



Original Article

Cultivating Peace as a Socialization Outcome in Universities: The Role of Institutional-based Religious Students' Associations

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The search for peace and harmony entails many life aspects across the globe and various institutions. While the common conflicts in Kenya are skewed on tribal, political, and family orientations, the effects spread into institutions of higher learning. It is on this background that the need for cultivating peace in universities through nurtured socialisation outcomes is attributed to students' association. The article emanates from a study conducted in 2020-2021 with the purpose of examining the influence of students' associations on educational socialisation outcomes among students in selected universities in Nairobi County, Kenya. Guided by Structural Functionalist Theory, the study used a mixed-methods design. The target population of students in ten chartered universities in Nairobi County. The researcher used a sample of 3 universities and achieved involved 167 students. Using stratified and simple random sampling techniques combined with purposive sampling, the study selected universities, deans of students, and individual association members. Data was gathered using an observation checklist, and questionnaire for students, and an interview schedule for deans of students. The researcher piloted the research instruments in one of the private universities that were not among the main study sites. The reliability and validity of the instruments were checked using the split-half technique and critically assessing the consistency of the responses on the pilot questionnaires. The data collected was then analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24. The major finding was that participation in students' religious association activities influenced educational socialisation outcomes. The outcomes can be harnessed into creating peaceful and harmonious co-existence in institutions of higher learning through which cultural, religious, and political diversities can be shared for the socio-wellbeing of the university community. The study recommends the embracing of students' religious-based associations by university administrators to foster peace education.

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INTRODUCTION

All over the world, people in various societies are known to form associations that bring them together. A social organisation starts with the psychological bond between individuals. In their study, Amiot et al. (2010), in *Changes in Social Identities over Time*, stress the role of coping and adaptation processes such as socialisation which enables individuals to join new associations and cope in new environments. Socialisation refers to the process through which the individual acquires modes of behaviour and is integrated into society and its social systems (Dijkstra, 2012). It is part of human nature for man to seek friendship and companionship. University students are known to be attracted to the various student associations that exist in the institutions.

Socialisation is a lifetime process for any individual and it takes place through various agents. The first agent is the family and more so the parents. A study done by Palmer (2015) titled *Ecology of Socialization* discusses the various agents and outcomes of socialisation. According to Palmer (2015), the socialisation process will be driven by other forces such as biological factors which include genetics which the child will have inherited from their parents and evolution which involves major transformations or changes in the individual,

family, and society at large. Biological factors also include hormones which will determine the pace and extent of the socialisation outcomes.

The socialisation process will continue throughout school life. Beginning from secondary school, young adult is now able to identify with peers and they also have a major contribution to the individuals' educational socialisation outcomes. Peer groups are very strong agents of socialisation, and their contributions will have a strong bearing on an individual's adult life. By the time adult joins the university, they are able to make a choice on the type of students' associations they want to join and the type of company they want to keep (Brennar, 2015). Having made a choice, they may join several associations which have different roles, beliefs, and practices and impart different values and attitudes.

The process of socialisation continues through other agents, such as the community in which the youth grow up. According to Rashkova (2017), this involves individuals copying the behaviour and actions of others. Imitation is the self-conscious assumption of others' acts or roles. Imitation may be conscious, unconscious, deliberate, simultaneous, perpetual, or ideational. It is through imitation that most socialisation takes place. The importance of the community cannot be quantified because apart from hosting the individual, it also

houses other socialisation agents such as the parents, family, peer group, culture, education, health, and religion.

Globally, the picture can be seen in a report obtained from the *Students' Organizations Finance Office (SOFO) Directory (2016)*. The office at Christian Union (CU) Boulder provides an important link between students and their surrounding communities. This is an international office that plays various roles, the most important being forming a network of the students' associations, their leaders as well as other volunteers. When organisations work in collaboration, they are able to tap various talents and potentials among the students and also expose the same within and outside the university. Participation in associations gives students the opportunity to enrich their academic endeavours as well as their educational socialisation outcomes. Universities in Kenya would benefit from the efforts of such an office.

