

Liberty University School of Divinity

**Youth Decline in Church Growth and Attendance**

A Thesis Project Submitted to

The Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Ministry

By

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## Doctor of Ministry Thesis Project Abstract

### YOUTH DECLINE IN CHURCH GROWTH AND ATTENDANCE

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Youth attendance in the church has declined in the recent past. The reason for their decline is that they no longer find a church to be socially and spiritually relevant to their lives. The paper seeks to provide a solution to the problem through spiritual formation and increasing the depth of youth programs so that they can remain socially relevant to the lives of the young people. This will be done by encouraging youth people to know who Jesus is and how to have a personal relationship with him through faith.

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## Abbreviations

DMIN:	Doctor of Ministry
KJV:	King James Version
LUSOD:	Liberty University School of Divinity
UN:	United Nations
USA:	United States of America

## Chapter One

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Overall Background

This paper presents a study on the state of youth decline in church growth and attendance, with a focus on youth ministry issues and trends in modern Christian times. Youth ministry is “an indispensable gathering of professing believers in Christ who under leadership, are gathered to establish a foundation for building Christian character, morals, values, and behaviors in young people ages 16 to 24; by using creative and innovative methods to excite, inspire, capture and ignite young people for Jesus.”<sup>1</sup> The fundamental aim of this study was to establish why there is a looming decline of youth in church activities and attendance, despite numerous efforts ranging from youth-specific programs to youth-oriented contemporary music services that are intended to ensure that young people are encouraged to be active participants in spiritual matters. Hence, youth ministry aims to “enable young people to understand and recognize who Jesus is and what it is to live for Him only.”<sup>2</sup>

Youth attendance in the church has declined in the recent past, according to many scholars, but the reasons for such a trend spurs a debate as to what is being done wrong or what is not being done that has escalated such a problem.<sup>3</sup> Ideally, this forms the foundation of this inquiry, with an emphasis on theological and theoretical foundations while borrowing from

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<sup>1</sup> Houston Heflin and Amy Jacober, *Youth Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Youth Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009), 6-9.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Yaconelli, *Contemplative Youth Ministry: Practicing the Presence of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 54-61.

<sup>3</sup> Shantelle Weber, “Decolonizing Youth Ministry Models? Challenges and Opportunities in Africa,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 73, no. 4 (2017): 1-10.

biblical proclamations as well as societal norms and cultures. A comparative review on the challenges in youth ministry reveals that one of the main problems propagating the decline in the youth's church attendance is because there is a mismatch on the youth's social and spiritual needs.<sup>4</sup>

According to one study on the effectiveness of youth ministry, the main impediment to youth ministry is due to the approaches adopted, where the focus is on social and skill needs as opposed to a reliance on theology-driven strategies. Emphasizing socialization above theological education and worship, that is, can impair the effectiveness of youth ministry.<sup>5</sup> In this regard, it is essential to examine the leadership methods and the role of the church in modern times when promoting engagement of the young people in spiritual matters, which should, in turn, improve attendance and participation of the youth in church affairs.<sup>6</sup> From an international context, there are different cultures and ways of worship, and this can imply varying reasons and challenges in the youth ministry. Challenges such as linguistic differences, for example, can create barriers to reaching specific groups of young people through youth ministry. In this regard, the emphasis here will be to identify the overarching, cross-cultural factors affecting the ministry in general and what that might imply for potential improvements to be adopted in the future.

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<sup>4</sup> Bert Roebben, "International Developments in Youth Ministry Research: A Comparative Review," *The Official Journal of the Religious Education Association* 107, no. 2 (2012): 192-206.

<sup>5</sup> Philippa Strong, "Effective Youth Ministry: Theology-Driven in a Cultural Context," *In Die Skriflig* 49, no.1 (2015): 1-9.

<sup>6</sup> Chao Guo et al., "Religious Affiliation, Religious Attendance, and Participation in Social Change Organizations," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (2013): 38-40.

## 1.2 Ministry Context

As already stated, youth ministry is the deliberate effort by a Christian community to try and attract more young people to Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup> The rationale for youth ministry is founded on the Old Testament times.<sup>8</sup> Specifically, the Bible states that,

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore, remove sorrow from thy heart and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanities. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say; I have no pleasure in them.<sup>9</sup>

From this biblical scripture, it is clear that the author emphasizes that young people need to be close to God and rejoicing at their young age. Youthfulness is a stage that is not permanent, and one has to be accountable for the kind of life he or she lives during this stage, after maturity.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the future of a church depends on its youthful congregation, because young people learn about worship and will then be better equipped to take over from the aged people as they grow. In this regard, in a situation where few members are young, it implies that the future of the church is also uncertain. From recent statistics, many churches are finding it difficult to maintain their capacity, especially with young people. According to Skip Masback, many congregations and denominations are facing challenges, because they cannot transmit the faith or convince the

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<sup>7</sup> Mark DeVries, *Sustainable Youth Ministry: Why Most Youth Ministry Doesn't Last and What Your Church Can Do About It* (Surry Hills, NSW, Australia: Read How You Want, 2010), 79-86.

<sup>8</sup> Dave Keehn, "Biblical Mandate for the Youth Ministry (Part 2): Youth Ministry in the Old Testament," *The Good Book Blog: Talbot School of Technology*, February 15, 2012, <https://www.biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2012/biblical-mandate-for-youth-ministry-part-2-youth-ministry-in-the-old-testament>.

<sup>9</sup> Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:1 (KJV).

<sup>10</sup> Dean Borgman, *Foundations for Youth Ministry: Theological Engagement with Teen Life and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 68-97.

young generation, while the youths are struggling to maintain church attendance because they lack the fundamentals and pillars that were conventionally disseminated by churches. Specifically, young people are not being provided with theological and moral instruction that they can apply in their daily lives outside of a church context.<sup>11</sup> Fundamentally, the Protestants, Roman Catholics, and evangelicals are all puzzling over the declining attendance of young adults. Statistics show that one-in-four Millennials are unassociated with any faith.

In Ecclesiastes 12:1, there are several rationales from the Old Testament regarding the call for the young people to be taught who God is and the reason for them to be involved in the worship. First, the Bible makes it clear that the ultimate goal of a human being and life is to worship God.<sup>12</sup> In worshipping God, the young people must have a clear grasp of who He is and what He has done to us as a human race. Second, the Old Testament is full of examples in which God calls young people to Himself as opposed to the aged people.<sup>13</sup> Third, it is clear that young people must be fully taught about the nature of God and what He desires and expects from human beings as His people.<sup>14</sup>

For example, one of the best stories that illuminate the special focus God has on young people is Samuel's story. God called Samuel at a very young age, even though Samuel had not known God. In 1 Samuel 3:7-14, it is clearly explained that the Word of the Lord had not been

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<sup>11</sup> Skip Masback, "Twin Calamities: Declining Churches, Struggling Youth," *Reflections*, 2014, <https://reflections.yale.edu/article/seeking-light-new-generation/twin-calamities-declining-churches-struggling-youth>.

<sup>12</sup> Keehn, "Biblical Mandate for the Youth Ministry (Part 2)."

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.



announced to him, but God found favor in him and called him to be a great prophet in Israel. When God called Samuel, God revealed to him the plans he had for the family of Eli. God gave an assurance that He was to carry out all the proposals against the family, for Eli failed to stop his children from cursing God. This incident serves as another rationale for the youth ministry that the parents or elders in society have a God-given duty and responsibility to show the young ones the way and teach them the ways of the Lord. The spirit of the Lord was with Samuel from the day he was called until his old age. Later, Samuel himself testified to the people of Israel that he had been their leader since the days of his youth, a fact that shows he was anointed as a young boy.<sup>15</sup>

The second example that can be used as a foundation for the youth ministry in the Old Testament is the call of Joshua, Moses' aide right from his youth age. In Numbers 11:28, the Bible says, "... and Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, my lord Moses, forbid them...." This is yet another scenario where God called young people to serve Him. Although Joshua was among the young men of Moses, his support to both Moses and the people of Israel cannot be undervalued as he later helped the Israelites to reach the Promised Land.<sup>16</sup> While one can argue that it is Joshua who received help from elderly leaders, the main point is that God called him when he was young and entrusted him with leadership, although indirectly through Moses.

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<sup>15</sup> Joy Melissa Jensen and Lu Simi, *Samuel Hears God's Voice* (Marblehead, MA: Scandinavia Publishing House, 2015), 58-60.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Hattin, *Joshua: The Challenge of the Promised Land* (New Milford, CT: Maggid Books, 2014), 101-120.

Although Samuel and Joshua have been presented as being called when they were young, their ages during the time God initiated agreements with them have not been recorded in the Bible. However, one man whose age is clearly recorded is Joseph. “These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report...” (Gen. 37:2). During this time, God met with Joseph and established a relationship with him, that later became essential and relevant to the entire family and Israelites. The fundamental tenets in these scriptures are the identification of how God can use individuals to fulfill His mission, irrespective of their age, a fact that supports the need to have young people fully involved in church affairs so that they can have experience with God.<sup>17</sup> The numerous visions and dreams that Joseph received from God during his youth age were later fulfilled almost 22 years later, and he saved the world from starvation; but this happened after he was able to remain faithful to God despite numerous temptations and betrayal from his brothers and certain elements of society as well, such as Potiphar’s wife.<sup>18</sup>

Apart from the Old Testament, one of the greatest pictures referring to youth ministry is Luke’s Gospel that presents Jesus Christ as a youth leader.<sup>19</sup> Although Jesus Christ was God, he gave himself a human face and grew up just like any other teenager. Luke 2:42 indicates that

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<sup>17</sup> Sally Nash, *Youth Ministry: A Multi-faceted Approach* (London, UK: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2011), 25-31.

<sup>18</sup> Keehn, “Biblical Mandate for the Youth Ministry (Part 2).”

<sup>19</sup> Dave Keehn, “Biblical Mandate for the Youth Ministry (Part 3): Youth Ministry in the New Testament,” *The Good Book Blog: Talbot School of Technology*, March 5, 2012, <https://www.biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2012/biblical-mandate-for-youth-ministry-part-3-youth-ministry-in-the-new-testament>.

Jesus went to the temple at the age of 12 years. His knowledge and answers were amazing, especially to the teachers of the law, whom he interacted with after his parents left him behind in Jerusalem.<sup>20</sup> As a young boy, he faced several challenges which include: self-identity development, establishing relationships with others in the society, puberty, and need to obey parents among other common challenges. However, his holistic growth intentions demonstrated through his life presents the modern youth in the church with motivation and goals that must be attained. Having developed spiritually, emotionally, intellectually, and physically, Jesus received God's confirmation as His child during the baptism; and indeed, this provides a New Testament rationale for youth ministry.

Another important example from the New Testament is Paul's life and mission as a follower of Christ. When Paul met God and converted into a Christian while on his way to Damascus to persecute the people of God, he was at his youth age. More important to note in the life and person of Paul, is that he mentored many young people, and among them, Timothy. According to biblical stories, Timothy was regarded as Paul's spiritual son. Further, after Timothy became a Christian, he matured in his Christian faith by the help and guidance of his grandmother and mother, respectively.<sup>21</sup> Two moral lessons serve as a rationale for the youth ministry in this story of Paul. First, he was bullying and killing God's people, and God appeared to him, changing his life. Similarly, young people who do not know God should not be excluded from the ministry, as they can be converted and eventually become great witnesses of Jesus. Second, Paul became a role model for Timothy, who was nurtured by biological parents (mother

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

and grandmother) respectively. In this case, while one can leave the responsibility of spiritual nurturing to church leaders, parents also have a duty of ensuring that the youth ministry is enhanced right from family levels. This suggests that in addition to the aim of discipling youth directly through ministry activities, youth ministries should also embrace the goal of empowering caretakers in their role as disciples.

The ultimate goal of youth ministry, according to the New Testament, is to inspire and mentor young people to become disciples and believers. Even in the life of Jesus himself, it is clear that he mentored his disciples after he called them to follow him. To realize God's purpose in the lives of young people, the culmination of the biblical tenet of youth ministry is inevitable just as evidenced through Paul and Jesus' lives.<sup>22</sup> While looking at today's church, Karen Schlabach asserts that youth ministry is of great relevance because it promotes an enhanced integration of the young people into the larger and intergenerational diversity of the church. It helps the church to put more focus on the life and person of Jesus and remain relevant by resisting the status quo and recognizes that the young people are conspirators and co-creators in the church's divine work. It also promotes the work of inviting or bringing those who are not yet ready members of the church into the wider picture of God's salvation plan.<sup>23</sup>

According to Mike McGarry, youth ministry is real. It enhances the youth's commitment not only to the local church but also to Christ. It is a reflection of the culture of the church; and when a strong youth ministry is established, there is a high likelihood of having stronger

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Karen Schlabach, "Five Reasons Why Youth Ministry is Important to the Church Today," *The Episcopal Church: Youth Ministries*, November 7, 2013, <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/posts/youth/5-reasons-youth-ministry-important-church-today>.

families.<sup>24</sup> Youth ministry is beyond events and programs; it encompasses the wider church community to be involved in offering the young people opportunities to grow spiritually, develop ideas, be engaged in church activities, and explore their faith and values, respectively.<sup>25</sup>

Shortcomings in the ministry culture are one of the fundamental reasons why so many Millennials are unaffiliated, in addition to other contributing factors. Miroslav Volf, a director at the Yale Center for Faith and Culture, explains that the common culture is offering the youth a maladaptive aspect of people's comfort while drifting away from the biblical philosophical, religious, and ministry teachings aspects that earlier generations used to instill church culture as a way of value living. Volf asserts that more youths are ignorant of the reason or purpose of life, as stipulated by God. These youths become experts in manipulating and understanding their environment based on their institution or perspectives.<sup>26</sup>

Involvement in the ministry by all members of the Christian community or church is yet another important aspect of promoting affiliation from among the youth. Despite this, the biblical freedom given to every human being to choose between right and wrong can yet be another challenge of ensuring there is absolute and committed involvement from the youth as they are free to be part of the ministry or choose not to. However, the church community, to some extent,

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<sup>24</sup> Mike McGarry, "9 Things You Need to Know about Youth Ministry," *The Gospel Coalition: US Edition*, July 17, 2013, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/9-things-you-need-to-know-about-youth-ministry/>.

<sup>25</sup> Cameron Cole, *Gospel-Centered Youth Ministry: A Practical Guide* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 88-93.

<sup>26</sup> Masback, "Twin Calamities."

has been active in discouraging young people for reasons of not being good role models.<sup>27</sup>

Willard writes that:

For at least several decades, the churches of the Western world have not made discipleship a condition of being a Christian. One is not required to be, or to intend to be, a disciple in order to become a Christian, and one may remain a Christian without any signs of progress toward or in discipleship.<sup>28</sup>

The scholar agrees that the powerful Biblical mandate to create disciples is lost, and churches are reaping the consequences. The growth of healthy churches can never be distinguished from the increase of healthy followers.<sup>29</sup> For the church's growth, biblical values are key elements and the guiding principles that are set to shine like light and act as the salt of the world.<sup>30</sup> Masback asserts that when the church ministers to youths with professionalism, commitment, and passion, it offers the nourishment required for reaping fruits of loyalty and regenerative energies of commitment.<sup>31</sup>

The apostle Paul reiterated that essentially a flourishing church consists of vibrant and growing Christians or church attendees. The apostle took time to pray for and to coach the Christians about spiritual formation with God and its impact on the church growth as documented in his first epistle to the Thessalonians, starting at 3:12.<sup>32</sup> The Bible offers several examples of congregation attraction through early church activities. Nevertheless, modernization

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<sup>27</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (Oxford, England: Monarch Books, 2006), 5.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Matthew 5:13-16

<sup>31</sup> Masback, "Twin Calamities."

<sup>32</sup> Dever Mark, "Biblical Church Growth I Thessalonians 3:12-4:12," *9Marks: Articles*, March 1, 2010, <https://www.9marks.org/article/biblical-church-growth-i-thessalonians-312-412/>.

is a competing force transforming lifestyles, concepts, perceptions, and worldviews that attract more youths. Should the church conform to the world to attract these youths? The answer to this question is complex. The Bible teaches against conforming to worldly approaches.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, there is a difference between conforming to the world and becoming like the world in order to win others.<sup>34</sup> However, it is the mandate of the ministry to attract the youths without compromising on biblical teachings.<sup>35</sup>

Youth church attendance is on the decline due to blame games between the youth and the leadership. The ministry should always strive to minister teachings that manifest spirituality for growth and engage youths in church services and activities. The Church has to tactically improve value-oriented guidance through discipleship and mentoring to persuade or attract the young population and retain youths in their congregations rather than blaming on modernization. Many modern churches have abandoned such experiential aspects of religion and chosen to focus on basic teachings mainly targeted at achieving success in the contemporary world. For example, many churches focus on general positive and uplifting messages about God's love that, while not inherently problematic, often have little theological depth. As a result, many young people no longer find the churches captivating. The problem can be addressed by promoting narratives that show how the application of religious teachings and values has helped individuals overcome various obstacles in life.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:11–12.

<sup>34</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

<sup>35</sup> Vitisia Virginia, “Influence of Modernization on Youth Church Attendance: A Comparative Study,” (MA diss., Pan Africa Christian University, 2016), 1-43.

<sup>36</sup> Mark Riddle, *Inside the Mind of Youth Pastors: A Church Leader's Guide to Staffing and Leading Youth Pastors* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 22-29.

