (1954). Allport suggested that increased contact between different groups can reduce prejudice and improve relations under certain conditions. This theory suggests that ignorance and misinformation often fuel biases and that meaningful contact allows individuals to challenge their erroneous beliefs about others. The hypothesis emphasizes that such interactions should occur under favourable conditions, including equal status among participants, cooperative engagement towards common goals and support from external authorities.

Yuker (1988) again stated that the contact theory is a way of refining relations among individuals who are facing differences. In inclusive education, the contact theory relates to the impact of enhanced interaction on regular learners' attitudes toward learners with disabilities. Yuker (1988) noted that as mainstreamed learners in schools applying inclusion programmes get closer to their marginalised peers, their attitudes become more positive and they develop positive relationships with each other. The basis of Allport's theory of Allport is that, under suitable situations, interpersonal contact is one of the most effective ways of reducing prejudices between mainstream and minority group members to improve their interaction. How to realise these objectives is to offer a chance for learners of diverse ability groups to cooperate.

The contact theory is of the view that constant exchanges among members of the mainstream and marginal groups would lead to enhancement in interactions among them. Allport stressed further that those supportive integrated interactions meant reaching shared objectives that must be encouraged to ensure positive interpersonal relationships. The theory is applicable to this study because it will bring to bear the understanding of interfaith and reduce prejudice among student teachers from diverse faith backgrounds.

## **2.2 Interfaith Engagement Programmes among Students**

The term interfaith represents the coming together of people who orient around religion differently (Rockenbach *et al.*, 2020). Interfaith environments are those in which “*people encounter one another’s stories, identities, beliefs, values, and practices to such a degree that they come away changed*” (Mayhew & Rockenbach, 2021, p. 3).

### **2.2.1 Interfaith Dialogue**

According to Camilleri, cited in Acar (2013), the first benefit of interfaith dialogue is the shattering of the psychological walls and fears about others. People of diverse beliefs set aside imposed ideas and opinions from outside sources, and learn through direct interaction certain ties about each other. The second benefit, Camilleri asserts, is that interfaith dialogue makes people aware of “*the collective heritage of humankind*”. Further, excluding or ignoring any major religious tradition not only diminishes the collective heritage of humankind but also diminishes each of its heirs. Camilleri indicates that the third benefit of interfaith dialog is its emphasis on the importance of citizens’ understanding of the value of both commonality and difference in order to co-exist and to illuminate and reinforce each other. In short, the benefits of interfaith dialog include promotion of respect and diversity, development of a more cohesive community, restoration of trust, and reduction of the feeling of threat. Acar (2013) revealed that interfaith activities are events that were beneficial because the activities helped their educational and social development through tolerance and friendships with believers of different religions. Interfaith club Acar's (2013) findings lend support to the establishment of student clubs that promote interfaith dialog activities at college campuses. Students participating in these clubs express a tolerance for faiths different from their own, and thus student clubs such as this one could prove to enhance the educational experience with perspectives typically missed by students who are not pursuing religious studies academically. In a time when the lack of tolerance and understanding of other religions leads so often to strife and violence, clubs such as the TSA provide a way to increase tolerance.

Also, Pealore *et al.* (2025) studied interfaith dialogue as a participatory approach for peacebuilding. The study found out that the use of interfaith dialogues increased communities’ knowledge and experience in peaceful co-existence, with an increase from 4 % of respondents experiencing extremely high knowledge to 98 %. As high as 96% of the respondents observed very high peaceful co-existence among various religious groups due to the adoption of interfaith dialogues. Similarly, 17% of the respondents agreed that religious conflicts in the communities have reduced, while 74% of the respondents strongly agreed that religious conflicts in the communities have reduced as a result of interfaith dialogue among them and other stakeholders. All respondents generally agreed with the assertion that there has not been any violent conflict in their communities which was directly associated with IDs. Interfaith dialogue as an approach to sustainable peacebuilding demonstrated profound relevance by successfully addressing the root causes of conflicts stemming from religious or other group

differences. It also demonstrated notable effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability in securing the needed peace among intra- and inter-groups. 84% of respondents strongly agreed that ID was efficient, while 99% respondents strongly agreed that the adoption of IDs yielded sustainable outcomes. It is recommended that ID as a tool for promoting peace should be encouraged among communities and stakeholders in the peace-building and coexistence initiative. Communities and stakeholders should be equipped with the requisite interfaith dialogue facilitation skills and principles. Based on the study findings on the role interfaith dialogue plays in promoting peace, we recommend that the Government, CSO's, religious bodies and other faith-based organizations should increase investment in livelihoods and entrepreneurship development among the youth and women as part of the holistic interfaith dialogue approach.