Religious Based Students Associations (RBSA), which are ethnically based can be found in all universities in Kenya. Their major motive is to bring together students who hail from the same geographical region and help to orientate them to their new statuses, new environments with new and wider expectations (Ishabiyi and Khan, 2020). Religious-based students' associations are meant to inform members of the opportunities that are available in their local communities, especially leadership positions which in most cases attract former university students' leaders. If not well guided these RBSA can sometimes bring hostility and suspicion among the many ethnic communities that are represented in a university. Kenyan universities are national institutions and host students from different ethnic communities.

Human beings live in societies and human life is essentially a life of the association. Students' associations are a very important feature in any university. This research aimed at studying their influence on students' educational socialisation

outcomes. According to Rashkova (2017), socialisation is the process of learning group norms, habits, and ideals. Students run the associations on their own and therefore if they are not monitored, they can engage in some anti-social and negative behaviour and activities. A student who is positively socialised is self-disciplined and responsible and is able to cope with the challenges of university life and even thereafter.

Group formation and socialisation are global issues, as depicted in various studies. According to Forsyth (2010), in the study focusing on *Group Dynamics*, most or all students' associations will have clear and set goals which give them a reason to exist. Some of the goals include increasing knowledge, skills, education, and wisdom, rendering emotional support or going through a spiritual or religious experience together. The achievement of such goals is best realised within a students' association. The students' organisations form part of the university structures, and the university administration gives the learners the freedom to conduct their affairs with minimum supervision. University administrators, lecturers, parents, teachers, and all stakeholders in education need to understand how students conduct themselves socially when they are alone in the institutions (Saunders, 2017). Thus, the study was anchored on a research question; what is the role of institutional-based students' religious associations in cultivating peace as a socialisation outcome in universities?

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are religious associations which exist in all universities. They include the Christian Union (CU) which strives to bring together young Christians for them to worship and fellowship as a group, Young Catholic Society (YCS) which brings together young Catholic faithful for the purposes of strengthening their worship and practice and Young Muslim Association (YMA) which brings together young Muslim faithful for the purposes of worship and practice of their faith (Wiedemer, 2021).

Religious and spiritual associations are faith-based. Studies that have been conducted in foreign universities indicate that these associations are popular with foreign students who are far away from their cultures and homes. In the study conducted by Manuela (2022), *Types of US College Students Organizations*, the following religious based students' associations were identified; Muslim Students Association (MSA) of Colorado State University which helps Muslim students in their educational, cultural, social, and spiritual lives and Adventist Christian Fellowship (ACF) at Idaho University involves members in joint Bible reading, indoor, and outdoor activities as well as regular fellowship.

In a study conducted by Wiedemer (2021), a revelation on a variety of religious associations in the institution is done. The university has a Student Life Office (SLO), which acts as an intermediary between the university students and the religious community. There is a Students Wellness Centre (SWC) whose leadership attracts individual students, students' associations, and local priests. It encourages participation by different faith associations in university activities. The university is a public institution and therefore respects the constitutional right to freedom of religion for all its members.

Another religious-based students' association is the Campus Crusade for Christ International (CCCI). This is a Christian student association whose motto of 'Great Commission' is to fulfil Christ's last command to his disciples to go out to the world and make disciples of all nations (Wiedemer, 2021). Their effort to make Christ an issue on campus has an impact on the entire university environment. Their activities include The Maine Event, which is made up of Bible topics, fun and friends, Bible studies, discipleship groups, conferences, and overseas projects. They also hold events such as parties, sports events, video shows and lots of fun (Ochanda, 2012). University Christian Fellowship (UCF) is another inter-denominational group of

students who also welcome faculty and other staffs who seek to follow Christ as their Lord and Saviour. The association embraces ethnic diversity and holds weekly meetings for singing, teaching, and worship. Other small groups also hold meetings for Bible studies, daily prayer meetings, and prayer retreats on weekends. The group also participates in welfare activities on and outside the campus.

The University of Maine also has a religious-based association known as Catholic Community. This one work closely with the Catholic Students Association. The students meet for mass and prayers. They also take retreats, offer service to the needy and contribute towards spiritual development. The association is involved in the preparation of sacraments and other social activities (University of Maine Student Government, 2012). Lectures and discussion groups on students' spiritual growth are held every semester.

The Navigators is another international, inter-denominational Christian association whose purpose is to spread the good news of great joy and knowledge of Jesus Christ. They help students in their spiritual journey by organising meetings, building relationships and worshipping. They organise large gatherings, Bible study groups, individual mentoring, retreats, and personal growth in an environment of love and grace.