Youth ministries should have a significant focus on religious strategies that can be used to overcome various challenges in life. Furthermore, the Millennials should be allowed to share their successes and failures in utilizing the strategies so that the experiences can motivate them to develop better ways of addressing the problems. In the end, they will find the activities highly engaging, thereby, motivating them to participate in church activities. Key traits that define Millennials can be used as a theoretical basis for developing youth programs that will increase their attendance and participation in church activities. In the above discussion, the focus on the aspects of religion has been used to propose strategies for revamping youth programs so that they will hold more relevance to the lives of the youths.<sup>37</sup>

In Matthew 28, Jesus Christ entrusted the church with the Great Commission as he said to his disciples,

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.<sup>38</sup>

The example in Matthew 28 is just one out of many situations in which Christ called the disciples to bring the people to salvation, and to teach them to obey all that had been commanded by Jesus. Ideally, this becomes the responsibility of all Christians and particularly Christian parents to ensure that the young experience spiritual growth for them to accept Jesus as Lord as they become of mature age. Nonetheless, a distinction has to be drawn from leadership that conforms to the teachings in the Bible and that which seeks to conform to world desires without necessarily bringing salvation among people. For example, the baby boomers generation is

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<sup>37</sup> Thomas East and Alejandro Titus, *Leadership for Catholic Youth Ministry: A Comprehensive Resource* (New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2010), 18-32.

<sup>38</sup> Matthew 28:18-20.



greatly influenced by technology, to the extent that church programs should be made such that they incorporate technology to attract the youth. However, the church leadership must recognize that young people may potentially misuse technology. To ensure that the youth in a congregation develop into responsible and committed future members of the church, it is important to provide them with effective guidance to help them avoid the potential pitfalls of technology.<sup>39</sup>

A church that adopts technology in its growth strategies has high chances of attracting and sustaining the youths into their services and activities.<sup>40</sup> The youths are receptive to how technological advancements enhance different aspects of lives like social connection and understanding the world from different aspects. Consequently, procedures meant to draw their attention can produce better outcomes if the expertise and technology are integrated into various practices.<sup>41</sup> The youth ministries should have a considerable technological presence to facilitate connection and sharing of information through technology media. However, the church must be cautious not to conform to world procedures of using technology, such as boastful and self-aggrandizing practices that violate biblical warnings about vanity.<sup>42</sup> Also, the youths should have opportunities to use technology as a channel of ministering to others or engaging other populace in essential religious deliberations. In the process, they will remain highly attuned to the youth ministry, thereby finding the church relevant once more in their lives.

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<sup>39</sup> Anne E. S. Wimberly, Sandra L. Barnes, and Karma D. Johnson, *Youth Ministry in the Black Church: Centered in Hope* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2013), 55-80.

<sup>40</sup> Mark, DeVries, *Sustainable Youth Ministry: Why Most Youth Ministry Doesn't Last and What Your Church Can Do About It* (Surry Hills, NSW, Australia: Read How You Want, 2010), 64.

<sup>41</sup> Thom S. Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2014), 56-59.

<sup>42</sup> Philippians 2:3-4.

Essentially, there are mixed reactions and challenges in the entire context of the youth ministry owing to the changing times and trends. Leadership, technology, world desires, parenthood, spiritual commitment among the youth, role modeling, societal norms, cultures, and other factors are among the issues that are causing uncertainty in terms of youth engagement in the church. These are the foundations of the youth ministry in modern times, and the study will seek to examine the main issues from the youths' perspectives. The following section restates the problem that was investigated to justify the need to have this study conducted, especially taking into consideration the looming decrease in youth populations in modern churches and worship.

### **1.3 Problem Presented**

The statement of the problem addresses and confronts the issue of the decline of youth in today's churches due in part to the lack of an authoritative source for church growth. The researcher looks at the problem from different perspectives, such as the role of churches, factors driving the youth away from churches, and the impact of spiritual formation. Studies have shown that church youth attendance has been on degeneration trends for decades. In 2007, a survey conducted by LifeWay Research showed that over 70% of persons between 23 and 30-year-olds stopped attending churches.<sup>43</sup> Also, research involving evangelical youth conducted by Christianity Today confirmed the statistics when it revealed that about 70% of American youths dropped out of church attendance.<sup>44</sup> Rackley argues that 60% of youths will stop attending

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<sup>43</sup> Lifeway Research, "Reasons 18- to 22-Year-Olds Drop Out of Church," *LifeWay Research*, August 7, 2007, accessed May 30, 2019, <https://lifewayresearch.com/2007/08/07/reasons-18-to-22-year-olds-drop-out-of-church/>.

<sup>44</sup> Ed Stetzer, "The Real Reasons Young Adults Drop Out of Church," *Christianity Today*, December 2014, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2014/december/real-reasons-young-adults-drop-out-of-church.html>.

church permanently or for a long time due to various reasons.<sup>45</sup> According to Barna President, David Kinnaman, 33.3% of youths call church dull and boring, approximately 25% claim faith is inappropriate, and Bible lessons or ideas are ambiguous or unclear, and 20% claim God is not present from their church encounters.<sup>46</sup> These are real concerns that any church must be concerned about when it is pursuing the growth and attraction of young congregation members.

While the fact that the trends above have shown a clear need to be concerned about the decrease in youth numbers in the church, it is imperative to ascertain the actual issues leading to such an outcome. For example, it is unlikely that the church whose premise is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ cannot attract young people, as Jesus himself established that the young people should be left to come to him. Moreover, from the ministry's background and context, it has been established that right from the Old Testament to the New Testament times, youth ministry has been in existence, and God has used them to fulfill His plans for society. For example, in Jeremiah 1:4-7, it is revealed that God anoints one even from childhood, and by virtue that the young people do not get actively involved in church affairs, it implies that the plans God has for the human race will not be fulfilled. The Bible says,

Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

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<sup>45</sup> Rackley, Michael, "Rethinking Discipleship in the Area of High School Ministry: Key Strategies for Transforming Urban Youth," (DMin diss., Liberty University, 2013).

<sup>46</sup> Eric Reed, "Six Reasons Young People Leave the Church: Barna President David Kinnaman Examines the Trend," *Christianity Today: Pastors*, 2012, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2012/winter/youngleavechurch.html>.

From this scripture in Jeremiah 1:4-7, God has clearly shown His intentions to enter into covenant with human beings from a very early age. Based on these foundations, it is important that the modern church leadership should find ways in which the young people can be encouraged to come close to God. Perhaps this can increase the chances of meeting with God and entering into divine relationships that can shape the future of the church. In this regard, the current study is aimed at solving the existing gaps in the literature, especially on demonstrating why the youths are decreasing in church attendance and growth across the world.

#### **1.4 Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to investigate how the spiritual formation and depth of a church's youth program can effectively add to the growth of the overall local church. To achieve this purpose, the entire inquiry was guided by an overall aim, which is stated below.

*Overall Aim: To investigate if the overall decrease in the youth in today's churches is partly due to lack of an official source of the church's growth.*

In seeking to achieve this aim, the researcher will be able to show the relevance of establishing an authoritative approach in leadership that integrates the gospel teachings and youth needs in modern times to attract them to take part in church activities. For purposes of simplifying the overall aim above, the following are the specific questions that helped the researcher to remain focused on the topic of youth decline in church growth and attendance.

- I. What are the factors that have contributed to the decrease of youth in church attendance and participation in modern times?
- II. What are the views of the youth concerning the modern church leadership with regard to their expectations?

- III. What is the influence of technology in youth's perception of the relevance of the church in their lives and attendance?
- IV. How have the theological developments in worship and church growth contributed to youth attendance in the church activities?
- V. What are the theoretical models and literature supporting the trends of youth decrease in the church, as presented in the problem statement?
- VI. What are the recommendations in improving the situation for the church's future?

The above questions served as an objective model that helped to achieve the overall goal through the conduct of this study. Moreover, in answering these questions, the researcher decided to conduct quantitative and qualitative research in addition to literature reviews to test the empirical findings and provide evidence-based data through primary data. The target population was the youth members of a local church. The sample group started with 60 questionnaires. It decreased to 45 youths for the survey; and 15 youths participated in the semi-structured interviews. These approaches are explained in detail in the methodology section to rationalize their design.

### **1.5 Basic Assumptions**

The researcher presupposes that parents, church leaders, and the lack of spiritual nourishment are the key factors fueling the decline in church attendance among youths. Parents are giving children more freedom compared to earlier generation parents. The spiritual formation is a key factor in promoting youth attendance since it promotes loyalty and the growth of a church. Another presupposition is that youth programs are essential in stimulating the growth of a church and membership commitment among the Millennials.

The basic assumption is that the decline in youth congregations affects church growth. Regular church attendance is considered as a fundamental test of spiritual health; and the growth

of any church is tested in terms of the congregation's capacity. The significance of church attendance and the capacity of a church can never be underestimated for a solid church.<sup>47</sup> The key factor to church attendance decline is commitment. It is easy for churches to point the finger at modernization as the root of church turnout decline; but the blame game will not resolve the problem. Churches that involve its members of the community in various activities will witness attendance increase if they have a clear mission and are convincing to everybody interested in church.

The researcher is confident that the problem of church growth and attendance can be explored to produce recommendations for churches to encourage church attendance among the youth. The churches that wish to attain holistic growth ought to put their concentration beyond growing the numbers of the congregation alone but focus on encouraging lasting discipleship as guided by Christ. These churches must concentrate on nurturing knowledgeable followers of Jesus Christ who adore God and serve him from all aspects of their lives. Graham Maidstone writes, "Discipleship may well prove to be the most critical issue. The long-term value of any expression of church inherited or fresh is to be judged by the sort of disciples it makes."<sup>48</sup> The assumption is that by teaching and nurturing church members in spiritual formation, the youths will be captivated, and the problem of low attendance reduced substantially.

The decline in church growth and attendance for Millennials is a universal concern for all churches. Millennials have garnered more attention because of their perceptions, preferences, and views concerning church attendance. The Millennial generation is the largest group of the

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<sup>47</sup> Pete Ward, *Liquid Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 18.

<sup>48</sup> Graham Maidstone, *Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* (London, UK: Church House Publishing, 2012), ix.

population after the baby boomers; therefore, any problem associated with them is of great concern to all stakeholders, the church being one of the concerned parties. Engaging the youth in various activities captivate them and create a culture of loyalty; thus, church growth and attendance can only increase when the church engages the youth in ministry activities.

Millennials have their own habits, preferences, and beliefs. Key traits that define Millennials can be used as a theoretical basis for developing youth programs that will increase their attendance and participation in church activities. In the discussion above, the instruments have been used for an overview of the project planning and development process strategies for revamping youth programs so that they will hold more relevance to the lives of the youths.

Finally, the researcher assumes that the target population for the study will be able to give objective and truthful responses that will guide the author to make assertions that can address the questions and objectives satisfactorily. More importantly, the outcomes will be compared with other scholars' findings to establish if there is consistency and dependability that can lead to generalization of the outcomes. It is also assumed that the outcomes can be used in future studies as a basis for quantitative studies to improve on the situation since qualitative studies are best in setting the foundation for quantitative inquiries.

## **1.6 Definitions**

In the Bible, the word church is adapted from a Greek word *ecclesia*, meaning a called-out assembly or company. However, wherever the word is used in the Bible, it denotes the people, not structures: "It can be a mob (Acts 19:30-41), the children of Israel (Acts 7:38), and the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 5:25, 32)." <sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Michael L. Williams, "What Is the Bible Definition of Church? What Is the Biblical View of Church?" *Christian Crier*, August 2014, <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/christiancrier/2014/08/28/what-is-the-bible-definition-of-church-what-is-the-biblical-view-of-church/>.

Since this research project addresses the decline in church attendance among youth and Millennials, it is important to define these groups. Definitions of youth typically differ based on the cultural or academic context. For health specialists, youth typically refers to the pubescent period of development. For labor specialists and economists, youth is defined in terms of individuals whose age falls below the minimum work age. The UN defines youth as the period between the ages of 15 to 24 years old.<sup>50</sup>

Another important terminology for this research is the Millennial. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the term Millennials refers to individuals who were born between 1980 and the 1990s. They are also known as Generation Y after Generation X.<sup>51</sup> Examining some of the most notable characteristics of Millennials can provide greater insight into the phenomena of their declining church attendance. In 2012, a study discovered that Millennials are more disengaged with customary ways, more committed to materialistic perspectives, and less drawn to assisting society at large compared to members of Generation X. The magazine *USA Today* describes them as placing greater emphasis on extrinsic things like fame, image, money, and others, but as having less concern for intrinsic values like group affiliation, self-acceptance, and society.<sup>52</sup> These features are essential in understanding the group and the causes of the decline in church attendance.

Another important definition is the term growth as used in the context of this study. Growth is used based on the Biblical teachings on the church's increase in numbers such as the

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<sup>50</sup> World Bank, *Caribbean Youth Development: Issues and Policy Directions* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2003), 7.

<sup>51</sup> Douglas Main, "Who Are the Millennials?" *Live Science*, September 2017, <https://www.livescience.com/38061-millennials-generation-y.html>.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.



Antioch church according to Paul's teachings as well as other disciples.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, the term attendance is used to refer to the presence of young people during church services and activities.

Another important terminology is theology or theological foundations, which are the overall teachings and study about God's nature on various dimensions. They encompass theories that are systematically analyzed concerning the nature of God with regard to certain issues such as the role of youth in the church and so forth.<sup>54</sup>

Youth ministry is used in the context of this study to refer to an indispensable gathering of professing believers in Christ who under leadership, are gathered to establish a foundation for building Christian character, morals, values, and behaviors in young people by using creative and innovative methods to excite, inspire, capture and ignite young people for Jesus."<sup>55</sup>

Finally, it is important to define the term church leadership within the context of this study. Church leadership is the deliberate motivation and influence of the believers or congregation to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ through being role models and offering the opportunity for people to heed to the salvation call.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Gary McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth: How You Can Work with God to Build a Faithful Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 25-30.

<sup>54</sup> Stephen Long, *Theology and Culture: A Guide to the Discussion* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: James Clarke & Co, 2010), 1-10.

<sup>55</sup> Houston Heflin and Amy Jacober, *Youth Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Youth Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009), 6-9.

<sup>56</sup> Lovett H. Weems, *Church Leadership: Vision, Team, Culture, and Integrity* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 15-20.

## **1.7 Limitations and Delimitations**

### **1.7.1 Limitations**

The major limitation of the study was the theoretical basis used as its foundation. The study chose to focus on key traits that define Millennials as a basis for developing strategies which will motivate the youth to attend church and participate in associated activities. First, the key traits used are derived from studies carried out by other researchers in the recent past. However, there are always outliers in any research that may not fit the general patterns presented. Therefore, the traits may not readily reflect the actual behavior of the youths in the local church of this study. Second, since the prior studies were carried out in a different time and setting compared to the local church, there might be significant differences in the reasons for which the youth fail to attend church or participate in its activities. Another limitation of this study was time constraint. The proposed youth program required significant time to establish that the targeted goals can be attained. Therefore, the study may succeed in establishing the program, but challenges may be experienced along the way in determining whether it succeeds in attracting the youth back to church.

### **1.7.2 Delimitations**

The major delimitation of the research was that no preliminary study had been carried out to understand the reasons why youth attendance in the local church has reduced. The research depended on reasons put forth by past researchers and the researcher herself. The decision was made due to time constraints and the complexity involved in carrying out such a preliminary study. Additionally, the major goal of the activity was to devise strategies that can be used to address the problem. Therefore, by focusing on research carried out by others, research carried

out by students, it becomes possible to implement programs meant to improve the youth's church attendance within the limited period.

### **1.8 Thesis Statement**

*The overall decrease in the youth in today's church is partly due to the lack of an authoritative source of church's growth.*

The study will seek to justify or disapprove the above thesis statement that is based on the overarching aim of the study. The current literature proposes several factors that are tied to the decline of youth church attendance. To begin with, present teachings have failed to be relevant to the lives of the current youths.<sup>57</sup> Political, social, cultural, and technological changes present new challenges that the population has to face every day. In the past, churches were highly active in matters affecting the social world of the congregation.<sup>58</sup> As a result, the members found the churches relevant to their daily lives. However, in the present, churches have chosen to be selective on socio-cultural matters, which have a significant impact on the lives of the youths.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, the population has struggled to see the church's relevance in their lives. Therefore, an improvement in current church teachings and practices to reflect the lives of the youths will be required to win them over.

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<sup>57</sup> Sarah Guldalian, "The Millennials: Reflections on Reaching a Lost Generation for Christ," *Missio Apostolica* 41, no. 1 (2013): 42-44.

<sup>58</sup> Philip Hughes, "Religion and Youth: World Perspectives," *Pointers: Bulletin of the Christian Research Association* 21, no. 3 (2011): 6-7.

<sup>59</sup> Nicole Webster and Maurice D. Smith Jr., "A Church, University, and Extension: A Partnership for Creating Healthy Youth and Healthy Living," *Journal of Youth Development* 11, no. 3 (2017): 89.

## **1.9 Organization of the Study**

The study will be split into five chapters, namely: introduction, literature review, methodology, results, and conclusions, respectively. The first chapter has already provided an overview of the ministry context that is being focused on in this study. It has emphasized the underpinning questions and overarching goal leading to the development of the thesis statement. The second chapter will give a review of previous scholars' research relevant to the topic, as well as the theological and methodological foundations surrounding the topic of study. The third chapter will explain how the research collected and analyzed the data. The fourth chapter will present the outcome from the investigation; while the last chapter will provide possible conclusions followed by the development of potential recommendations, respectively.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Foundations / Models**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The chapter provides a review of various models or foundations, specifically the contributions by different authors from past studies, theological foundations, theoretical foundations, and empirical frameworks, respectively. The overall aim of this section is to have an appreciation of existing knowledge on the topic of youth decline in church growth and participation. Moreover, the review of theological and theoretical models will inform the methodology of the study as this will build the foundations upon, in which a critical synthesis of the assertions from the study interviews is examined.

Mostly, the entire chapter has focused on the research questions provided in Chapter One. These are:

- Examining the factors that have contributed to the decrease in church attendance and participation among youth in modern times;
- Identifying the views of young people concerning current church leadership about their expectations;
- Determining the influence of technology in youth's perception about the relevance of the church in their lives and how this affects their attendance;
- Establishing how the theological developments in worship and church growth have contributed to youth attendance in church activities;
- Synthesizing the theoretical models and literature supporting the trends of decrease in youth involvement in the church as presented in the problem statement; and

- Evaluating possible recommendations to improve the situation for the church's youth attendance in the future.