### **2.2.2 Interfaith Sports**

Sports are linked to several favourable psychological consequences for young people, including higher levels of socialisation, confidence, leadership abilities, and body image (Balogun-Mwangi *et al.*, 2023). Studies show that participating in sports and games as female Muslim students may help their lives (Zarezadeh & Rastegar, 2023). Awudu (2024) revealed that institutions' endeavours to provide inclusive and supportive settings for Muslim female girls are shown in the adaptation of activities, deliberate education and awareness promotion, partnership promotion and incorporation of scientific notions into sporting events. Zahara (2023) revealed that their male counterparts' objectification hampered female students' equal involvement and gaining rewards in extracurricular activities. Several cultural and environmental expectations and perceptions have resulted in a lack of inclusion of female students in sports and physical education. Girls are systemically limited and have their dexterity lessened, which is why this issue is firmly anchored in an interconnected dynamic of subjugation and dehumanisation.

Again, Mohammed's (2024) study on the inclusion of female Muslim Students in sports and games in Islamic Schools indicated that the concerning parents' and Islamic teachers' perceptions of Muslim females' inclusion in sports and games, three core thematic areas were revealed: positive influence on character development, school for Important Skills, and secret Code for Success, which favourably influence the diverse development of Muslim girls. Numerous considerations at individual levels of the Social Ecological Model (SEM) influence parental decisions about Muslim female sports inclusion. Individually, parental choices are induced by weighty factors, including religious convictions (prayer periods), cultural principles, and modesty concerns. The study further unearths how teachers shape the sports climate at the organisational level. The organisation's endeavours to provide inclusive and supportive settings for Muslim female girls are shown in the adaptation of activities, deliberate education and awareness promotion, partnership promotion and incorporation of scientific notions into sporting events. As sports are seen as important educational instruments for fostering the development of Muslim female students, they must be integrated into the curriculum.

Stakeholders in the education sector must collaborate to guarantee Muslim female students receive a fair opportunity to excel in sports and games while respecting their cultural and religious beliefs, utilising these synchronised initiatives.

### **2.2.3 Interfaith Prayers**

Korley (2024) explored the impact of religious beliefs and ethical principles on undergraduate students' critical thinking and academic performance. The findings revealed a philosophical connection between religious beliefs and ethical principles in shaping students' critical thinking and academic performance. Participants consistently identified believing in prayers and miracles as indispensable pillars of their intellectual and ethical frameworks, viewing divine intervention as a complementary force reinforcing their academic pursuits and life challenges. Moreover, the study revealed a significant divergence between faith-based reliance and humanist perspectives, which prioritise personal autonomy and critical reasoning. Nonetheless, belief in prayers and miracles showed a weak positive correlation with critical thinking skills; other factors such as educational background, teaching methods, and personal attributes like motivation and self-efficacy played a significant role in students' academic performance. Jeynes *et al.* (2020) explored a meta-analysis on the relationship between prayer and students' outcomes and revealed that the exercise of prayer is associated with better levels of students' outcomes. Moreover, the effect of prayer was greater for high-quality studies.

## **2.3 Effects of Interfaith Engagement on Students' Academic Inclusion**

The exploration of students' engagement has become a focal point for researchers, encompassing diverse dimensions such as culture, societal influences, academic motivation, instructional belongingness, socialisation and religiosity (Roy & Swargiary, 2024).

Canaan *et al.* (2023) study on the impact of religious diversity on students' academic and behavioural outcomes showed that exposure to peers from different religious backgrounds increases Muslim students' enrollment in classes with non-Muslim instructors, suggesting that contact improves openness towards members of other religions. Inter-religious contact also impacts students' academic performance. We show that while exposure to peers from non-Islamic high schools increases Muslim students' GPA, exposure to peers from Islamic backgrounds reduces the GPA among students from secular high schools