Maine Muslim Students' Group (MMSG) is a group of international students who share and practice Islam as a religion. They take part in various activities such as weekly Friday prayers and Islamic Saturday meetings every Saturday, organise celebrations for Islamic holidays and events and serve as a good platform for positive fellowship within Islamic teachings (University of Maine Student Government, 2012).

A study by Ochanda (2012), *Faith Organizations and Social Economic Welfare*, explores the history of Christian and Muslim religions in Kenya. The study notes the contributions of faith-based

associations in education and health. Religions have contributed greatly to Kenyan development in various aspects, such as the promotion of the Kiswahili language, which is a uniting factor among the many Kenyan communities. Many churches also run mission hospitals in Kenya, and these have managed to remain neutral and serve patients as the nursing fraternity continues to argue over the unfulfilled Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA).

Another study was conducted by Akaranga & Ongong'a (2013), *The Dynamics of Religiosity and Spirituality in Kenyan Public Universities*. The study examines the distinctions between religiosity and spirituality, which are common phenomena among religious communities. According to the study, the relationship between the two has been a challenge among university students. Many of them are easily influenced by peer pressure, literature and ideologies learnt from their professors.

There are a number of characteristics that cut across the board. The formal, informal, and non-formal associations comprise a given number of students who form reciprocal relations with common goals and interests. The members enjoy a sense of unity and solidarity as they all adhere to the association's norms. All the members are likely to have similar behaviour and awareness as most of their activities are controlled by the association.

Kombo (2005), *Sociology of Education*, emphasises that all human beings are social beings, and they have to socialise. There is a very close correspondence between the various students' associations and educational socialisation outcomes among university students. This assertion helps us to draw conclusions from observation of certain behaviours and activities among students. These include the student's company, conduct, language, personal inclinations, and their impact on the student's life and the educational socialisation outcomes as well as the smooth running of the university. This research did a study on; Influence

of Students' Associations on Educational Socialization Outcomes among University Students in Select Universities in Nairobi County–Kenya.

Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by structural functionalism. Structural functionalism as a concept in sociology states that institutions, relationships, roles, and norms come together to constitute a society that serves a purpose. The theory was postulated by Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). The theory looks at society as a structure with interrelated parts designed to meet the biological and social needs of individuals in that society. Spencer compared society with the human body, which has various organs designed to work together to keep the body functional. Likewise, various parts of society work together to keep society functional. An institution such as a university works like a society. The various members or individuals have to be ready to work together for the good of everybody. Thus, the current study on socialisation groups was guided by the theory of how the groups make up leadership that form structures including a guiding constitution.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research adopted a mixed methodology which was most appropriate. The Mixed Methodology combines both qualitative and quantitative aspects. According to Kombo & Tromp (2013), some of the aspects are qualitative and comprise attributes which require description, while others are quantitative and require to be analysed numerically. This study adopted a Concurrent Triangulation design which is appropriate for Social Sciences. The study utilised both qualitative and quantitative approaches whereby description, as well as analysis, were combined in order to give a comprehensive data and information presentation. Universities have many students' associations. To be precise, one of the public universities has 197 registered students' associations.

The target population of the study were the 175,917 students in the universities in Nairobi County – Kenya. Among the universities, the majority are private and located within different constituencies, while a few are public and also located within different constituencies. This ensured a comprehensive and exhaustive study where data and information were collected from both public and private universities in varied constituencies, as shown in *Table 1*.

The sample size for the universities’ selection used Mugenda and Mugenda’s (1999) recommendation of a sample size of between 10% and 30% of the population. Using the largest sample size of 30% of the 10 universities gave 3 universities. The

population of three universities (average enrolment of 175,917/11=15,992 students) gave out 15,992*3 = 47,976 students.

The sample size for individual students in the associations was calculated from the sampled universities using the formula by Krejci and Morgan (1970) to give 259.

For the student population, an equal proportion of 86 students ($\frac{1}{3} * 259$) was selected from each of the three selected universities. The researcher then used stratified sampling to select the 86 students from each selected university. The individual respondents were selected randomly through the office of the dean of students.