In this regard, the first three objectives will be handled under literature review (empirical framework), the fourth objective will form part of theological models, and the fifth objective will form the basis for a theoretical review. The qualitative research undertaken for this project will also inform the first three objectives.

## **2.2 Literature Review**

A review of past studies will be carried out based on the primary three aims or research questions, as outlined in the introduction above. Youth attendance decline in church in modern times will be looked at from different perspectives. First, the identification of factors contributing to this trend based on past studies will be examined. Second, the review will seek to identify young people's views about modern church leadership. Finally, the report will examine the influence of technology on youth church attendance as presented by past scholars.

### **2.2.1 Factors Contributing to the Decline in Youth Church Attendance**

Numerous studies have been carried out on the topic of youth and church attendance. Some of the studies have focused on the leadership, culture, technology, perceptions, conflict of interests, and many more issues that are common in modern times.<sup>60</sup> Some youth congregations associate their lack of church participation, especially in the developing countries, to the decolonization of youth ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>61</sup> The situation of the modern youth culture in which they do not want to be part of church services is as complicated as interreligious issues

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<sup>60</sup> John Vaughan, "Church Growth Today, Resources," *Church Growth Today: Center for the Study of Growing Churches: Mega-Church Research Centre*, accessed March 21, 2019, <http://churchgrowthtoday.com/Resources.html>.

<sup>61</sup> Weber, "Decolonizing Youth Ministry Models?" 1.

in recent times, politics, vulnerability, and globalization, respectively.<sup>62</sup> Contrary to this argument, some contend that the decline of youth in the church affairs is just like the decline of the general population and that the focus on youth is only a wrong representation of the facts as opposed to focusing on the entire people irrespective of age groups.<sup>63</sup> The assertion is supported by authors who argue that church attendance is on a decline for all groups, irrespective of the region or religion.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, other scholars have shown that many churches with conservative methodologies and theologies lack in more innovative forms of worship. This may be increasing the rate at which young people are leaving these churches.<sup>65</sup> The study by Harriet, which focused on Canada and included the perspectives of both clergy and congregants, established that more than two-thirds of young people oppose traditional theologies and prefer modern approaches to worship.<sup>66</sup>

A news report investigating church attendance among Catholics revealed that attendance has been going down in recent years. The decline in attendance is most significant for young people in Western countries.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Bert Roebben, "International Developments in Youth Ministry Research: A Comparative Review," *The Official Journal of the Religious Education Association* 107, no. 2 (2012): 192.

<sup>63</sup> Strong, "Effective Youth Ministry," 2.

<sup>64</sup> Merwe Michelle et al., "Getting Young Adults Back to Church: A Marketing Approach," *HTS Theological Studies* 69, no. 2 (2013): 1-12.

<sup>65</sup> Harriet Sherwood, "Literal Interpretation of the Bible Helps Increase Church Attendance," *The Guardian*, November 17, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/17/literal-interpretation-of-bible-helps-increase-church-attendance>.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Lydia Saad, "Catholics' Church Attendance Resumes Downward Slide," *Gallup News*, April 9, 2018, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/232226/church-attendance-among-catholics-resumes-downward-slide.aspx>.

The statistics confirm the assertions of most scholars that church attendance overall has been reducing over time. However, the most hit age group for the young people is between 16 through 24, whose decline is massive, having reduced from 70% to below 25% by the year 2017, as revealed by Gallup News of 2018.<sup>68</sup> When comparing Catholics' church overall attendance with that of Protestants, Protestants have a higher percentage who did not leave. According to the news, although in the last one or two decades the Catholics' attendance was higher than the Protestants, in recent years the Protestants are leading, even though the statistics for Protestant youths have declined slightly from 42% to about 36% between 1995 to 2017.<sup>69</sup> This is attributed to the innovative worship that is said to be adopted by Protestants as opposed to Catholics.<sup>70</sup>

A focus on youth and modernity demonstrates that young people have been negatively affected by modernization, although it can have a positive impact on youth attendance in the church if adapted constructively.<sup>71</sup> Before considering the decline in attendance, other factors concerning church growth should be considered, as all elements are interrelated. Some factors which directly impact attendance include evangelism, positions on scriptural authority, cultural relevance and openness, goals and vision, planning, organizing, and pastoral leadership. The impact which these factors have on attendance should be considered rather than focusing on attendance in isolation, as the former has a direct effect on the latter.<sup>72</sup> An online blog for church

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Sherwood, "Literal Interpretation of the Bible."

<sup>71</sup> Virginia, "Influence of Modernization on Youth Church Attendance," 1-43.

<sup>72</sup> Jan Jenssen, "Inspirational Sources for Church Development. A Discussion of Selected Topics from the Church Growth Movement and from Offshoots that Arose in its Wake," *Scandinavian Journal for Leadership and Theology* 2, no. 1 (2015): 1-26.



management captured ten different thoughts from various church leaders concerning attendance decline amongst young people. The thoughts captured include:

- The decline in church attendance is primarily a generational issue. Proposed response: Churches should focus on non-traditional alternatives.
- The decline comes as a result of the availability of too many activities among the congregations. Proposed response: the focus should be on growth rather than options.
- The issue is generally exaggerated. Proposed response: Church growth would be on the rise if churches kept the focus on young couples with children.
- Millennials have become cynical towards the church. Proposed response: churches need to address their assumptions that religion causes wars and social disparities.
- Other social activities have replaced the church. Proposed response: generate more community activities.
- Complacency has led to an inward focus. Proposed response: the church must reach out and engage those who are outside.
- It is ok when young people are busy outside *being* the church rather than *attending* church.
- The decline is a symptom of an outdated and ineffective institution that is geared to talk at—but not listen to—young people through social media and various other channels.
- The key to reversing the decline is fundamentally to build more engagement in the community.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Andrew Conrad, “Church Leaders Speak Up: 10 Honest Thoughts on Church Attendance Decline,” *Capterra Blogs: Church Management*, September 13, 2017, <https://blog.capterra.com/church-leaders-speak-up-honest-thoughts-on-church-attendance-decline/>.

Moreover, other concerns indicate that church attendance decline among the youth results from society's role modeling, where the majority of the people are not practicing Christianity in the modern days. According to Barna's report on the state of the church, less than 31% of the American population is actively practicing Christianity (defined as self-professing and attending church at least once a month), despite the fact that Christians are the majority in America.<sup>74</sup> As of 2016, the majority of the people in the US were Christians at 73%, while a total of 20% did not have any faith. This shows that young people can be influenced by those who did not belong to any religion as well as the 41% who profess to be Christians and do not attend church.<sup>75</sup> These findings support the fact that lousy role modeling can be the cause of the decrease in church participation and attendance among the youth. Moreover, it is emphasized that the modern church lacks the active involvement of young people, leading to an increased assumption of various myths and misconceptions about God and the Church.<sup>76</sup> Additionally, youth ministry has in the recent past failed due to one of the following factors:

- failure to replace the ones who just attend church as a cultural aspect.
- failure to replace the older generation of builders, as young people are not ready to take up missionary responsibilities.
- rapid transfers among churches, and

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<sup>74</sup> Barna Online, "The State of the Church in 2016," *Barna Group*, September 15, 2016, <https://www.barna.com/research/state-church-2016/>.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Jayson Bradley, "25 Church Growth Strategies," *Pushpay*, January 17, 2018, <https://pushpay.com/blog/25-church-growth-strategies/>.

- emerging trends in the modern environment, such as individuals placing more emphasis on other issues as opposed to worship.<sup>77</sup>

### **2.2.2 Views of the Youth Concerning Modern Church Leadership**

Another controversial issue in modern churches which affects the youth's willingness to participate in church activities, is the leadership factor.<sup>78</sup> According to the authors of an article on the role of youth in the church, society has generally ignored young people, leaving them to develop their own philosophies as far as their roles are concerned both at the societal level and in the church.<sup>79</sup> Such a trend is a failure on the part of church leadership to appreciate the fact that young people actually represent both the present and future of the church, and if they are not properly nurtured, the future of the church will not be productive. Leadership should be able to identify present challenges; and develop strategies to solve such problems, not just for benefits in the present but also for the future sustainability of church attendance and membership. Although conflicts are inevitable, the church leadership should ideally handle conflicts in satisfactory ways, ensuring that there is inclusivity and that the young people are satisfied with the outcomes. This is especially important in situations where there are conflicts of interest owing to the disparities between the expectations of the older population and the demands of Generation X.<sup>80</sup> When there is a failure to secure this consensus, the youth opt to take a nosedive towards consumerism and modernity, both of which are often destructive worlds, and which contribute to

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Gladys Ragira, Wepukhulu Rispah, and Savala Angeline, "Role of the Youth in the Church," *Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 22, no. 12 (2017): 49.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>80</sup> Ragira, "Role of the Youth," 51.

the destruction of their family ties and their spiritual attachment to Jesus Christ and the church in general.<sup>81</sup>

According to an analysis of a Scottish Presbyterian Church on the leadership challenges when ministering to the young people, it is revealed that adults' perception of the youth as well as the youth's perception concerning adults is yet another impediment in modern times when attracting youths to church.<sup>82</sup> The youth regard the adults as old-fashioned while the older people regard the youth as spoiled and pleased with worldly pleasures. These perspectives create a rift between the two groups leading to a gap that makes the youth to feel out of place while in the church. There are several dimensions to the problem, such as dress codes, language use, type of music played in the church, dancing styles adopted, preaching, as well as leadership in general.<sup>83</sup> This concept is widely supported by Wen Reagan, who indicates that the youth have adopted rock music, long regarded as the devil's music, to be the best music for modern church worship, especially for young people.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, it is argued that the differences in perceptions have resulted in church leadership that is overly judgmental and pushing young people from worship.<sup>85</sup> Such trends have widened the gap and brought about numerous concerns about the

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>82</sup> Charles Mwangi, "Challenges of Ministering to the Youth: A Case Study of Presbyterian Church of East Africa," (MA thes., University of Nairobi, 2015), 8.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>84</sup> Wen Reagan, "A Beautiful Noise: A History of Contemporary Worship Music in Modern America," (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 2015), 250.

<sup>85</sup> Research by Design, "Rooted in the Church: Summary Report," *Church in England Education Office*, 2016, [https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/2016\\_rooted\\_in\\_the\\_church\\_summary\\_report.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/2016_rooted_in_the_church_summary_report.pdf), 8.

future of the church, both in terms of worship and leadership.<sup>86</sup> The confusion between desirable or appropriate and inappropriate music in the church has caused further divisions between the old and the youth in the modern churches based on the music itself, ecclesiology, church development, liturgiology, and theology respectively.<sup>87</sup> These observations are supported by a study which demonstrates that the decline in church participation and attendance is a problem that has been existing for decades now since it started way back in the 1960s, and that the leading causes for this trend include technological, demographic, social, economic, cultural changes that became in unpredictable and discontinuous patterns.<sup>88</sup>

Contrary to many of the studies that have shown a general decline in youth population due to leadership challenges, another study gives a different opinion by holding that the main reason for the decreased numbers of young people in the church is that more than half of the children to adults who attend church do not deliberately attend church.<sup>89</sup> Despite the contributions of the study by Voas and Watt, their main limitation and gap are that they did not explore the causes or rather the fundamental reasons that make the children of church-going parents not to attend services.<sup>90</sup> Some of the potential reasons could be leadership from parents, who might have failed to introduce the children to church matters right from a tender age so that

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<sup>86</sup> Patricia Snell Herzog, "Youth, Emerging Adults, Faith, and Giving," *Religions* 8, no.7 (2017): 19.

<sup>87</sup> Stephen Benson, "The Influence of Music on the Development of the Church of God," (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2015), 11.

<sup>88</sup> Amos Muzondiwa, "The Extent and Causes of Decline in Church Attendance in Inglewood between 1960 and 2010," (MM thes., Otago University, 2012), 34.

<sup>89</sup> David Voas and Laura Watt, "Numerical Change in Church Attendance: National, Local and Individual Factors," *Church Growth Research Programme*, January 18, 2014, [http://www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Reports/Report\\_Strands\\_1\\_2\\_rev2.pdf](http://www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Reports/Report_Strands_1_2_rev2.pdf), 90.

<sup>90</sup> David Voas, "Numerical Change," 92.

when they grow, they get used to it. However, when young people grow into young adults, they have the freedom to choose what they want or do not want, it might be difficult for parents to intervene in asking them to attend church services, leaving each person to make personal choices and decisions.<sup>91</sup>

On principle, the current trends on church attendance and growth are marred with numerous ideologies, ranging from family leadership to personal religious experiences.<sup>92</sup> Leadership is a broader terminology that encompasses even an individual who directs his or her intentions, especially concerning worship.<sup>93</sup> Issues on growing secularism and circumstances where individuals analyze the cost/benefit of their involvement in church matters have worsened the situation. The society is no longer as it was several years ago, where the main idea was to believe and revere not just God but also the church leaders, especially the clergymen. New trends have changed the situation, and people can challenge the clergy, their character, and behaviors, which they feel are not seen as appropriate. Young people have become informed, and they are fearlessly able to confront any person irrespective of the leadership position held in society.<sup>94</sup>

One of the studies reviewed presented a rather interesting observation, where it stated that there is a tendency of young people leaving the church, and eventually returning after marriage.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Jessica Chase, "Why They Stop Attending Church, An Exploratory Study of Religious Participation Decline among Millennial from Conservative Christian Backgrounds," (MA thes., University of Central Florida, 2010), 17.

<sup>92</sup> Marilyn Harris, "From a Faith Perspective: Scholars and Bloggers Respond to Decline and Growth in Church Participation," (MA thes., University of Wisconsin-Platteville, 2013), 2.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>95</sup> Sarah Vaughn, "Why Millennials are Leaving the Church: A Qualitative Study Analyzing Multiple Factors Contributing to the Decline in Millennial Engagement within the Church," (BA thes., Appalachian State University, 2016), 6.

The finding demonstrated that individuals, while they are young, without responsibilities, and when they are exploring life, they tend to be away from church activities until they settle down in marriage. Nonetheless, the author indicated that the challenge associated with such trends is that these young people return to their churches while they may not know the expected doctrines, making the way of worship look hard on them, a fact that leads to massive church transfer across the globe.<sup>96</sup> Such a challenge can, however, be eliminated by early initiation into leadership, in which case young people are given leadership responsibilities from earlier ages. The idea behind this approach is that when they reach the age group at which many others are prone to leave the church, they will find it hard as they have duties needing their attention. In this way, the numbers leaving the church can be reduced, although not to zero percent.<sup>97</sup>

### **2.2.3 Influence of Technology in Youth's Perception on Relevance of Church**

Apart from factors and views among the youth that are discussed in previous sections, many researchers have narrowed down technology as the most influencing factor that has led to a massive decline in youth involvement in church activities. According to a study on the perceptions of parents in terms of technology and their children's church activities, it has been established that parents are concerned that young people are exposed to technological platforms, which they do not use constructively.<sup>98</sup> While technology has brought numerous benefits to society, it has also created some challenges. Seemingly positive uses, such as providing online access to church services, may have the unintended side effect of decreasing church attendance

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Andrew Orton and Hart Peter, "Leading Together in Growing Methodist Churches: Learning from Research and Practice in the North East of England," Durham University, 2017, 1-32.

<sup>98</sup> Johnson Kurt, "Parental Perception of the Influence of Digital Media and Technology on Children's Reading Habits at Home," (PhD diss., Utah State University, 2014), 195.

among young people. The growing use of technology may reinforce a preference among young people for human-technology interactions above human-human interactions such as church attendance.<sup>99</sup> While technology has also improved communication in churches, its usability has also been abused by young people when they opt for online contents that are not Christian-based teachings that derail them from worshipping God.<sup>100</sup>

One of the fundamental elements of technology that have a significant impact on church growth and development among young people is social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. For example, Facebook provides an open platform on which issues are discussed, ranging from anti-Christian views to all manner of messages that discourage church attendance. It has been established that such sites have led to erosion of religious values among the youth, dismay of faith-based contents, and erosion of social values, respectively making the young people reluctant to attend church services.<sup>101</sup> The assertions are supported by Rita whose study established that social media has led to behavior change among young people, unfortunately to the worse extent based on spiritual matters.<sup>102</sup>

Essentially, the millennials are often disturbed by the fact that they can spend so much time in a church service when they can save that time and access religious teachings online and

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<sup>99</sup> Roger Pineda, "Technology in Culture: A Theoretical Discourse on Convergence in Human-Technology Interaction," *Jyvaskyla Studies in Computing* 191, no. 1 (2014): 187-188.

<sup>100</sup> Christian Bolu, "The Church in the Contemporary World: Information and Communication Technology in Church Communication for Growth," *Journal of Media and Communication Studies* 4, no. 4 (April 2012): 94.

<sup>101</sup> Mookgo Kagatle, "Social Media and Religion: Missiological Perspective on the Link between Facebook and the Emergence of Prophetic Churches in Southern Africa," *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 39, no. 1 (2018): 1-6.

<sup>102</sup> Rita Njoroge, "Impacts of Social Media among the Youth on Behavior Change," (MA thes., University of Nairobi, 2013): 61.



then do other things as well in the same amount of time. This reduces the interaction with other faithful believers, leading to a society whose young people do not appreciate the morals that can cultivate Christianity as compared to ancient times.<sup>103</sup> For ages, religious traditions have been meeting together in places of worship, sharing the word of God, and then praying together. However, this tradition is slowly fading away because of the information technology (IT) era.<sup>104</sup> This is ideally one of the most important challenges in the contemporary society that church leaders and parents should focus on while teaching their children on the best way of using IT platforms to glorify God through a prosperity gospel approach.<sup>105</sup> Indeed, God gave human beings the conscious and ability to be co-creators, and such any innovative ideas conceived by human beings should be for His greater glory.