Marfo *et al.* (2020), on the other hand, investigated the promotion of peace among student religious groups in public Universities in Ghana: UDS, Wa Campus, in perspective. The study revealed that the mechanisms employed by these campus-based religious groups in promoting peace include the following: preaching and teaching of peace, organisation of interfaith dinners and games, exchange of pulpits and periodic intercessory fasting and prayers for followers and the masses. This paper recommends that periodic education on religious tolerance should be carried out by amalgamated

religious bodies and university managements to help deepen the understanding and knowledge of students about religious pluralism and the need for peaceful coexistence. Roy and Swargiary (2024) explored religious engagement and academic success and revealed that underscored a robust correlation between religious engagement and academic success, emphasising common themes while acknowledging city-specific variations influenced by local cultural contexts. It offered insights into the multifaceted role of religious activities in fostering holistic educational experiences. Also, Badriyah's (2025) study examined harmony in diversity: Islamic perspectives on student perceptions and engagement in interfaith dialogue on campus. The results showed that most students had a positive view of religious diversity (87.3%) and considered it important to maintain harmony between religious communities (79.1%). However, their level of involvement in interfaith dialogue is still low (36.4%), indicating a gap between value awareness and social practice.

Although 88.2% of students did not experience discrimination based on religion, almost half (47.3%) had witnessed it happen to others, indicating that there is still potential for intolerance on campus. These findings emphasize the relevance of religious moderation theory and the idea of inclusive education, which highlight the importance of the role of educational institutions in building a space for reflective, collaborative and participatory interfaith dialogue.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

A cross-sectional survey was used for the study, and according to Creswell (2014), a cross-sectional survey is a research method that involves collecting data from a sample of participants at a single point in time. The design provides a picture of the characteristics and opinions of a population at a specific moment. The design was carefully chosen because it helped to determine the effectiveness of the influence of interfaith engagements on the academic inclusion of student teachers at Methodist College of Education.

#### **3.2 Population**

Population in research refers to the entire set of individuals of common interest that the researcher shares (Creswell, 2019). The target population was all student teachers in levels two hundred and three hundred of the 2024/2025 academic year. Level 300 had a population of 213, while Level 200 had 230 totally 443. 102 were sampled from Level 300, while 108 were sampled from Level 200 using a simple random sampling technique. This is a probability sampling method where every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected for the sample, and this approach helps to minimise bias and ensure that the sample is representative of the population (Kumar, 2018).

### 3.3 Instrument for Data Collection

Data were gathered using a questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: A, B, and C. The questionnaire has Section A, which consists of demographic data of the student teachers and a total of 16 questions. There were eight items in Section B about interfaith activities student teachers engage in at the Methodist College of Education campus.

Section 'C' featured eight items on how interfaith engagements influence academic inclusion of student teachers at the Methodist College of Education campus. Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. To ensure the validity and reliability of the test items, a pilot test was done at Kibi Presby College of Education. For the acceptability of the questionnaire instrument, two fellows from the same subject, that is, special education, were allowed to complete it.

**Table 1:** Reliability Estimate

| Scale                                                     | No of Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------------|
| Kinds of interfaith activities students engaged on campus | 8           | .71              |
| Influence of interfaith engagement on academic inclusion  | 8           | .74              |

Table 1 present for the reliability analysis of the pilot test. With the pilot test, a Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of at least 0.7 for a new instrument is acceptable (Devon *et al.*, 2017). The Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the items measuring the kinds of interfaith activities students' teachers engaged in on campus was 0.71, and the influence of interfaith engagement on academic inclusion was 0.74. This is an indication that the questionnaire was of high content validity, as indicated by Devon *et al.* (2017).

**Table 2:** Distribution of the Respondents by Gender

| Gender       | Frequency  | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Male         | 114        | 54         |
| Female       | 96         | 46         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>210</b> | <b>100</b> |

The statistics in Table 1 show the distribution of the gender of the respondents used in the study. 210 respondents answered the data collection instrument. 114 (54%) were males and 96 (46%) were females.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The IBM Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 21 was employed to analyse the data. Mean and standard deviation were used to analysed research questions one and two, while the hypothesis was analysed using independent sample t test.

## 4. Results

The aim of research question one was to identify interfaith activities student teachers engage in at Methodist College of Education campus.

To answer this question, the researchers analysed the quantitative data from Section A of the questionnaire (items 1-8). The analysis involved calculating the mean and standard deviation of each item, and then examining the overall average responses to determine the interfaith activities student teachers engaged in. The questionnaire used a 4-point Likert scale, where respondents chose from: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The average score helped to determine interfaith activities student teachers engaged in on campus ( $4+3+2+1=10$ ,  $10\div4=2.5$ ). If the mean falls above the cut-off mean of 2.5, it is taken as an interfaith activity student teachers engaged in on campus, while if it is below 2.5, it is taken as non interfaith activity. Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations of responses on the interfaith activities student teachers engage in at Methodist College of Education campus.