Table 1: Sampling Grid

Nature of University	Sampled Universities/Deans	Students Population	Students Sample
Private	2	31984	172
Public	1	15992	86
Total	3	47976	258

Source: CUE, 2017

The research instruments adopted in the study adopted were mainly an interview guide for the Deans of students, a questionnaire for students’ associations’ members and an observation checklist. The research instruments enabled the researcher to gather information and allowed for probing, especially the interview guide with the Deans of Students. This was done on the phone and recorded and also via email. The researcher administered the questionnaire through google forms which the respondents accessed through a link. The multiple instruments helped to gather as much data and information as possible from the respondents on the; Influence of Students’ Associations on Educational Socialization Outcomes among University Students in Nairobi County-Kenya.

RESULTS

Nature of Participants (Grouping)

The study reported the highest valid percentage of 75% [167] indicated Yes on whether they anticipated participating in any religious-based associations’ activities in the next 2 months while. 25% (42) indicated No anticipation to participate in any religious-based association activities in the next 2 months. This shows that most students like participating in religious-based associations’ activities.

Experience with Religious-Based Associations

The study also sought to find out the students’ experiences with religious-based associations. The participants were to indicate Yes or No against descriptive statistics based on expected educational socialisation outcomes. The statistics of the items

are presented in *Table 2* with the variables measured as 1-YES and 2-No.

Table 2: Influence of religious-based associations on acquiring social interaction skills

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Whether there is influence of religious-based associations through experience in social interaction skills	167	1	3	1.26	.468
Whether there is influence of religious-based associations through experience in building confidence	167	1	2	1.26	.439
Whether there is influence of religious-based associations through experience in improving academic performance	167	1	2	1.50	.501
Whether there is influence of religious-based associations through experience in stress management	167	1	3	1.50	.513

Table 2 presents findings in the form of descriptive statistics. A mean of 1.50 indicated that there was influence of religious-based associations through experience in stress management, 1.50 indicated there was influence of religious-based associations in improving academic performance, 1.26 indicated there was an influence of religious-based associations on building confidence, while 1.26 indicated there was an influence of religious-based

associations on experience in social interaction skills.

Connecting with Others Through Networking

The study also sought to find out whether the students' associations helped members to acquire social interaction skills. The participants were to indicate 1 for Yes or 2 for No against descriptive statistics. The findings are presented in *Table 3*.

Table 3: Influence of Religious-Based on Networking

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Whether there is an influence of religious-based associations through connecting with others in networking	167	1	2	1.20	.399
Whether there is an influence of religious-based associations through connecting with others in adopting university culture	167	1	2	1.67	.471
Whether there is an influence of religious-based associations through connecting with others in being part of university	167	1	2	1.58	.495

Table 3 presents findings in the form of descriptive statistics. A mean of 1.67 indicated there was an influence of religious-based associations on connecting with others in adopting university culture, 1.58 indicated there was an influence of the religious-based associations through connecting with others in being part of the university, while 1.20 indicated there was an influence of religious-based associations through connecting with others in networking. The responses indicated that students' associations influence many aspects of

social life in universities, including educational socialisation.

Adopting University Culture and Norms

The study sought to find out whether there was an influence of religious-based associations on adopting university culture and norms. The participants were to indicate Yes/ No against descriptive statistics. The responses were calculated and presented in *Table 4*.

Table 4: Influence of Religious-Based Associations on Adopting University Culture and Norms

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Whether there is an influence of religious-based associations through adopting university culture in joining associations	167	1	2	1.51	.501
Whether there is an influence of religious-based associations through adopting university culture in joining associations	167	1	2	1.57	.497
Whether there is an influence of religious-based associations through adopting university culture in volunteering	167	1	2	1.51	.501
Whether there is an influence of religious-based associations through adopting university culture in organising social support	165	1	2	1.48	.501

Table 4 presents findings in the form of descriptive statistics on the influence of religious-based associations on adopting university culture and norms. A mean of 1.57 indicated that there was an influence of religious-based associations through adopting university culture in joining associations, 1.51 indicated the influence of religious-based associations through adopting university culture in joining associations, 1.51 indicated there was an influence of religious-based associations through adopting university culture in volunteering while 1.48 indicated there was the influence of religious-based associations through adopting university culture in organising social support.