The reason that young people are so readily influenced by social media and other technological platforms is not that they are inherently more susceptible to such influences. Rather, it is because they lack mentorship in the church from leaders and parents. This apparent technology issue points back to an underlying leadership challenge.<sup>106</sup> On the other hand, some studies on technology and youth are positive. Jacob explains that in modern times, technology can be an effective tool to attract many youth faithful into the church when it is used

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<sup>103</sup> Philip Schwadel, "Interactive Effects of Church and Religious Traditions on Depressive Symptoms and Positive Affect," *Mental Health and Society* 2, no. 1 (2012): 15.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Kanaiza Milemba, "The Influence of Prosperity Gospel on the Well-Being of the Youth," (MA thes., University of Nairobi, 2017), 1-103.

<sup>106</sup> Serena Alexandria, "Young Adults Leaving the Church: the Tie to Intentional Spiritual Mentoring among Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Teens through Youth and Confirmation Ministry," (DMin diss., George Fox University, 2015), 7.

innovatively.<sup>107</sup> In general, the reviewed studies represent a broad spectrum of views from different authors regarding the current investigation. This will provide a solid framework for the current study to examine, compare and contrast.

## **2.3 Theoretical Review**

The decline in the number of youths attending church, as already expressed from literature review has dramatically increased over the years. Therefore, the theoretical foundations that explain how the present-day youths have declined in attending church and contributing to its growth are derived from the character traits of the older people in society today. The traits include: the influence by technological determinism theory, the desire to embrace collaboration and cooperation among the youths rather than individualism, and the interest in experiences and not just narrations. These theoretical foundations have been discussed below, showing how they have contributed to the decline of youth in church attendance and growth.

### **2.3.1 Technological Determinism Theory**

The present generation of young people greatly depends on technology since it has helped them to improve various aspects of their lives.<sup>108</sup> Besides, youths enjoy using technology. This includes devices such as smartphones, computers, and laptops among others. These devices give them online access to all types of content and make it possible to connect with different types of people both near and far. By facilitating interaction among friends, it gives them a new means to develop relationships among themselves. However, because this type of communication is characterized by hands, fingers, and eyes, rather than face-to-face

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<sup>107</sup> Jacob Dankasa, “New Media as Tools for Evangelization: Towards Developing Effective Communication Strategy in the Catholic Church,” (MA thes., St. Cloud State University, 2010), 16.

<sup>108</sup> Sarah Guldalian, “The Millennials,” 42-43.

conversations, it has radically altered not only how our young people relate to one another, but also their expectations and their characters.<sup>109</sup>

Youths spend most of their time watching television, playing games on their smartphones, or gambling.<sup>110</sup> Therefore, they spend less time on church activities or even do not attend church at all due to technological influence.<sup>111</sup> These days, both adolescents and young children own cellphones. As parents monitor the daily lives of their children, it is becoming increasingly difficult for them to detect the changes which result from their use of technology.<sup>112</sup> Many youths have adopted a dichotomous way of life, whereby they live in two different worlds: one is the actual world, and another is the internet world.<sup>113</sup> This is directly tied to the pervasive nature of the internet and the different social media forms that are changing rapidly.

Many video games offer online platforms that foster interactions among players. Young people tend to be quite eager to interact with others, so the social elements of video games are a powerful draw for them. This shows how important technological advancements have become in relation to the daily activities of many young people. Today, young people tend to spend more time interacting with technology and using social media than they do engage in actual communal activities in person. Because of this, a generational division has emerged whereby young children and youths have developed an advantage over their elders regarding the ability to use

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<sup>109</sup> Giovanna Giancesini, "Ten Years of Family Resilience: New Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Family* 2, no. 1 (2009): 37-53.

<sup>110</sup> Jesse Russell and Ronaldson Cohn, *Technological Determinism* (Nashville, TN: Book on Demand, 2012), 107.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Helen Cowie, "Coping with the Emotional Impact of Bullying and Cyber-Bullying: How Research can Inform Practice," *The International Journal Of Emotional Education* 3, no. 2 (2011): 50-56.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

technology.<sup>114</sup> When older people, for example, the parents are unable to use their devices, they turn to their children for help. Therefore, there is enough evidence that shows how the young generation has been exposed to various changes in technology, leaving a large number of adults nervous and impressed at the same time.

In spite of the negative impact that various technological devices may have on the younger generation, not all technological innovations can be considered harmful, as they can be integrated into the classroom level.<sup>115</sup> Technology, as used in the classroom, offers many important opportunities to enhance the learning environment for pupils, thus delivering results at school which are of great importance. The learning environment for pupils will be conducive and therefore, their achievements at school will be improved. The problematic side of technology makes parents fear for the welfare of their children since they can be easily influenced by predators to engage in immoral activities like sexting online.<sup>116</sup> Therefore the impact that technology has on youths is both positive and negative. Parents are encouraged to better understand the type of technology that their children use.

As technology is so attractive to young people, using technology could be an important tool in attracting their attention and providing a gateway for them to become more involved in different church activities. Youth ministries whose aim is to generate participation and to achieve longevity would be wise to acknowledge technology and to use it to their advantage. By tapping into the right platforms, youth leaders can share information more easily and foster social

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<sup>114</sup> Brad J. Bushman, "Violent Video Games and Hostile Expectations: A Test of the General Aggression Model," *Personality and Psychology Bulletin* 28, no. 1 (2004): 1679-1686.

<sup>115</sup> Jan Serveaes, *Technological and Social Change: Communication in the Tech-Mad World*, rev. ed. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), 330-336.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 332.

connections among members, thereby building a sense of community in the group.<sup>117</sup> It is through such media groups that youths are able to minister to their friends and engage them in important discussions about religious matters. Such activities allow youths to recognize the importance of youth ministries in their lives and encourage them to embrace them for a longer period.

Since technology has led to the decline in church attendance among young people and their contribution towards activities that will enable the church to develop, it has had a negative impact on our youth. The negative influence springs from what they access on social media platforms. For example, most youths refer to celebrities as their role models, and as most of these celebrities do not embrace Christian values, they easily influence youths away from the church.<sup>118</sup> This is one reason behind the decline in youth church attendance and growth, and constitutes one more reason to advise youth leaders to encourage their young people to use technology and technological devices in ways which will influence them to embrace church activities and invest in the growth of the church.

### **2.3.2 Cooperation and Collaboration Rather than Individualism**

When the focus is on collaboration and cooperation, individuals are passionate about sharing life moments together.<sup>119</sup> They embrace activities that involve different individuals to

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<sup>117</sup> Guldalian, "The Millennials," 42.

<sup>118</sup> Merritt Roe Smith and Leo Marx, *Does Technology Drive History?: The Dilemma of Technological Determinism*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1994).

<sup>119</sup> Richard Waters and Denise Seveck Bortree, "Can We Talk About The Direction Of This Church? The Impact of Responsiveness and Conflict with Millennials' Relationship with Religious Institutions," *Journal of Media and Religion* 11, No.4 (2012): 206-208.

help each other to solve the problems they face by providing relevant solutions.<sup>120</sup> When prestigious institutions like schools and churches form community-based partnerships to help in the development and learning processes which touch our young people's lives, they can offer support as they deal with barriers that are non-academic, such as bad relationships among peers, poor living conditions, poverty, and conflict within the family.

Community leaders and schools which take part in these partnerships offer experiences that have a positive impact on our youth. When young people become involved in organizations that foster cooperation and collaboration, they learn how to develop positive relationships. This is especially helpful for those who find it difficult to relate to others.<sup>121</sup> And because these activities also help the youth to grow morally, parents should encourage their teenage children to take part in the activities offered through community partnerships, especially during the holidays, when idleness and indecisiveness are a commonplace enemy. They will be busy with worthwhile activities, and their minds will be occupied at all times, lessening the time they spend engaged in undesirable activities.

As partnerships are formed between the community and the schools to provide positive experiences for young people, the critical role of the partnerships should be clearly outlined for them to be successful.<sup>122</sup> All leaders should first come into agreement as to how they can best-

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<sup>120</sup> Anderson Butcher, *Working with Parents and Families of Exceptional Children and Youth: Techniques for Successful Conferencing and Collaboration*, 4th ed. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004).

<sup>121</sup> Brent Richardson, *Working with Challenging Youth: Lessons Learned Along the Way*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>122</sup> Cindy E. Hmelo-Silver, *The International Handbook of Collaborative Learning* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013).

set goals for the youth whom they serve to grow and develop in positive ways.<sup>123</sup> Then, for the collaboration to be well balanced, they should commit to sharing all the responsibilities, whether simple or enormous, in a cooperative way.<sup>124</sup> They will be most effective when all the parties involved—leaders and young people alike—share responsibilities and work together as a team to agree on common goals while establishing the infrastructure of the partnership itself.<sup>125</sup>

Successful partnerships should be characterized by:

- the involvement of all leaders in the partnership from the first stage of decision making and goal setting to the last stage,
- clarity in the division of labor and other responsibilities,
- maintaining high levels of supervision in the activities of the partnership,
- sharing of important information among all individuals and
- document all important decisions which define the expectations of the partnership.

Other qualities that will aid the partnerships to be more successful are:

- encouraging change,
- sharing visions,
- having a well-trained staff
- maintaining good communication with one another, and
- establishing a stable system which safely collects and keeps data

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<sup>123</sup> Kristein Pittman, *Using Creative Thoughts: Building Awareness in the Mind*, 2nd ed. (Seattle, WA: CreateSpace, 2017).

<sup>124</sup> Hmelo-Silver, *The International Handbook*.

<sup>125</sup> Pittman, *Using Creative Thoughts*.

As most youths are in high schools, universities, and some in senior primary, their teachers and church leaders are in a primary position to encourage them to take part in church activities and work towards helping the church to grow.<sup>126</sup> For youths to participate actively in church activities and contribute to the growth of the church, they need the guidance of their leaders, both at church and school. Unfortunately, freedom of religion has influenced many youths to move away from Christianity and to ‘try’ other religions or cults, some of which involve devil worshipping. With this in mind, church leaders, teachers, and partnership leaders have a responsibility to respond to this situation in a positive manner and make every effort to bring the lost youths back to church. School principals should implement rules aligned with Christian values; this further encourages the students to embrace Christian values.<sup>127</sup> Once the rules are in place, the leaders should ensure that the rules are strictly followed; heavy punishments should be imposed for those who break the rules. Church and school leaders should motivate teenagers to embrace the spirit of togetherness to maximize the effectiveness of their activities.<sup>128</sup>

A first step towards building a sense of collaboration might be to schedule annual meetings aimed at improving the lives of community members through youth-led activities in the context of youth ministries. The yearly meetings would highlight the benefits of helping the community and convince the young people that these efforts are more likely to succeed when they attend church regularly. As the young people learn to collaborate around their shared experiences together, they will motivate each other. Low self-esteem is a commonplace enemy at

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<sup>126</sup> Robert Chaskin, *Youth Gangs and Community Intervention: Research, Practice and Evidence*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2010).

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>128</sup> Waters and Bortree, “Can We Talk About the Direction of This Church,” 206-208.



this age, as the teens practice setting goals and work hard to achieve them, their self-esteem improves. As they help in various projects, they also develop a spirit of teamwork, which gives them an increased sense of belonging. Once they see the concrete benefits of their efforts emerge and begin to recognize the positive impact they have had in the broader community, they will become even more motivated to stay involved in church and to contribute to its development.

### **2.3.3 Foundations of Experiential Preference**

They prefer being told the life experiences that are related to the daily teachings in the church.<sup>129</sup> For example, the present Protestant churches are being developed by the early teachings of the first church ministers who include Martin Luther King. The teachings given by the earliest church leaders were strong enough, and they informed people about religion and its importance in their lives.<sup>130</sup> Churches in the present day have abandoned the experiential teachings and instead focused on basic teachings whose main aim is to attain success in the modern world.<sup>131</sup>

Restrictive objects for the mind, for example strict rules about which books and learning materials are acceptable sources of instruction and which are forbidden, are used as tools for learning among the young people since they help them maintain their safety internally and also provides moral guidelines that they use to develop their ethical traits.<sup>132</sup> However, these objects

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<sup>129</sup> Noah D. Drezener, "The Black Church and Millennial Philanthropy: Influences of College Students Prosocial Behaviors at a Church-Affiliated Black College," *Christian Higher Education* 12, no. 5 (2013): 370-371.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Jennifer A. Moon, *A Handbook of Reflective and Experiential Learning Theory and Practice* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>132</sup> Ray Morose, *Experiential Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Sarasota, FL: Ocean View Publications: 2011), 220-222.

do not support experiential learning among young people. Both educational and parental processes should grow as the kids also grow. The processes should provide better methods that will enable the youth to experience the nature of the unrestricted learning objects of the mind.<sup>133</sup> The use of restrictive learning objects rather than experiences threatens an individuals' freedom, and this makes the youths abandon attending church since most of them do not like their freedom to be controlled in any way.

Accountable teaching exercises should be offered to the youths who are willing to be taught, and therefore they should not be forced.<sup>134</sup> The leaders should seek appropriate means to attract the youths for the teachings. Failure to select appropriate teaching methods will lead to a fall in both religious and secular teachings due to a lack of practical methods that will enable learners to experience the unrestricted nature of what had been presented restrictively.<sup>135</sup> Due to this, behavioral learning is not adequately practiced, therefore affecting most societies since undesirable dogmatic and detrimental patterns of living are formed. Such habits lead to extremism, volatility, and aggressive behavior among members of the community and mostly among the youth. Therefore, leaders should understand how these outcomes emerge in their societies and deal with them in good time before they bring about destruction in society.

Relevant legislation should be implemented to explain that what individuals learn is important. Still the, method of learning that is being used is more critical since it helps in establishing what one later absorbs and assimilates.<sup>136</sup> For instance, a situation where the

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<sup>133</sup> Seymour Epstein, *Cognitive-Experiential Theory: An Integrative Theory of Personality* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Morose, *Experiential Christianity*, 124.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 221.

restriction method of teaching is mostly used indicates that restriction in the future can be assimilated in a secure way. On the other hand, information that is unrestricted is easily ignored since the people involved are used to restricted information from the earliest stage. The same case applies to the teachings given at church whereby if a preacher uses experiences in his or her preaching, then the members of the congregation will be used to teachings that include life experiences. Therefore, the introduction of teachings that are not experiential can be easily ignored.

Therefore, human beings are considered to be unique among all living things since our adaptation skill does not depend on a single ability but instead identifies with the adaptation process itself during the learning process.<sup>137</sup> Thus we are the species that can acquire knowledge, and our chances to exist depending on the capability to adjust to both proactive and reactive senses of shaping the world and fitting into the two types of worlds which, are the social and physical worlds.<sup>138</sup> The more experiences are used in the daily teachings of the church the more individuals adapt to that system, and they can embrace that kind of content delivery. Experiences motivate individuals to carry out their activities passionately and also attend church as usual as well as taking part in its growth and development.<sup>139</sup> Most churches refer to the personal life experiences and sufferings of Jesus Christ in their teachings, which helps Christians, especially the youths, to change their own lives for the better.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> David Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Pearson Educational, 2014).

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> David Allen Kolb and Ronal Eugene Fry, *Toward an Applied Theory of Experiential Learning* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Alfred P. Sloan School of Management, 1994).

<sup>140</sup> Colin Beard, *The Experiential Learning Toolkit: Blending Practice with Concepts*. (Sonipat, India: Replika Press, 2010).

The problem brought about by the present-day churches can be addressed appropriately to avoid the increase in absenteeism of individuals in the church today due to the exclusion of experiential teachings in the church. The church can endorse the tales that illustrate how the application of religious teachings and ethics has helped individuals overcome different difficulties in life. Therefore, the youths should be allowed to share their successes and downfalls so that they will be motivated by the experiences and thus be able to develop the best criteria for addressing challenges facing them daily. By giving the youths such opportunities, they will find the activities more engaging hence being motivated to participate in church activities.

## **2.4 Theological Foundations**

In an examination of the literature concerning the approaches used to attract people to church, we see that leaders are prone to using an incarnational approach as opposed to an attractional approach.<sup>141</sup> The traditional attractional approach is engaging in efforts that are meant to attract non-believers to the church environment for proselytization,<sup>142</sup> whereas the incarnational method involves the church providing support to believers as they bring their mission out into the broader community.<sup>143</sup> Nevertheless, in probing the reasons why the youth are not attracted to the church, the current study chooses to discuss attractional theological foundations, which in this case are: spiritual formation, leading through relationships, missiology, and family ministry respectively as discussed in subsequent sub-sections. The

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<sup>141</sup> Kara Powell, *Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2016), 1-10.

<sup>142</sup> Hugh Halter and Matt Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom: Creating Incarnational Community* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 95.

<sup>143</sup> Reggie McNeal, *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 51.

selection of these theological foundations is based on the researcher's assumption that the main challenge leading to youth decline in church attendance is spiritual.

### **2.4.1 Spiritual Formation**

Spiritual formation is generally a process of sanctification, to develop a student who is wholly prepared to appreciate the goodness of God by choosing right as opposed to evil.<sup>144</sup> It is usually a product of mixing experience with Biblical knowledge, plus the revelation of—and encounter with—the Holy Spirit among the youth. This theology is based on Paul's teachings in Galatians chapter five, where Paul outlines those things that are righteous and inspired by the Holy Spirit and those that are evil, led by the devil. In Gal. 5:25, he says, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Furthermore, in verses 22-23, Paul asserts that "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such, there is no law." In this regard, spiritual formation is founded on principles of doing that which is good as opposed to that which is evil.<sup>145</sup>

Nonetheless, the root of Paul's teachings can be traced back to the Genesis stories of creation in which God gave human beings the freedom to choose between good and evil. It is important to note that in God's intention of creation, He aimed at and created 'good.' Unfortunately, evil also emerged when the devil perverted that which was good and turned it to evil.<sup>146</sup> It is the struggle between these two forces that eventually caused individual wars. Ultimately, though, it became a faith walk. The journey was instead an exciting development. It

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<sup>144</sup> George Kalantzis, Jeffrey Greenman, and George Kalantzis, *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 5-9.