**Table 3:** Mean and standard deviation on interfaith activities  
student teachers engage in at Methodist College of Education campus

| Statement                                                     | Mean | Std |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------|-----|
| I always attend the Sunday service organised by the college   | 3.79 | .47 |
| I always attend the morning devotion organised by the college | 3.72 | .59 |
| I engage in interfaith prayer meetings on campus              | 3.17 | .74 |
| I engage in interfaith dialogue or discussion on campus       | 3.08 | .80 |
| I engage in interfaith sports competitions on campus          | 2.94 | .95 |
| I engage in interfaith music competitions on campus           | 2.78 | .95 |
| I am a member of an interfaith club on campus                 | 2.41 | .99 |
| I attend religious diversity workshops on campus              | 2.37 | .97 |

Table 3 shows the results of the analysis on the interfaith activities student teachers engage in Methodist College of Education campus. The respondents agreed ( $M = 3.79$ ,  $SD = .47$ ) that they always attend morning devotion organised by the college. Also, they agreed that ( $M = 3.17$ ,  $SD = .74$ ) they engage in interfaith prayer meetings on campus. They agreed with the statement ( $M = 3.08$ ,  $SD = .80$ ) that they engage in interfaith dialogue or discussion on campus. Again, they agreed ( $M = 2.94$ ,  $SD = .95$ ) that they engage in interfaith sports competitions on campus. They agreed with the statement ( $M = 2.78$ ,  $SD = .95$ ) that they engage in interfaith music competitions on campus. On the other hand, the respondents disagreed with the statement ( $M = 2.41$ ,  $SD = .99$ ) that they were members of an interfaith club on campus. And again disagreed ( $M = 2.37$ ,  $SD = .97$ ) that they attend religious diversity workshops on campus

The aim of research question two was to find out how interfaith engagements influence academic inclusion of student teachers at Methodist College Education campus. To answer this question, the researchers analysed the quantitative data from Section B of the questionnaire (items 1-8). The analysis involved calculating the mean and standard deviation of each item, and then examining the overall average responses to determine

the influence of interfaith engagement on student academic inclusion. The questionnaire used a 4-point Likert scale, where respondents chose from: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The average score helped to determine interfaith activities student teachers engaged in on campus ( $4+3+2+1=10$ ,  $10\div4=2.5$ ). If the mean falls above the cut-off mean of 2.5, it is taken as having an influence on student teachers' academic inclusion, while if it is below 2.5, it is taken as not having any influence on student teachers' academic inclusion. Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations of responses on the ways in which interfaith engagements influence academic inclusion of student teachers at Methodist College Education campus.

**Table 4:** Mean and standard deviation on ways interfaith engagements influence academic inclusion of student teachers at Methodist College Education campus

| Statement                                                                                                    | Mean | Std |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-----|
| Interfaith activities help promote a more harmonious school environment                                      | 3.36 | .77 |
| Interfaith activities help all students with different religious beliefs to feel welcome in the lecture room | 3.33 | .78 |
| Interfaith activities help all students to freely express their religious beliefs in the lecture room        | 3.30 | .80 |
| I receive academic support from students of other religious faith outside the lecture room                   | 3.22 | .78 |
| I receive academic support from students of other religious faiths in the lecture room                       | 3.02 | .99 |
| Interfaith activities enhance the academic performance of students                                           | 2.82 | .99 |
| Interfaith activities help to improve class attendance of students                                           | 2.55 | 1.0 |
| Interfaith activities help to reduce academic stress of students                                             | 2.53 | .99 |

Table 4 shows the results of the analysis on how interfaith engagements influence academic inclusion of student teachers at Methodist College Education campus. The respondents agreed ( $M = 3.36$ ,  $SD = .77$ ) that interfaith activities help promote a more harmonious school environment. Also, they agreed ( $M = 3.33$ ,  $SD = .78$ ) that interfaith activities help all students with different religious beliefs to feel welcome in the classroom. They agreed with the statement ( $M = 3.30$ ,  $SD = .80$ ) that Interfaith activities help all students to freely express their religious beliefs in the classroom. Again, they agreed with the statement ( $M = 3.22$ ,  $SD = .78$ ) that they receive academic support from students of other religious faiths outside the classroom. They agreed with the statement ( $M = 3.02$ ,  $SD = .99$ ) that they receive academic support from students of other religious faiths in the classroom. Also, the respondents agreed with the statement ( $M = 2.82$ ,  $SD = .99$ ) that interfaith activities enhance the academic performance of students. Again, agreed ( $M = 2.55$ ,  $SD = 1.0$ ) that interfaith activities help to improve class attendance of students. Finally, agreed ( $M = 2.53$ ,  $SD = .99$ ) that interfaith activities help to reduce academic stress of students.