The high percentages indicated that there was an influence of students' associations on adopting university culture, organising social support, and volunteering. The same proportion indicated that the associations were instrumental in the moulding of a student's moral character.

This was confirmed by responses from the deans of students as below. K1, the dean of students, noted:

Yes. It is true that Students' Religious-based Associations are instrumental in moulding students' moral character. The students are able to acquire social interaction skills, connect with others through networking and adopt university culture and norms (K1 Dean of students, X University, December 2020).

K3, the dean of students, noted:

This office appreciates the role of Students' Religious-based Associations in moulding the moral character of students. The associations offer members a platform for social interaction, connecting with others through networking and adopting university culture and norms (K3 Dean of students, Z University, December 2020).

Criterion for Religious Grouping

The study sought to find out the most popular criteria for joining religious-based associations. The participants were to choose among described practices. The responses were calculated and presented in *Figure 1*.

Figure 1: Most popular criterion of religion-based association in the university

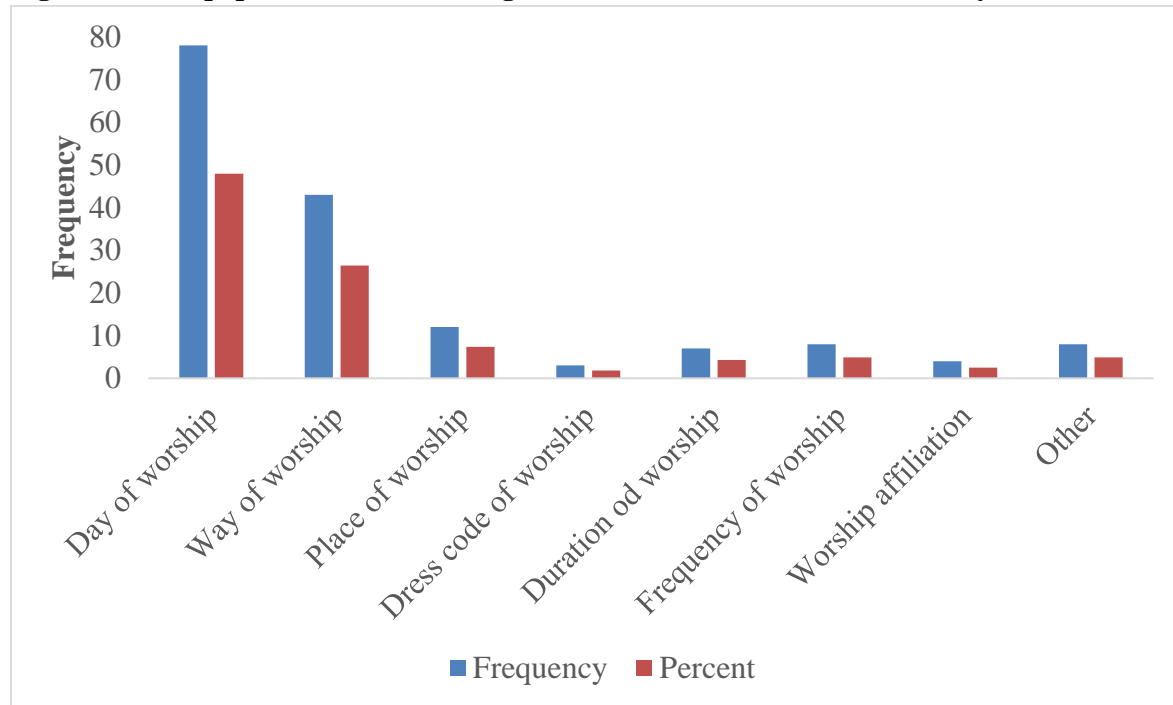


Figure 1 shows that the highest valid percentage of 47.9 (80) indicated day of worship, 26.4 (44) way of worship, 7.4 (12) place of worship, 4.9 (8) frequency of worship, 4.3 (7) duration of worship, 2.5 (4) worship affiliation, 1.8 (3) dress code and 4.9 (8) indicated other. The responses show that day of worship is the biggest attraction while the dress code attracts the least when it comes to choosing a religious-based association among university students.