<sup>145</sup> David Setran, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 88.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

started from the state of innocence. Later it grew into a state of awareness. When Adam and Eve came into existence, God gave them life. The two did not know evil (innocence) until when the devil asked them to eat the fruit. That is the time when the two realized they were naked and evil emerged (awareness). However, they had been warned by God that they were not to eat a particular forbidden fruit. Yet they obeyed the devil and ate it. This was a sign of disobedience to God. It led to many problems due to sin.<sup>147</sup>

Spiritual formation is the process of becoming a disciple. Of course, each person has the right to choose whom he will follow: whether he or she will become a disciple of God or the devil. At the root of this decision is a choice for good or evil.<sup>148</sup> The main question is this: are modern churches presenting these things in the church environment or not? As a matter of principle, it is quite unlikely that the church, either the leaders or the parents, can expect young people to resist when presented with temptations if they have not thought their spiritual formations through and made a decision to stand firm in their faith. Ideally, a strong spiritual foundation begins with teaching them that the Bible goes way beyond a collection of Old Testament and New Testament stories; it is, in fact, a message from the Lord. The teachings provided in the Biblical context should be emulated in practice if both the elders and the youth are to see the essence of such teachings.<sup>149</sup> Paul further says in Galatians 5:16, “This I say then, walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Dallas Willard et al., *The Kingdom Life: A Practical Theology of Discipleship and Spiritual Formation* (Colorado Springs, CO: Nav-Press Publishing Group, 2016), 102.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 103.

Based on this theology, we can also look to both the Old and New Testaments for their teachings of love. The book of Deuteronomy 6:4-5 says, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” This was also part of the 10 commandments given to Israelites. The Bible further teaches that the nation of Israel was chosen to be God’s people because God loved them. And in return, they, too, were commanded to Love Him and abide by His laws. The emphasis is put on the fact that there is only one God. So, how do we interpret this for the new generation? That is where the main challenge is: to convince young people that there is no other god other than God we read of in the Bible.<sup>150</sup> Many youths are falling prey to the false prophets who teach against the Lord, and whose main enticements are materialistic promises such as riches or money: the good life, good houses, good cars, and so forth. And yet, the true Gospel provides hope for eternal life, a promise that is too ‘remote’ from their present experience to hold much value in their eyes. The overarching aim of the Biblical teachings is to give the young people the tools to discern who God is and learn how the creation of the universe came about. God’s primary purpose in creating was to have them love Him.<sup>151</sup> After that, we become His children with whom He is pleased. It does not matter of the past but of the present and future. It is essential for young people to be taught that once one genuinely repents of his or her sins, God allows redemption. In the book of Jonah 3:8-10, the Bible says, “But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn everyone from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Steven Por et al., *Psychology and Spiritual Formation in Dialogue* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 7.

turn away from his fierce anger that we perish not? And God saw the works that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not.

In this regard, the young people have an opportunity to be saved from their iniquities, to reclaim their relationship with God, and become favored. However, the major challenge which remains is this: to convince these young people to come to church so that they can listen to the Word of the Lord.<sup>152</sup> And this is the basis where the family ministry becomes relevant in youth ministry as part of the theological foundations that is discussed below.<sup>153</sup>

#### **2.4.2 Family Ministry**

Although the focus of this study is on youth ministry, family ministry is an essential aspect of outreach, which helps to lay the foundations on which young people can come to meet Jesus, learn about him, and discern their relationship with God. God designed the family to be the place where children will have their first encounter with God, as their parents are to play godly roles on earth.<sup>154</sup> Moreover, it has been established that parents have an implicit responsibility for the spiritual formation of their children, bringing them up in the light of God and offering them instructions that will build them up as good persons in society. The Bible says in Proverbs 1:8-9, “My son, hear the instruction of thy father and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.” If

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Michael Anthony et al., *A Theology for Family Ministries* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2011), 10-36.



indeed children must hear the teachings of their parents, then parents must include the Biblical provisions of knowing God among the things that they teach their children.<sup>155</sup>

Furthermore, in the New Testament, the Bible commands children to obey their parents—a command which has a promise for them too. Ephesians 6:1-3 says this clearly: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.” This verse tells us that parents are expected to instill obedience in their children as their first duty. If they do this, then later, it can be easy for them to attract their kids to church. And of course, if the kids learned obedience as a virtue, they will obey.<sup>156</sup> Parents will succeed in laying the foundation for their children to have an encounter with God through church teachings if the church leadership is well prepared not only to attract but also to retain the young people to whom they are ministering. In modern times, we must remember that youth ministry is first built by the parents, and indeed, shepherding happens right at home with parents as the leaders.

We see quite clearly in the New Testament that Jesus loved children and invited them to come to him. He likened the Heavenly Kingdom as belonging to them; this should be the foundation of showing the love to kids and teaching them to love others as the most important commandment. In Mark 12:30-31, Jesus said, “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandments greater than these.” The provisions of these teachings are so powerful that if young people think them through, they will realize the need to be true to their

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 25-36.

<sup>156</sup> Charles Sell, *Family Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 108-109.

God and to other people in society. And this will, in essence, reduce the deviations from the teachings of God, and bring many closer to him. By building a good rapport between young people and their God as well as other people in society, this theology leads to the third foundation for this discussion, which is leading through relationships.

### **2.4.3 Leading through Relationships**

Building lasting relationships among people by loving each other, forgiving each other, and embracing each other as brothers and sisters is yet another vital element of Christ's teachings.<sup>157</sup> In life, events happen not by sheer coincidence; instead, they happen for specific reasons. Youth ministry can be based on pastoring to young people or even pastoring by young people.<sup>158</sup> However, before forming relationships with other people, the first step is to build a relationship with God by loving Him as explained above and then giving that same love to others. As a rule, if we love others as we love ourselves, it means that if we are saved, then we would like others to be saved as well. That is the foundation on which relationships theology intersects with youth ministry.

Nonetheless, this theology is founded on willingness, both on the part of the ones who are pastoring and the ones to whom the gospel is being presented.<sup>159</sup> For example, one must be willing to go out and reach the rest of the young people to deliver good news. Similarly, the target audience must also be willing to be ministered to. The main challenge in modern times is that young people are busily preoccupied with earthly things at the expense of the Word of God.

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<sup>157</sup> Andrew Bain, Ian Hussey, and Martin Sutherland, *Theological Education: Foundations, Practices, and Future Directions* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018), 96.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>159</sup> Michael Hryniuk, *Theology, Disability, and Spiritual Transformation: Learning from the Communities of L'Arche* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2010), 33.

Perhaps society is not committed to a sufficiently high set of moral standards; or perhaps sin has become more attractive. It is true that we are all sinners in different ways, but we cannot run away from the face of God because at the end of the day, judgment awaits us. Paul wrote in Romans 3:23-24 “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...” This verse tells us that Christ came because of our sins, and that he brought redemption, implying that we have been reconciled to God and we have a responsibility to return to Him and ensure that we abide by the laws. Ideally, the provisions of this theology are based on the command given by Jesus in Mathew 28:16-20, where the Bible states,

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

The Great Commission provided by Jesus Himself above does not apply only to a selected few; rather, it is an exhortation to all who have believed in Him. This is the foundation for establishing good relationships of care and it leads to the next theological foundation to be discussed below: missiology.

#### **2.4.4 Missiology**

The foundation of the Missiology ministry is to entrust the young people with the responsibility of communicating God’s Kingdom to others.<sup>160</sup> Although founded on the above premise of Jesus’ Great Commission, it is instead a continuation of the mission that Jesus

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<sup>160</sup> Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 51-59.

Himself started. Later, Jesus appointed more disciples and sent them to go and preach the Good News. This commission is found in Luke 10:1-3:

“After these things, the Lord appointed other seventy also and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. Therefore said he unto them, ‘The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray you therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest. Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves’”.

Having successfully convinced the young people to attend church and hear the word of God, it is important to equip them with the necessary skills and power to be the missionaries who will go and look for others. According to the literature review, a recent phenomenon is that it has become difficult to replace the aged persons in a modern church congregation. But as we send the youth for missionary work, they will also prepare to take up leadership responsibilities from the older members of the group, thus influencing the numbers to continually increase and achieving a positive impact on church growth.<sup>161</sup> Moreover, it is impressive how Jesus sends out the seventy-two: He does not give them promises of good things. Instead, he cautions them by saying that where they are going, they will be like lambs among wolves. In other words, He reminds them of the hardships and challenges that they are likely to face, including rejections, humiliations, prosecution, poverty, hunger, and many other tribulations. Those who are in leadership in modern youth ministry must remain aware that the present generation of young people is primarily focused on the good things in life and material gain. As Jesus Himself started the ministry at the age of 12, young people should also be given opportunities from tender ages like Jesus to participate in the ministry, starting from their homes and churches before attaining

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 51-59.

an age where they are ready to be sent to the outside world.<sup>162</sup> Ideally, it is important to communicate the will of God to our young people. We must help them understand that they have a special place in Christ and that following him is the only way to find their place in the world and discover their calling. However, this can be done successfully if and only if they are brought up in the face of God.<sup>163</sup> The best way to achieve this is to have an inclusive society where parents and leaders at the societal and the church level play their respective roles. It is as the theologies reviewed above are applied that family ministry will find its form and direction, spiritual growth and formation will take place, lasting relationships will be created and nurtured, and missiology will become a reality.

## **2.5 Chapter Summary**

The current chapter has demonstrated the relationship among different models of youth ministry and has individually placed an emphasis on empirical review, theoretical review, and theological review, respectively. The author has presented different theoretical foundations such as technological determinism theory, cooperation, and collaboration rather than the individualism model, and experiential preference framework, respectively. Each of these models has contributed towards the identified theological contexts, which are spiritual formation, leading through relationships, family ministry, and missiology, each of which has also been explained in detail. The following chapter will outline the methodological models adopted in this study.

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<sup>162</sup> David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 78-79.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The chapter on methodology is crucial in the overall research process, as it highlights the specific approaches adopted in answering the research questions as raised in the introductory and literature review sections. This chapter will include two basic sections: the first covers the intervention design, and the second covers the implementation of this design. The first section (intervention design) highlights how the study will be structured, mainly focusing on philosophical stances, research design, nature and source of data, target population, sample size, and sampling approach. In the second section, the implementation of intervention design will be structured to include data collection instruments, data collection procedures, data triangulation to check the accuracy, pilot testing, techniques of data analysis, advantages and disadvantages of adopted methodology, limitations of the method and ethical considerations. To support the methodological choices, the researcher refers to the research questions and problem context for the study before research begins.

#### **3.2 Intervention Design**

The intervention design starts by highlighting the specific questions to be addressed in this study after analyzing the approaches used in past studies.<sup>164</sup> The fundamental aim is to demonstrate a gap that should be filled, which is why this study is relevant. According to the study's context, the overall goal was to investigate if the decline in youth church attendance in modern days is caused by the lack of an authoritative source of the church's growth. The study's

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<sup>164</sup> Jack Rothman and Edwin Thomas, *Intervention Research: Design and Development for Human Service* (New York, NY: Haworth Press, 2013), 1-10.

primary purpose emerged from the fact that it had pointed out that there is an overall decrease in the number of young people attending church services globally. In this regard, with the intent to establish the role of the church in promoting youth attendance, it was imperative to find out the specific factors that have caused the decrease in church attendance among the youths, and the impact of spiritual formation in inculcating morals<sup>165</sup> and need to promote youth ministry.<sup>166</sup> As a result, the questions that emerged from this quest include: What are the factors that have contributed to the decrease of youth in church attendance and participation in present times? What are the views of the youth concerning the modern church leadership about their expectations? What is the influence of technology on youth's perception of the relevance of the church in their lives? How have the theological developments in worship and church growth contributed to youth attendance in church activities? What are the theoretical models and literature supporting the trends of youth decrease in the church, as presented in the problem statement? What are the recommendations in improving the situation for the church's future?

Moreover, the study's approach is supported by the models and literature reviewed in which it was established that there is insufficient research targeting the fundamentals that the current study aimed. Additionally, the review sections primarily focused on theories and theological frameworks to present opinions that can help promote youth ministry. As such, there is a need to undertake primary research to collect views on the issues, based on the perceptions of the modern youth in our churches today. Therefore, the methodologies to be chosen will

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<sup>165</sup> James Digiacomo, *Morality, and Youth: Fostering Christian Identity* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1993), 38-45.

<sup>166</sup> David Claydon, *A New Vision, a New Heart, a Renewed Call*, vol. 2 (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2005), 581-583.

highlight approaches of obtaining information from the right audience to compliment the models discussed in the literature review, as discussed in the subsections below.

### 3.2.1 Philosophical Stance

The topic of philosophy is of paramount significance in choosing the methodology to adopt in this study.<sup>167</sup> In this regard, it is beneficial that an overview of the appropriate philosophy is provided before deciding on the specific design that will be used. First, there are distinct differences concerning the provisions and specifications of each of the philosophical strategies that can be considered in research. The figure below provides an overview of the differences that exist among various stances.

	<b>Pragmatism</b>	<b>Positivism</b>	<b>Realism</b>	<b>Interpretivism</b>
Popular data collection method	Mixed or multiple method designs, quantitative and qualitative	Highly structured, large samples, measurement, quantitative, but can use qualitative	Methods chosen must fit the subject matter, quantitative or qualitative	Small samples, in-depth investigations, qualitative

Figure 3.1: Research Philosophy<sup>168</sup>

According to the above figure 3.1, one of the primary approaches used to different philosophical stances is based on the methods of collecting data: pragmatism relies on mixed

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<sup>167</sup> Kerry Howell, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Methodology* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2013), 59.

<sup>168</sup> Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, and Adrian Thornhill, *Research Methods for Business, Students*, 6th ed. (New York, NY: Pearson Education, 2012), 60-66.



approaches,<sup>169</sup> targeting both quantitative and qualitative data; positivism uses to a larger extent, quantitative approaches through highly structured instruments;<sup>170</sup> realism uses any approaches provided they are designed to fit the purpose of study;<sup>171</sup> and finally interpretivism, basically adopts a qualitative approach.<sup>172</sup> Based on the complexity of the phenomenon that was being investigated, the researcher decided to employ both positivism and interpretivism, whose features are expounded in figure 3.2 below.

The two philosophies (positivism and interpretivism) are adopted in the current study because they complement each other. Specifically, positivism focuses on ensuring that a researcher is independent from the social constructs being observed, while interpretivism allows the researcher to be part of the social system.<sup>173</sup> Furthermore, positivism reduces the problem to a simpler form, in order to make it more understandable, while endorsing a continued social system for a better understanding to be achieved.<sup>174</sup> Positivism employs a quantitative research method, while interpretivism relies on a qualitative approach. Finally, positivism is based on an

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<sup>169</sup> Bora Kurum, *Pragmatism, Methodology, and Politics of Research* (Munich, Germany: GRIN Verlag, 2017), 4-8.

<sup>170</sup> Christopher G. A. Bryant, *Positivism in Social Theory and Research* (London, UK: MacMillan, 1985), 28-34.

<sup>171</sup> Nick Emmel, Joanne Greenhalgh, and Ana Manzano, *Doing Realist Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2018), 89-95.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Malcolm Williams and Tim May, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Social Research, S.1* (Abington, UK: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 135.

<sup>174</sup> Mark Smith, Richard Thorpe, and Andy Lowe, *Management Research: An Introduction* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2002), 27.

objectivist approach,<sup>175</sup> whereas interpretivism is founded on subjectivist tactics.<sup>176</sup> Both approaches proved useful in the current context, and therefore they were used to develop the research methods that are discussed in subsequent sections.

Main Features	Positivism	Interpretivism
<b>Feature</b>	The observer is independent of what is being presented.	The observer becomes a part of the system
<b>Causality</b>	This is aimed to identify causal explanations of social entities existing in reality with/without being concerned of social actors associated with the entities.	The aim of the researcher is to understand the social phenomenon from the perception of social actors and their consequent actions
<b>Reductionism</b>	Problems can be better understood if they are reduced into the simplest possible elements.	Problems are better understood if the process of social interaction is continued so that the social phenomenon are in constant state of revision.
<b>Research Method</b>	Quantitative	Qualitative
<b>Research Paradigm</b>	Objectivist	Subjectivist

Figure 3.2: Application of Research Philosophy<sup>177</sup>

Figure 3.2 shows a comparison of the two philosophies that were used in this study.

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<sup>175</sup> Michael Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2003), 101-115.

<sup>176</sup> Williams and May, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Social Research*, 135.

<sup>177</sup> Saunders et al., *Research Methods*.

### 3.2.2 Research Design

Based on the adopted philosophies (positivism and interpretivism), the current research employed both a quantitative and qualitative methodology designed to answer the specific research questions. The main tactic in the quantitative approach is to quantify a study problem through the collection of numeric data, which makes it possible to perform statistical analysis and present numerical results.<sup>178</sup> Among the various components that can be quantified include attitudes, opinions, perceptions, behaviors, or any other variables that can be defined, and then the results used to generalize outcomes from a sampled populace to an overall population being studied.<sup>179</sup> It is essential to appreciate that in quantitative studies, measurable data is used to formulate specific facts that are important in uncovering trends and patterns concerning a given phenomenon. Moreover, the methodology relies on data- gathering approaches that are much more structured and sophisticated when compared to a qualitative approach.<sup>180</sup> Therefore it is a suitable approach, especially where there is evidence from previous studies. It helps to delve further into the problem to uncover the underlying facts that can help build upon existing knowledge. The possible methods that can be considered under this methodology to collect data include online surveys, mobile surveys, paper surveys, face-to-face interviews, kiosk surveys, longitudinal studies, telephone interviews, systematic observations, online polls, and website interceptors.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Geoffrey Marczyk, David DeMatteo, and David Festinger, *Essentials of Research Design and Methodology* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 92.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Perri 6 and Christine Bellamy, *Principles of Methodology: Research Design in Social Science* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2012), 30.

<sup>181</sup> John Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2014), 98.