**Table 5:** Independent sample t-Test of Gender on Student

| Gender | N   | Mean | Std | T    | Df  | P    |
|--------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|
| Male   | 114 | 3.05 | .79 | .305 | 173 | .383 |
| Female | 96  | 3.01 | .82 |      |     |      |

Table 5 shows that there was no statistically significant difference  $t(173) = .305$ ,  $P = .383$  between male and female student teachers in their engagement in interfaith activities on campus. The null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was hence not rejected. Therefore, the results showed that there is no statistically significant difference in the means of male student teachers ( $M = 3.05$ ,  $SD = .79$ ) and female student teachers ( $M = 3.01$ ,  $SD = .82$ ) regarding their engagement in interfaith activities on campus.

## 5. Discussion

Analysis of research question one revealed Sunday service, morning devotion, interfaith prayer meetings, interfaith dialogue, interfaith sports competition and interfaith music competition as interfaith activities student teachers engage in Methodist College of Education campus. Some of the interfaith activities, like Sunday service and morning devotion, had the highest mean because, as a mission institution, those two interfaith activities were compulsory for all students, which may be the reason for that score. The current study was in agreement with Jeynes *et al.* (2020), who explored a meta-analysis on the relationship between prayer and students' outcomes on campus and revealed that the exercise of prayer is associated with better levels of students' outcomes; the current study revealed a series of interfaith activities which accompanied by prayers. Acar (2013) indicated that interfaith dialogue is one of the interfaith activities students experience on campus, and its benefit is the shattering of the psychological walls and fears about others. Again, Awudu (2024) revealed that institutions' endeavours to provide inclusive and supportive settings for Muslim female students are shown in the adaptation of activities, deliberate education and awareness promotion, partnership promotion and incorporation of scientific notions into sporting events on campus.

Analysis of research question two revealed that interfaith activities help promote more harmonious school environment, students with different religious beliefs feel welcome in the lecture room, students to freely express their religious belief in the lecture room, receive academic support from students of other religious faith outside and inside the lecture room, it enhance academic performance of students, helps to improve class attendance and helps to reduce academic stress of students. Interfaith activities help promote a more harmonious school environment, which was the strongest influence of interfaith engagements on academic inclusion among student teachers, while helping to reduce academic stress of students was the least. This showed that interfaith engagement has a significant influence on some activities among student teachers on campus. The findings had a reflection and the mood of religious tolerance in the entire country, where all religious activities are embraced by the citizens, which has a positive effective on peace and harmonious living in the country. Canaan *et al.* (2023) study on the impact of religious

diversity on students' academic and behavioural outcomes showed that exposure to peers from different religious backgrounds increases Muslim students' enrollment in classes with non-Muslim instructors, suggesting that contact improves openness towards members of other religions, which impacts the academic performance of students. Again, Roy and Swargiary (2024) explored religious engagement and academic success, revealed that underscored a robust correlation between religious engagement and academic success among students on campus.

Concerning the hypothesis, it was established that the null hypothesis was not rejected. Therefore, the results showed that there is no statistically significant difference in the means of male and female student teachers regarding their engagement in interfaith activities on campus. This finding was corroborated by Korley (2024), whose study revealed no significant gender difference in the impact of beliefs on critical thinking and academic performance, indicating that the influence of spirituality is equally felt across genders. Even though the purposes of the studies were different, there was some similarity between the two studies, which made it possible to compare and contrast.

## **6. Conclusion**

Based on the findings, it has been concluded that, firstly, student teachers engage in various interfaith activities on campus, including compulsory ones arranged by the college and voluntary ones organised by the students themselves.

Secondly, interfaith engagements promoted religious harmony, which created an avenue for academic inclusion for all student teachers, including students with disabilities on campus.

Again, gender played no role regarding the engagement in interfaith activities on campus.

### **6.1 Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made based on the findings:

College management should organise regular religious diversity workshops on campus to strengthen academic and social inclusion of all student teachers, especially student teachers with special educational needs.

Also, the college management should sensitise student teachers to appreciate diversity and its influence on students' academic and social progress.

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### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

### **About the Author**

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