The findings were further confirmed through the responses of deans of students shown below

K1, the dean of students, noted:

Students have various factors to consider before joining a religious- association. In order of popularity, the day of worship seems to attract the majority of members, followed by; the way of worship, place of worship, frequency of worship and duration of worship, while dress code seems to be the least among the factors that attract students to join a faith-based

association (K1 Dean of students, X University, December 2020).

K3, the dean of students, noted:

This office recognises that students are interested in a number of factors before joining a religious-based association. The most popular factor is day of worship, while the dress code attracts the least (K3 Dean of students, Z University, December 2020).

Religious-based Associations' Educational Socialisation Outcomes

The study also sought to find out whether religious-based students' associations helped to build members positive outcomes from Bible/Koranic studies, prayer meetings, prayer retreats, and worship services. This was reflected on a table showing no effect, minor effect, neutral, moderate effect, and major effect. The findings are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Religious-based Associations' Educational Socialization Influence

	Bible/Koranic Studies	Prayer meetings	Prayer retreats	Worship Service
No influence	29(18.1%)	14(9%)	20(14%)	26(16.4%)
Minor influence	11(6.9%)	10(6.4%)	13(9.1%)	8(5%)
Neutral	15(9.4%)	19(12.2%)	20(14%)	13(8.2%)
Moderate influence	16(10%)	18(11.5%)	19(13.3%)	14(8.8%)
Major influence	89(55.6%)	95(60.9%)	71(49.7%)	98(61.6%)
Total	160(100%)	156(100%)	143(100%)	159(100%)
Nonresponse	7	11	24	8
Total	167	167	167	167

Table 5 presents findings in the form of frequencies. The highest valid percentage of 89.0 (55.6%) indicated major influence from Bible/Koranic studies, 16 (10%) indicated moderate influence, 15 (9.4%) indicated neutral, 11 (6.9%) indicated minor influence, while 29 (18.1%) indicated no influence.

Another valid percentage of 95 (60.9%) indicated major influence from Payer meetings, 19 12.2%) indicated neutral, 16 (10%) indicated moderate influence, 14 (9%) indicated no influence, while a small percentage of 10 (6.4%) indicated minor influence. From prayer retreats, 71 (49.7%) indicated major influence, 20 (14%) indicated neutral, another 20 (14%) indicated no influence, 19 (13.3%) indicated moderate influence, and 13 (9.1%) indicated minor influence.

From worship service, 98 (61.6%) indicated major influence, 26 (16.4%) indicated no influence, 14 (8.8%) indicated moderate influence, 13 (8.2%) indicated neutral, and 8 (5%) indicated minor influence.

DISCUSSIONS

The majority of the students (75%) admitted that they anticipated participating in religious-based association activities within the next semester, implying that the concern about educational socialisation outcomes derived from university students' associations is significant. This verifies the findings of a study conducted by Gee (2017), 11

Types of College Clubs and Organizations. The study notes that there are various students' associations that help the students spend their time well away from the lectures. The students' associations enable students to feel at home away from home. Political or multicultural associations are formed on a cultural and ethnic basis, and they bring together students from the same geographical regions. There are many religious-based students' associations that a student can join so as to be able to network with people with whom they share a common background and most likely a common view of the world.

The high percentage of those who indicated there was an influence of religious-based students' associations on stress management and academic performance was an indication that students were happy with the time and effort they spent in religious association activities.

The responses showed that the religious-based students' associations were quite influential, and their activities attracted the students. This is confirmed by those students who go to political seats in their home counties after completing their studies. The findings collaborate with those of a study conducted by Mulinge et al. (2014), *The Status of Student Involvement in University Governance in Kenya, The Case of Public Universities*, which interrogated the role of the university in preparing future leaders. Both studies agree that students' associations in universities give

opportunities to members to nurture their leadership skills.

CONCLUSIONS

Religious-based students' associations inform different educational socialisation outcomes among students in selected universities in Nairobi County-Kenya. These were based on feelings created to feel at home, to concentrate on their studies as well as attraction into leadership that nurtures their skills.

Recommendations Related to Practices

This involved actions that can be undertaken by various stakeholders so as to improve the role of religious-based students' associations on their educational socialisation outcomes. According to the findings, the university is the major stakeholder as far as the efficiency of the religious-based students' associations is concerned. This implied that university authorities need to set up or enhance their systems as far as religious-based students' associations are concerned.

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