Second, the qualitative approach is founded on the need to explore concepts, in which case, little information is available.<sup>182</sup> It helps to develop an understanding of the perceptions, opinions, views, motivations, and reasons that are underlying a given phenomenon.<sup>183</sup> This design is appropriate to formulate potential hypotheses and insights into a certain issue, which can be helpful in further quantitative studies.<sup>184</sup> Additionally, the approach is also suitable in uncovering trends in opinions and thoughts, thus offering a more in-depth insight into a particular problem.<sup>185</sup> The common data collection approaches under qualitative design include semi-structured or unstructured processes, such as focus group discussions, participation or observations, and individual interviews. In most cases, the sample size selected is usually small, which is defined to meet the specific needs and aims of a researcher.<sup>186</sup>

### 3.2.3 Nature and Source of Data

Given that it has been highlighted in the previous subsection that both quantitative and qualitative methodologies will be used, it is an implication that both numeric and non-numeric data will be collected respectively. Ideally, a quantitative methodology yields numeric data, while a qualitative methodology yields descriptive data.<sup>187</sup> Essentially, it is imperative to define

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<sup>182</sup> Patricia Leavy, *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches* (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2017), 74.

<sup>183</sup> Laura Dwyer and James Bernauer, *Quantitative Research for the Qualitative Researcher* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2014), 41.

<sup>184</sup> David Morgan, *Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods: A Pragmatic Approach* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2013), 77.

<sup>185</sup> Ewe Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2009), 191-192.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 77-78.

<sup>187</sup> Isadore Newman and Carolyn Benz, *Qualitative-Quantitative Research Methodology: Exploring the Interactive Continuum* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 98.

in advance the sources and nature of the data to be collected, so that other methodological elements can be determined in advance. Moreover, based on the study's primary aim of investigating the decline of youth in today's church, the main source of information should be the churches themselves. Moreover, this implies that the study will be primary in nature, as the data to be gathered will be specifically for this study and from first-hand informants only. Nonetheless, once the results have been analyzed, there will be a comparison with literature from the theoretical and theological models presented earlier.

### **3.2.4 Target Population**

As already explained, the goal of the study was to identify factors that have contributed to the decline of youth church attendance in the local church. Therefore, the target population will be the existing youth members of the church. The selected population knows existing church practices that are in-line with their lives. They also have insights on what can be improved through a youth ministry to increase their participation. Hence, the research was conducted at Christ Missionary Baptist Church with a specific focus on youth ministry. The questions that were used to gather data were of three types. The first group of questions focused on current practices in the church that are appealing to the youth. The second group focused on practices that are lacking to continue attracting the youth. The last group focused on measures that can be taken to improve the current situation and create a vibrant and attractive youth ministry. The items will then constitute factors that should be considered when addressing the decline in youth church attendance.

The reasons why the researcher chose to focus on the youth population is based on the philosophical stances used, as well as the models reviewed. As such, it was essential to gather information from the people affected by the youth ministry, although the elderly population has

been identified as having an influence, especially on the theological assumptions presented in previous sections. Nonetheless, the youth population in Christ Church will be given an opportunity to present their views, concerns, opinions, thoughts, and perceptions of various topics, such as leadership, technology, role modeling, youth pastoring, parenting, and their personal goals as far as Christianity is concerned. This population will be subjected to both the interviews and surveys to gather divergent opinions to aid in formulating inferences.

### 3.2.5 Sample Size

For the study to succeed, it is crucial to select a few representatives of the population, to make the process cost-effective and faster.<sup>188</sup> Therefore, the sample size is a subset of the entire population that exhibits similar characteristics of the population from where it is drawn.<sup>189</sup> Moreover, for results from a sample to be generalized to the entire population, a significant proportion should be chosen about the size of the whole population.<sup>190</sup> The current study must employ mixed methodology, implying that the sample size will be split into two, namely, for qualitative and quantitative data collection. Ideally, the total sample size was to be 60 youth members of the church, of which 15 would be subjected to interviews for qualitative data gathering, and the remaining 45 would be subjected to paper surveys for obtaining quantitative data. The researcher would ensure that those who have been selected for interviews will not also be selected for surveys and vice versa. The main reason for this is to prevent cases where later

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<sup>188</sup> William Trochim, James Donnelly, and Kanika Arora, *Research Methods: The Essential Knowledge Base* (Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2016), 92.

<sup>189</sup> Nick Emmel, *Sampling and Choosing Cases in Qualitative Research: A Realist Approach* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2013), 22-30.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

thoughts would influence a respondent who has prior information concerning the topic of study in responding to a second instrument, which requires strictly limiting them to one device.

### 3.2.6 Sampling Technique

Sampling is the fundamental approach of deciding who should or should not be included in a study.<sup>191</sup> There are different approaches that a researcher can choose from, which are classified into two broader classes, non-probabilistic and probabilistic.<sup>192</sup> The current study adopted probabilistic sampling owing to its merits. First, sampling based on probability is advantageous, as it has a minimum or zero chance of bias in selecting the individuals.<sup>193</sup> Second, it allows the researcher to avoid using judgment in determining the suitable candidates for recruitment for study survey and interviews.<sup>194</sup> In this regard, it implies that all participants are given equal chances and opportunities of being part of a study, proving an equal representation of the population in a sample.<sup>195</sup> Additionally, other benefits of such sampling approach include the fact that it is less costly, it is faster, it can quickly be done by people with less expertise, as it is simple, and it does not require specialized techniques or instruments.<sup>196</sup> Despite its numerous merits, probability-based sampling has some issues, which include increased chances of selecting

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<sup>191</sup> Steven Thompson, *Sampling* (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 99.

<sup>192</sup> Lim Weng, *Research Methodology: A Toolkit of Sampling and Data Analysis Techniques for Quantitative Research* (Munich, Germany: Grin Verlag, 2013), 53.

<sup>193</sup> Thompson, *Sampling*, 99-100.

<sup>194</sup> Weng, *Research Methodology*, 54.

<sup>195</sup> Johnnie Daniel, *Sampling Essentials: Practical Guidelines for Making Sampling Choices* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2012), 67-71.

<sup>196</sup> Thompson, *Sampling*, 100.

a specific group or class only, and the likelihood of experiencing monotony or redundancy in the exercise.<sup>197</sup>

Probability-based sampling further has numerous classifications, including stratified random sampling, simple random sampling, and systematic random sampling.<sup>198</sup> The key concept in this sampling is that samples are drawn randomly from the population. The current study employed the simple random sampling technique, which was perceived by the researcher to be a basis for a more reasonable judgment that is free of any possible bias. The researcher ensured that once a respondent was identified from the population, data collection instruments were administered immediately before going for another respondent until the overall sample size was obtained.

### **3.3 Implementation of Intervention Design**

Having explored the intervention design elements extensively, it is crucial to explain how the implementation process took place. The main concern in the implementation of the intervention design was on data collection, triangulation to check accuracy, data analysis, pre-test study, and potential ethical implications that needed to be observed, as explained in the subsections below.

#### **3.3.1 Data Collection Instruments and Procedure**

As already mentioned, the study relied on two primary data collection procedures, namely, interviews and surveys. For the interviews, the researcher used a list of interview questions to conduct face-to-face discussions, in which case respondents were briefly introduced

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>198</sup> C. R. Kothari, *Research Methodology: Methods & Techniques* (New Delhi, India: New Age International, 2014).



to the topic of study and their concerns regarding confidentiality were addressed before they were asked to offer their time, approximately 30 minutes, to respond to several questions. Specifically, the interview consisted of 10 questions, covering the different areas as per the research questions and problems. The researcher took notes of the interviews in a manner that allowed subsequent coding and analysis. For emphasis, the interview questions were split into three groups: the first group of questions focuses on current practices in the church that are appealing to the youth, the second part focuses on practices that are lacking to continue to attract the youth; the last group focuses on measures that can be taken to improve the current situation and create a vibrant and attractive youth ministry.

The interview participants were identified before church service and requested to spare time after church service for the interviews. Given that the researcher was targeting 15 individuals, it was planned by the researcher to interview at least four youth members every Sunday, to ensure that data collection was completed in one month. A sample of the interview questions has been attached to this study as Appendix D. Interviewees were allowed to choose to respond or refuse to respond to particular questions, if they considered them not appropriate. Before interviews were carried out, each interviewee was asked to consent and agree to be part of the process. Those who did not want to participate were not included, and the researcher planned to move on to the next potential respondents to reach the goal of 15 youth to participate in the interviews (according to the study's proposed sample).

For the survey, the researcher used a designed questionnaire with ten closed-ended questions to collect data that could easily be quantified and entered as numeric data for analysis. The questionnaire was equally subdivided into sections covering background information and factors influencing the youths' decisions to attend or not attend church services. The methods

used to identify subjects who were willing to complete this questionnaire included distributing flyers explaining the study and describing the questionnaire to members of the church, as well as having the Church Announcer provide the same information in brief form each Sunday. It was explained that only individuals between the ages of 16 and 24 were needed for the study. A convenient time which consisted of one meeting, was held after Sunday service on 2 June 2019. This date was selected to gather participants, briefly explain the research and address confidentiality concerns, and distribute the questionnaires. Participants were made aware that they should not complete the questionnaire if they were already participating in or planned to participate in the interviews. Since the questionnaire was relatively brief, participants were encouraged to complete it immediately if possible so that it could be turned in right away. Those who did not have enough time to complete the questionnaire at that time, or who preferred to complete it at home, were granted one week to return it on the next meeting Sunday, which would have been on 9 June 2019. Since all questionnaires were not turned in on that date as requested, the collection process extended across four weeks. Participants who planned on participating in the survey for weeks two, three and four were instructed by the Church Announcer to see the researcher after church to pick up a survey. The questionnaires were completed anonymously to protect the privacy of all participants. To reduce the possibility of duplicate responses from one or more participants, participants were assigned a pseudonym for tracking purposes. For the first week, a total of 15 questionnaires were distributed, and 15 were returned fully completed and collected to be used for data analysis. This procedure was carried out weekly for one month, so there were four total distributions of questionnaires. For the second week, another 15 questionnaires were distributed, but out of the 15 returned, only ten were fully completed and collected to be used for data analysis. For the third week, another 15

questionnaires were distributed, and out of those 15, 15 were returned fully completed and used for data analysis. Participation declined for the fourth and final week, perhaps because most potential subjects who were willing to participate had already completed the questionnaire. Only 15 questionnaires were returned, but only five were fully completed and turned in to be used for data analysis for the fourth week. Out of the 60 surveys distributed, only 45 were returned fully completed and able to apply for data analysis. The researcher assumed that those who had filled out the questionnaires would not interact with the ones to be interviewed in the following weeks, as this would potentially distort data collection from interviews. The questionnaire to be used in the exercise have been attached to this paper as Appendix C. Those respondents who were comfortable filling out the questionnaires and handing them back to the researcher made the process of data collection more accessible and perhaps increased the response rate.

### **3.3.2 Data Triangulation**

The primary goal of data triangulation was to ensure that credibility to data and its sources is added by checking the accuracy of data, using multiple approaches. To verify data accuracy, several approaches need to be planned prior to data collection process so as to provide a clear framework in undertaking the exercise. More importantly, linking data from different sources is one of the best approaches to achieve data triangulation.<sup>199</sup> Because survey data was collected across four weeks, a panel data technique was the primary approach used to achieve data triangulation, as feedbacks were compared from different interviewees based on the time difference. Moreover, the researcher adopted observational skills to monitor attendance of participants over the four weeks to ascertain their responses and actual practice. Moreover, the

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<sup>199</sup> Mohammad Karim, *Analysing the Role of Triangulation in Research* (Munich, Germany: GRIN Verlag, 2013).

researcher went ahead and tested reliability and validity as additional techniques of ensuring that data, as collected, was credible.

Validity is the overall approach of testing the credibility and soundness of data collection and the methods adopted to undertake research. The fundamental facet of validity is that the methods and instruments used must measure what they are intended to measure.<sup>200</sup> It can be either internal validity or external validity. Internal validity deals with possible flaws that can affect the study process that bare internal, and these are usually the concerns of the researcher.<sup>201</sup> Examples of such issues include failure to control significant variables or the specific tools of analysis selected. Moreover, internal validity can be affected by factors such as subject variability, history, size of the population, time, or period given for the collection of data, and the sensitivity of instruments.<sup>202</sup> Therefore, the researcher targeted internal sensitivity, and among the strategies adopted included ensuring that time taken to collect data did not exceed four weeks, and controlling the variables of the study. One of the major research considerations with respect to internal validity involves controlling for potentially confounding variables, while external validity is a more general concept that relates to the question of whether the findings of a study can be generalized to the relevant broader population. The major strategy that this study adopted for the purpose of controlling for potential confounding variables was the use of random (probabilistic) sampling of young church members. Self-selection effects relate to some of the most common potentials confounds in research; when research subjects can select which

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<sup>200</sup> Matthias Baumgarten, *Paradigm Wars - Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Research* (Munich, Germany: GRIN Verlag, 2012).

<sup>201</sup> Sharlene Biber, Jerome Kirk, and Grant McCracken, *The Practice of Qualitative Research, 2nd Ed.* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2010).

<sup>202</sup> Baumgarten, *Paradigm Wars*.

experimental group they are placed in, patterns in their individual differences can skew the results. Since the current study was observational rather than experimental in nature, subjects were not divided into control and experimental groups. However, self-selection effects can also relate to an individual's decision to participate in a study in the first place, and this can also skew the results. By randomly selecting subjects rather than simply asking for volunteers, the potential confound of self-selection effects was mitigated to a sufficient degree to ensure a high level of internal validity for the study. There is a minor limitation in this regard, given that not every individual who was selected agreed to participate. Overall, though, very few selected individuals declined to participate, so this limitation was not a serious threat to internal validity. A more serious limitation to the external validity of the study has to do with the fact that the study included only individuals from a single church. It is possible for this reason that the results of the study may only generalize to the youth population of that specific church rather than to the entire Christian youth population, although the results are generally consistent with the findings of other similar research on youth church membership.

Based on reliability, the main focus was to ensure that the results obtained were credible, reliable, and consistent. Ideally, the different types of reliability include test-retest, parallel forms, internal consistency, and inter-rater, respectively.<sup>203</sup> Neither test-retest reliability nor parallel forms reliability was considered in the current study due to feasibility constraints. The pool of research subjects was too small for this to be practical, and it was only possible to have each subject complete the written questionnaire once. The questions used for the interviews were not identical to those used on the questionnaires, and subjects who participated in interviews

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<sup>203</sup> Lucinda Becker, *Presenting Your Research: Conferences, Symposiums, Poster Presentations and Beyond* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2014), 54-57.

were not permitted to complete the questionnaires.<sup>204</sup> Inter-rater reliability was not a concern for the questionnaire since this was a survey instrument using a Likert scale, which generated quantitative rather than qualitative data. However, outcomes proved that the results were consistent; there was no suggestion that there was an issue with data collected. To determine internal reliability, one analysis for the written questionnaires was obtained through the study of Cronbach's Alpha ratio.<sup>205</sup> A minimum ratio of 0.7 was used as the threshold above which results were claimed to be reliable, and those that scored below 0.7 termed as not credible. Finally, parallel forms reliability was measured by using different versions of data collection tools, which in this case were survey questionnaires and interviews, and hence results measured if the outcomes were on the same trend.<sup>206</sup>

### **3.3.3 Pilot Test**

A pilot test is a pre-study before the actual study is carried out.<sup>207</sup> Before the beginning of the formal research, the researcher carried out a pilot test for both the in-person interview questions and the written questionnaire instrument that had been developed. Two volunteers from the youth membership of the church were used for the pilot interviews. The pilot interviews were used to determine the suitability of the questions and to generate an estimate of the time needed for completion of interviews during the formal study. No changes to the interview questions were determined to be necessary after the pilot interviews. The data from these interviews were not included in the analysis for the formal study. A pilot study for the written

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 54-57.

<sup>206</sup> Baumgarten, *Paradigm Wars*.

<sup>207</sup> Erin Ruel, William Wagner, and Brian Gillespie, *The Practice of Survey Research: Theory and Applications* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2016).

questionnaires was also carried out for the purpose of determining the internal reliability of the survey. Five volunteers from the youth membership of the church completed the pilot questionnaire. This data was not included in the analysis for the formal study, either. It was used only for the purpose of carrying out a Cronbach's Alpha analysis. The results for the analysis are presented in table 3.1 below. None of the volunteers involved in the pilot study were permitted to participate in the interviews or questionnaires for the formal research.

Table 3.1: Reliability Test

Independent Variables	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Importance of youth to the church	5	0.78
Generational differences in the church	5	0.74
Factors affecting youth growth and attendance	5	0.76
Leadership and technology in the church	11	0.71

As established above, all the items in the questionnaire scored above 0.7, which was used as the minimum threshold, and therefore concluded that the outcomes were reliable and accurate. As a result, the researcher placed reliance on designed instruments to measure the research's variables and answer the questions appropriately.

### 3.3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

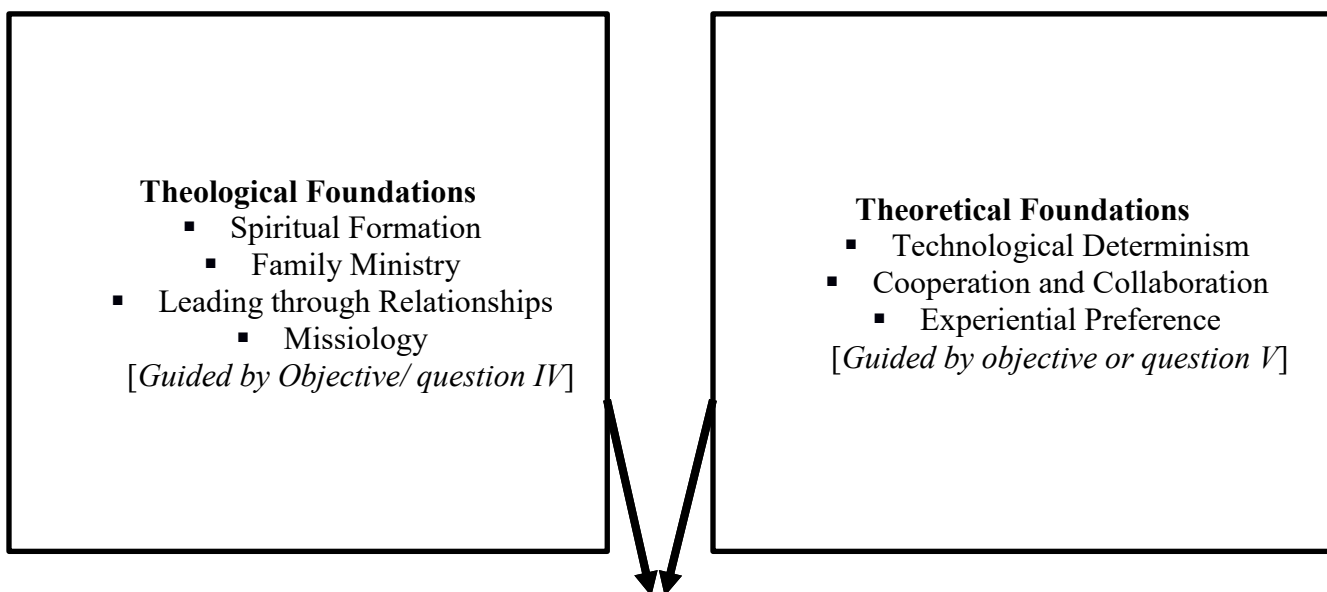
The researcher adopted mixed analytical approaches to synthesizing the obtained data. First, for qualitative data, the researcher adopted a thematic analysis technique, in which codes were given for the interviewees from 1 to 10, and their responses organized in a table (thematic analysis map), to aid the process of generating themes for presentation. The outcomes were presented as a descriptive text, supported by actual responses in addition to analysis. Second, on quantitative data from surveys, the researcher used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to perform data analysis. Mainly, the analysis was comprised of descriptive statistics,

which are percentages and frequencies. Also, regression analysis models were performed to yield ANOVA, coefficients, and R- values for interpretation, respectively. Results from quantitative analysis were presented using tables and figures, which were numbered sequentially throughout the analysis process.

### 3.3.5 Conceptual Framework

Based on a several approaches adopted in the study, ranging from methodology chosen to empirical, theoretical and theological reviews, as well as research questions, a conceptual framework has been developed to aid in data analysis using the above suggested techniques. Ideally, a conceptual framework integrates different thoughts as presented by the researcher, which will collectively shape the results and interpretations thereon, in making conclusions and recommendations, respectively.

Figure 3.3 below presents the conceptual Framework.





### **Empirical Framework**

- Factors contributing to decline in youth church attendance
  - Views of the youth concerning modern church leadership
  - Influence of Technology in Youth's perception on relevance of church
- [Guided by objectives/ questions I, II, and III respectively]*

Recommendations for improving  
the situation for the church's future  
*[Guided by objective/ question IV]*

Figure 3.3

As part of conceptualizing the above framework, it is important to explain the perceived relationship among the various components presented in figure 3.3 above. First, the researcher has provided that theological and theoretical foundations are independent of each other, but that, together, they can influence youth attendance and growth in the modern church. As a matter of fact, theological foundations are the bases that the church can employ in understanding the dynamics in church attendance and ministry, respectively. Based on the theological assumptions, there are a number of biblical verses, as well as past studies that have previously been provided to help in expounding the different perspectives such as missiology, spiritual formation, family ministry, and leading through relationships, respectively. Ideally, understanding these components implies that the church leadership will be open towards the assessment of the facets that young people rely on making decisions.

The concept is further supported by the three basic theories that have been explained in the literature review, which include technological determinism, experiential differences, and

cooperation or collaboration, respectively. Essentially, the theories indicate that the dimensions of theology in the church continuously keep changing due to emerging trends, such as technological advancements. The congregation can receive information globally faster than before, allowing them an opportunity to share their grievances, expectations, frustrations, and hopes. This should not be taken less seriously, as the impact can be felt globally. For example, by virtue that some regions in the world have been seen to be profoundly affected by the emerging wave of youth attendance in the church such as in America, less affected regions such as Africa, should not take this for granted because possibly the effect could be felt in these regions sooner or later.

Therefore, the proposed model tries to link the changes in theology and beliefs among people with modernity aspects in theory, such as leadership, technology, and perception. The fundamental assumption from the model is that, despite the basis adopted, whether theological or theoretical, it is possible to explain the specific factors that have contributed to a decline in church growth and attendance among the modern generation. In this light, two forms of models are directly linked to the empirical framework, which sought to establish the specific factors contributing to such a decline, the views of the young people concerning leadership in the church, and how technology has shaped the perception of what the church simply means to the youth.

However, for the current investigation to be of great value to the modern church according to the proposed significance, it is imperative that an understanding of the complex situations involved in the study's topic leads to a generation of multiple solutions as recommendations for improvement. In this context, all the models and frameworks in the conceptual review lead to the recommendations necessary for improving the situation for the

church's future. The primary assumption, in this case, is based on the facets of dynamism, emerging trends, and further advancements in society. Ideally, if the current generation is impacted to the extent observed in the literature review and problem statement, then it could imply that future generations will be more affected. Hence, the study will be not only important as a reactive measure and tool of recommendations for the current situation, but also a proactive instrumental tool of recommendations for the future as well. This conceptualization will guide the entire data collection and analysis so as to reach valid conclusions as already outlined in the model above.

### **3.3.6 Merits of Chosen Methodology**

The selected methodologies were deemed to have numerous advantages. First, the philosophical stance adopted was mixed (both positivism and interpretivism), which implies that the study benefited from both advantages of each approach by using qualitative approaches as an exploratory exercise to delve deeper into an area which few studies have focused on in the past. Further, this philosophy allowed the researcher to employ a quantitative approach to build on the qualitative one. Second, the adopted sampling approach was based on probability and not on bias or judgment, which implies that the selected participants truly represented the target population. Third, the study employed two data collection instruments (interviews and surveys), which implies that the data collected benefited from the merits of both instruments. Fourth, outcomes from one instrument were verified from the other, and this promoted data reliability and validity. Fifth, by the researcher's decision to undertake a pilot study, the overall results came from credible instruments. Sixth, the approaches used to analyze data actively support the possibility of having clear evidence to aid in inference making.

### **3.3.7 Demerits of Chosen Methodology**

Although the employed methodologies have many advantages, they are, however, not without demerits. First, by adopting two philosophies, two designs, and two data collection approaches, the process was time-consuming and costly. Second, since the results were collected across four weeks and from the same source, it is possible that subsequent responses would have been distorted from the people interviewed during the first periods of data collection. Finally, because the instruments used were designed by the researcher, it is possible that some errors or weaknesses of the instruments would influence the results since they were not standard instruments.

### **3.3.8 Limitations of Chosen Methodology**

Despite the demerits discussed above, there were a few noted methodological limitations worth mentioning. First, issues with sample selection were not purely probabilistic because after a sample was selected, those that refused to be part of the sample were not included; and the researcher again sampled an equal number to replace each individual who rejected to be included in the study. Second, the selected sample size was not sufficient to aid in the process of statistical measurement, since the size was determined by the researcher's convenience without a specific sampling calculation technique. Third, there was a lack of past studies on the same topic, which would have informed the researcher on the specific gaps and methods to use. Fourth, there could be conflicts arising among the respondents and the researcher based on personal issues and preferences from the youth, since the researcher was an elder in the church. Finally, time constraints were an inevitable limitation in the overall conduct of the study and application of the chosen methodologies, respectively.

### 3.3.9 Ethical Considerations

For any research to be valid, reliable, and credible, and to be able to add value to a body of knowledge, it has to be carried out under the confines of the ethical standards that are globally accepted by scholars.<sup>208</sup> Similarly, the current study was undertaken per ethical provisions for purposes of making it acceptable in the field of youth ministry and philosophy in general. First, the study was carried out with strict observation of confidentiality standards, given that it involves interaction with human beings.<sup>209</sup> The first step towards achieving these ethics was to seek consent from the respondents before interviewing them or even allowing them to fill the questionnaires. Subsequently, respondents were not required to indicate their personal details such as names and contact details on interview sheets or even on the questionnaires. Moreover, their anonymity was assured and guaranteed throughout the exercise, and even after the data collection exercise was completed.

Second, the researcher ensured that the study was carried out by explaining to the respondents the purpose of the study and providing that they understood why they needed to participate in the study. Moreover, they were promised copies of the completed study as a way of incorporating social responsibility into the actions of the researcher. Third, the scholar ensured that the conduct of the study was undertaken for the intended purpose of an academic award, and results were confined to this purpose only. Fourth, all materials used in the study were appropriately referenced through the provisions of the University to avoid plagiarism and research ethics. Fifth, any potential risk of harm was minimized by ensuring that all the

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<sup>208</sup> Martyn Hammersley and Anna Traianou, *Ethics in Qualitative Research: Controversies and Contexts* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2012), 23-30.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

participants benefited from the study as opposed to experiencing any discomfort and harm.<sup>210</sup> Specifically, the scholar minimized any psychological harm and stress by clearly counter-checking the research questions, so as not to provoke any negative feelings. The counter-checking procedures involved informally collaborating with many academic contacts, peers, and personal acquaintances to determine whether any of the research questions might conceivably be distressing to a research participant. The consensus was that none of the questions would cause any undue stress or negative emotional responses. Sixth, the participants were given the right to withdraw from the study at any given time, whether it was at the beginning, during the interview, or even after the interview before the responses are included in the data analysis scripts.

Seventh, any deceptive practices were avoided during the study, such as creation of data and results. As such, the researcher ensured that data collected from the respondents, and the data received was subjected to analysis without omission or alterations. Additionally, the outcomes were presented and reported as obtained in order to aid an objective interpretation and conclusion. Finally, the researcher made sure that the skills needed for data analysis were learned adequately before the study was undertaken, to understand the scope and methodologies suitable for the study. Specifically, those skills included statistical analysis using the SPSS software program, inferential statistics methods, determining confidence intervals and alpha values, determining R-values, and completing ANOVA tests. Consultations were made with the supervisor on the best approaches as the study progressed and this improved the credibility of the outcomes. To reduce researcher bias when engaging in the qualitative aspects of the study, a reflective journaling method was used. Reflecting on personal biases in relation to the topics of the study as well as identifying expectations for the outcomes that could potentially influence the

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<sup>210</sup> Hannah Farrimond, *Doing Ethical Research* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

interpretations of qualitative results. This method helps to uncover unconscious biases so that a researcher can better guard against their influence on the interpretation of qualitative data.<sup>211</sup> To ensure that the themes found were, in fact, accurate, the researcher went back to reread the full data set to determine whether the themes reflecting the data appropriately. During this rereading, the researcher also looked for outlier evidence that might challenge specific interpretations or themes that had been identified.<sup>212</sup> These steps were used to evaluate the accuracy of themes and to revise them as necessary.

### 3.4 Chapter Summary

The chapter has discussed numerous concepts that are fundamental when undertaking a study of this nature. First, it has highlighted the specific philosophical stances adopted to inform the overall methodology, which was mixed in nature, and the precise designs, which were both qualitative and quantitative. Additionally, the chapter has provided the approaches adopted to select a study sample from the specific population targeted. Moreover, it has been offered a discussion on the sample size, as well as the nature and sources of data. Efforts were made to explain the measures of collecting and analyzing data, as well as data triangulation to measure accuracy, validity, and reliability, respectively. Besides, the chapter has offered a discussion on data analysis, merits and demerits, as well as limitations of the chosen methodology. Finally, a detailed discussion on the ethical guidelines followed has also been provided. The next chapter analyzes and presents the results from the data collected.

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<sup>211</sup> Kathleen B. deMarrais, *Inside Stories: Qualitative Research Reflections* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 169-174.

<sup>212</sup> Sharon M. Ravitch and Nicole Mittenfelner Carl, *Qualitative Research: Bridging the Conceptual, Theoretical, and Methodological* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2016), 87-91.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Results Presentation**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter is a presentation of the outcomes of both interviews and surveys. It helps the researcher to form a basis on which findings will be examined in light of the research questions and answers obtained.

#### **4.2 Interview Results**

The first section of the results is a presentation of the outcomes from the interviews that were conducted on 15 youth members, administering ten questions to them. From the outcomes of the interview, numerous themes emerged, based on the thematic analysis approach that was adopted as presented in Appendix E. In summary, the themes that were defined from the numerous observations include: impact of technology, leadership influence, influence from parents, sense of belonging, and effectiveness of youth ministry, as explained below.

##### **4.2.1 Impact of Technology**

Technology as a theme emerged in several questions of the interview. When asking the interviewees to state their opinions as to why there is a massive youth decline in the church, among the issues they raised included technology. For instance, Respondent 2 (R2) says that “*in the modern days, technology has provided alternative platforms of learning the word of God*”. It was clear from the interviews that young people have resorted to online platforms, often with an excuse that they are learning the word of God, while deliberately avoiding church services. Seeking to determine the approaches in which youth decline in church attendance can be addressed, R6 indicated that, “*using technology in church services*”. This implies that if the technology is adopted as a way of promoting youth ministry, young people can be attracted to



the church. In the context of youth program development, technology also features as a fundamental issue that should be considered. For example, R1 states that *“adopting technological advancements is a better way of developing programs that are youth friendly.”* Moreover, R5 indicated that *“modernity should be embraced instead of traditional approaches.”* R15 also indicated that *“Resorting to bad technology”* can be one of the factors keeping the youth away from the church, as R5 also commented that, *“Modern technology exposing the youth to other sites that are not Godly”*. Also, on giving recommendations as to what can be an approach to improve youth attendance in church, R15 indicated that *“consideration of technology as a platform to improve youth ministry can be a better solution”*.

#### **4.2.2 Leadership Influence**

The second theme that emerged in most of the interview questions was leadership influence, ranging from parents to church pastors and other leaders, respectively. For instance, in a matter where interviewees were required to indicate their views concerning the leadership in church departments and whether they were really working, R1 reported that, *“The departments to some extent are meeting their goals, although they have limitations. They lack proper representation of all groups in the church since the youth leaders are not in all departments”*. From this response, it is demonstrated that the leadership problem in the church starts from sidelining the young people in most church committees. This act does not allow young people the opportunity to grow leadership traits and more often puts them off from the church. Similarly, while deliberating on the importance of youth programs in the church, R4 said that *“it is an opportunity to develop leadership among the youth and prepare them to take over the church leadership in future”*. Moreover, R3 mentioned that *“leadership in the church is not favorable”*. Additionally, R3 further suggested that one of the ways to improve youth attendance

is through enhancement of leadership among the youth, and particularly the respondent said, “R3. *Promoting youth leadership is a good strategy for youth church attendance improvement*”. R15 also mentioned that “*it is through being part of the committees*” while R11 said that young people “*should be given opportunities to preach and grow in the youth ministry and future leaders and ultimately the future of the church*”. Church leadership was also viewed from being bad role models and therefore causing the youth to have negative attitudes church attendance. Finally, R10 said that “*the church leadership should be open to new ideas since the world is constantly changing and the youth are exposed to such trends that constantly change the way they think and behave*”.

#### **4.2.3 Influence from Parents**

Closely related to leadership was influenced by parents; this emerged as a separate theme owing to the individual responsibility parents have, especially in family ministry, to enhance Christian values and reasons why children should follow Jesus Christ. However, it is important to note that the youths can only appreciate this if they are brought up in the church and given wise counsel from tender ages. For instance, on the identification of factors that have led to the looming decline in church attendance by the youth, R6 noted that “*Youth have no relationship with Jesus since they have not been taught about Jesus by parents.*” These observation places blame on parents for failing their God-given responsibilities. Secondly, R8 emphasized that the youth are these days not worried about attending church since “*there are no consequences from parents if I do not attend church.*” This is a demonstration of the modern family that does not emphasis on the need to be in church as a social obligation and duty of loving God. Other responses obtained indicated that, R14 parents can achieve good morals among their children by, “*teaching the youth the reasons why they should attend church*” and also R15 said that “*the*

*parents should be role models*”, and that church should not be seen as an avenue to please parents as mentioned by R15. Also, R12 indicated that youth ministry is failing due to “*lack of sessions at the family level to enhance youth ministry*”. These assertions were further supported by other respondents, especially when R13 mentioned that “*Parents not being involved in teaching the youth about Jesus*” and R14 also indicated that parents are “*not bringing children to the church when they are at teenage*” respectively.

#### **4.2.4 Sense of Belonging**

Another important theme that emerged from the thematic analysis map presented as appendix E is a sense of belonging among the youth where they identify themselves with the Church right from a tender age. While asking the respondents to mention how important they thought youth programs are, they mentioned that they enhance a sense of belonging since “*they help young people to come together,*” as mentioned by R3. Additionally, R1 says that “*youth programs are important and they determine the future of a church*”, while R2 noted that “*without youth programs, there is no church*”. As opined by R7, “*the youth in the Church is interested in the events and programs that are typically organized for the benefit of the Youth program. However, the approach of organizing such events does not involve the youth, making them lose the sense of belonging*”. According to the interview results, when youth are not involved, they consider the Church as not being relevant in society.

#### **4.2.5 Effectiveness of Youth Ministry**

According to the background to the study, it was clearly stated that youth ministry is an indispensable gathering of professing believers in Christ who, under leadership, are gathered to establish a foundation for building Christian character, morals, values, and behaviors in young people. What the modern trends are suggesting is that young people are increasingly going away

from the church, meaning that their relationship with Jesus is worsening over time. The interview results revealed that there are no church programs designed to build young pastors, which is the basis of youth ministry. However, according to R1, where such programs are in place, they are instituted on the youth since the youth is not involved in designing the programs, and the respondent said, *“I do not know the initial aims of the program as the youth was not involved.”* This makes them think that the church is boring, according to R12, and that it does not have value in modern society, as mentioned by R7. Moreover, it was established that the young people have really lost interest in the church, they feel not part of the church, they consider church doctrines as behind the times and old-fashioned, and that *“the youth ministry in the modern days does not really convince the youth why they should attend church”* as maintained by R10. While asked to provide recommendations on what should be done to improve church attendance among the youth and promote the growth of youth ministry, R11 said that “there should be proper spiritual formation and nourishment.” These should be supported by having leadership that is not hypocritical, giving the young people opportunities to lead and express their views, providing the young people, being respected from the elders, and *“using modern approaches of preaching and ministering”* according to R9.

#### **4.3 Survey Results**

The questionnaire that was used in this study contained closed-ended questions that made it possible for quantification of results for analysis using SPSS as earlier proposed. Tables, figures, and Likert Scales have been used to present the outcomes. However, the presentation has been classified into sections covering background information, youth views, the importance of

youth to the church, generational differences in the church, and factors affecting youth growth and attendance in the church.

#### **4.3.1 Background Information**

Under background information, the researcher focused on preliminary details such as response rate obtained, respondents' age, duration of church attendance, foundations of attending the church, youth service events attendance, and skipping of church service as provided below.

##### *4.3.1.1 Response Rate*

Since the researcher focused on 60 youth members to fill in the questionnaires, it was important to find out if the targeted number of respondents was achieved; this is summarized in table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Response Rate

Number of questionnaires issued	Number of questionnaires returned	Response rate
60	45	75%

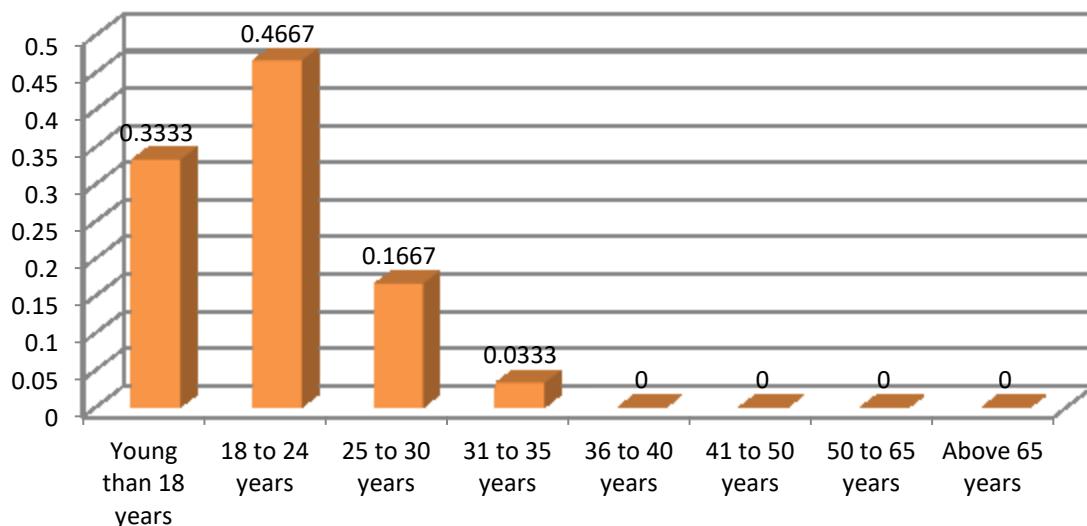
Source: (Survey Data, 2019)

According to the study's responses, during the first survey, 60 instruments were successfully returned, but only 45 were fully completed to be used for data analysis, marking a 75% response rate. However, according to the researcher, this is significantly attributed to the approach used in data collection. For instance, after sampling was done, every member was orally explained to the purpose of the study and asked if they consented to be involved in the study. In this regard, questionnaires were issued to those who agreed to be part of the study only, however, all participants who decided to take part in the study did not always fully complete all of the information; therefore those surveys were not used in the data analysis process.

Additionally, based on the fact that the study's data collection process took a total of 4 weeks, there was sufficient time to collect the questionnaires from the respondents. Moreover, based on the relationship between the youth and the researcher where confidentiality was assured of and maintained, this might have significantly contributed to a higher response rate. First, the study can be said to be a reasonable success, having attained a 75% rate of response for the surveys and a 100% response rate for the interviews. I say this because, in survey research, the survey response rate is the number of people who answered the survey divided by the number of people you sent the survey to, then multiply that number by 100, because it usually is expressed in percentage.

#### *4.3.1.2 Respondents' Age*

Second, in background information, it was necessary for the determination of the respondents' age brackets, and results are provided in the figure that follows.



*Figure 4.1: Respondents' Age*

From obtained feedback, it was clear that the researcher focused on individuals whose ages ranged from less than 18 years to 24 years. Traditionally, these are the ages considered as a

youth by many churches globally, and according to the adopted definition of youth in this study, it involved those between 18 to 24 years. Results show that the majority of the respondents were between 18 to 24 years represented by 46.67%, followed by those below 18 years at 33.33%, then those between 25 to 30 years at 16.67%, and finally those between 31 to 35 years at 3.33%. There were no respondents above 35 years, as seen in figure 4.1 above.

#### 4.3.1.3 Duration of Church Attendance

It was essential to find out how long the young people have been attending the church where they worshiped. The results are also provided in figure 4.2 below.

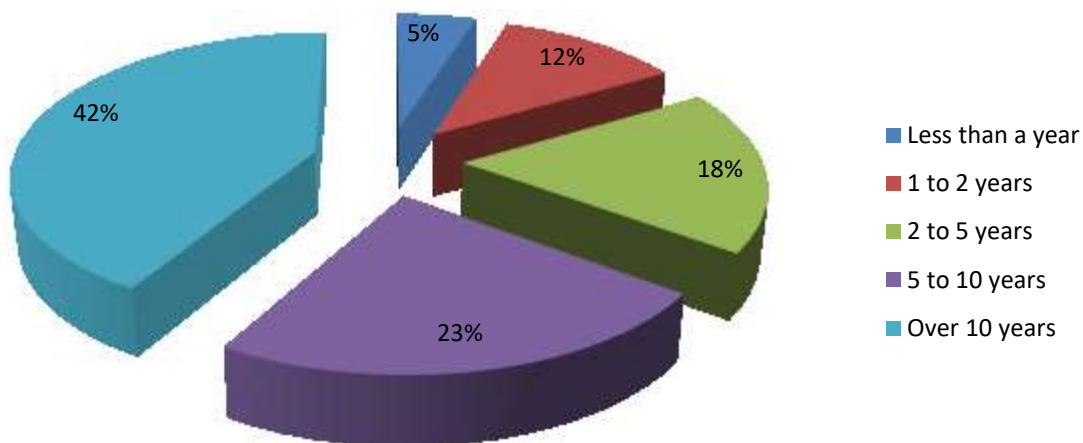


Figure 4.2: Duration of Church Attendance

Source: (Survey Data, 2019)

Results indicated that most of the youth who participated in the survey had attended the church for over ten years is 41.67%, while about 5% had participated in the church for less than a year. Between 1 to 2 years, they were found to be 11.67%, those between 2 to 5 years were 18.33%, and 23.33% reported to have been members for a period of between 5 to 10 years as observed in figure 4.2. Ideally, results show that there are youths who have not been members of

the church because there was a difference between their ages and duration of church attendance, respectively.

#### *4.3.1.4 Foundation for Attending Church*

The researcher sought to determine the motivations that led to the youth's decisions to start attending the church, and results are provided in table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Foundations for Attending Church

Motivations for Church Attendance	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
I am a founding member of the church	0	0.00	0.00
I was here during its early beginnings	1	2.22	2.22
This is my parents' local church	30	66.67	68.89
Someone referred me to this church	14	31.11	100.00
I saw it while walking past and walked in	0	0.00	100.00
Total	45	100.00	

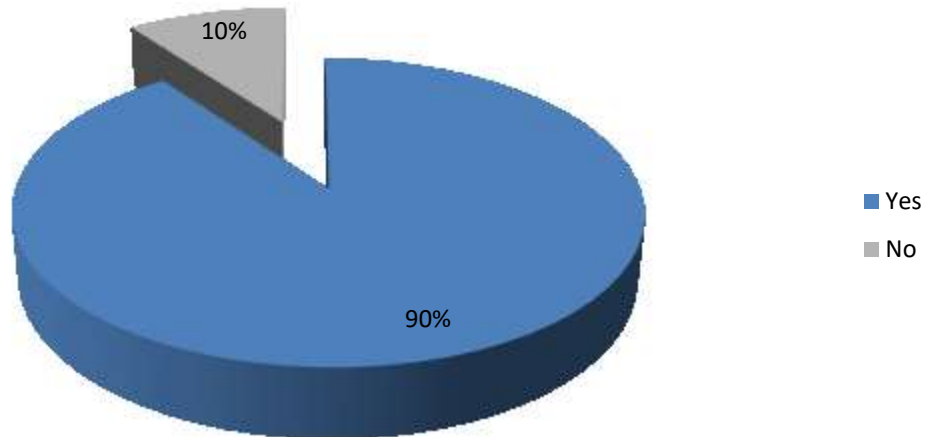
Source: (Survey Data, 2019)

Table 4.2 elaborates that most of the youth attend the specific church because their parents have been going to the same church, represented by 66.67% of the population. The second group of youths at 31.11% reported to have been referred to the church by others; 0% said they happened to see the church while walking around the area, and 2.22% indicated that they were at the church during its early days. These results show that the most significantly influence of young people to attend church is parents, who are the primary builders of youth ministry, according to the reviewed models and theological foundations, respectively.



#### 4.3.1.5 Youth Service Events

The study sought to find out if the respondents have ever attended a youth church service or any church function that was explicitly geared towards catering to the needs of the youth, and the responses obtained have been presented in the figure below.



*Figure 4.3: Youth Church Service*

Source: (Survey Data, 2019)

The results, as shown in figure 4.3, demonstrate that 90% of the youth sampled have previously participated in activities intended for the youth or aimed at catering to the youth needs in their church attendance history. However, 10% said that they have never attended youth service and that they have mainly been attending main church activities only. The results, therefore, demonstrate that the majority of young people in the church from the survey have been given an opportunity of being involved in the youth ministry.

#### 4.3.1.6 Skipped Church Sessions

Further, the researcher was determined to establish the sampled if any ever skipped church services since they started attending church in their lifetime. The results have been presented in table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3: Skipped Church Session Before

Skipped church session before	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Yes	45	100.00	100.00
No	0	0.00	
Total	45	100.00	

Source: (Survey Data, 2019)

Results presented in table 4.3 above shows that all the youth members that were sampled for the survey had skipped church sessions before since they started to attend the particular church they were going at the moment. These outcomes show a youth population that does not find anything wrong in skipping a church session. Despite the findings, the study questions did not focus on finding the frequency of skipping church service as it was not within the scope of the research. Essentially, the findings of the background information indicates that the youth that was sampled is accurate representation of the population targeted in this study based on their age, duration of attending the church, having an understanding of what youth services are in the church, and having experienced moments where they have skipped church sessions as the reasons for this will significantly inform the study.

### 4.3.2 Youth Views

The second section of the questionnaire was to ask the youth to give their views on general issues as far as a youth ministry is concerned. The section's questions have been analyzed and presented in the sub-sections below. The questions required the respondents to present their views in a Likert Scale of 5 points, ranging from strongly disagree to agree strongly.

#### 4.3.2.1 Feelings of Belonging

The study sought to find out if the young people feel comfortable and spiritually catered for whenever they attend a church service and therefore, the questions wanted them to agree or disagree on a Likert scale. The responses are presented in figure 4.4 below.

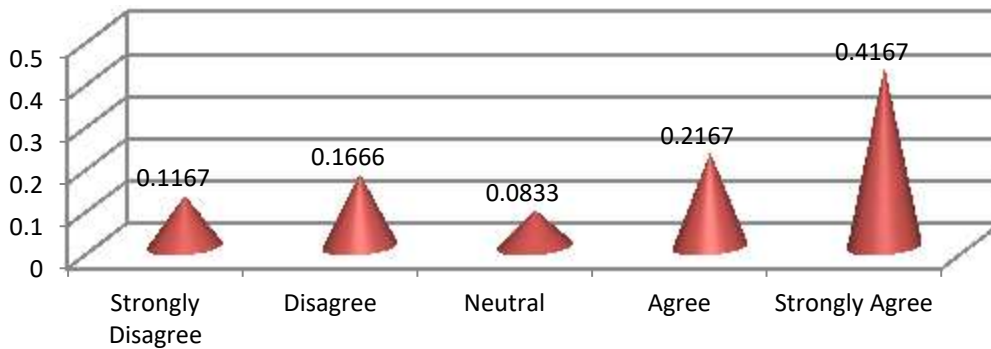


Figure 4.4: Feelings of Belonging

Source: (Survey Data, 2019)

Results obtained show that many young people in the church agree that they feel part and parcel of the faithful, given that 21.67% agreed to this, while 41.67% strongly agreed to make it a total of 63.34%. It is only 8.33% who remained neutral to this question, as 11.67% strongly disagreed, and another 16.66% disagreed, respectively.

#### 4.3.2.2 Interesting Youth Events

The questionnaire also provided to the respondents a statement that read, “The church always has events that I find interesting.” The Likert Scale results are provided in figure 4.5 below.

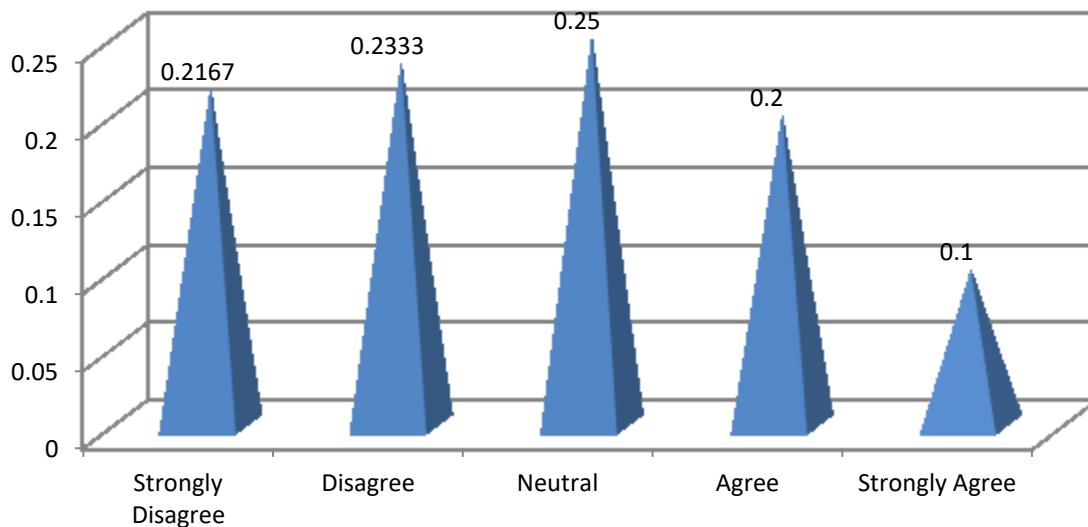


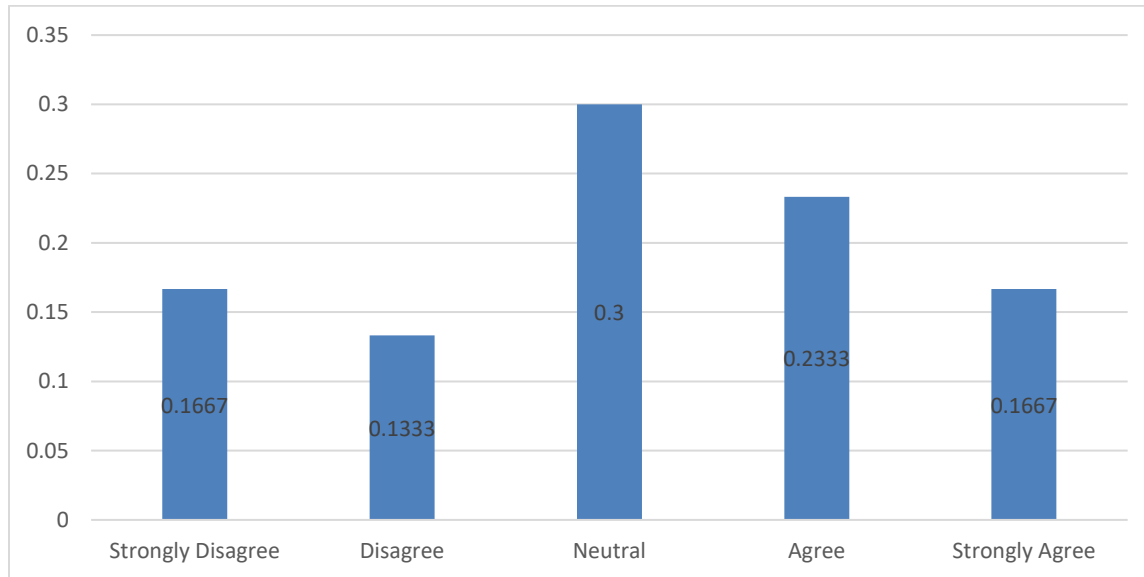
Figure 4.5: Interesting Youth Events

Source: (Survey Data, 2019)

The outcomes in figure 4.5 are a demonstration that the youth were found to be of mixed reactions as far as the church organizing captivating events for them was concerned. Particularly, 21.67% strongly disagreed with this assertion, while 23.33% disagreed, making it a cumulative percentage of 45% who refuted this claim, while 25% remained neutral. As a result, only 20% agreed with another 10% strongly agreeing, implying that a total of 30% found youth activities organized by the church to be interesting.

#### 4.3.2.3 Pleasing Parents

The study sought to find out if the youth really attended church service as a duty or just an approach of pleasing their parents. Outcomes are given in figure 4.6 as a Likert Scale.



*Figure 4.6: Pleasing Parents*

Source: (Survey Data, 2019)

As indicated in figure 4.6, a total of 30% remained neutral to this question. Out of the remaining respondents, 23.33% agreed, and 16.67% agreed that they attend church primarily as a way of pleasing their parents. This is a cumulative percentage of 40%, while 16.67% strongly disagreed as another 13.33% disagreed with this claim, making it a total of 30%, respectively.

#### 4.3.2.4 Involving Youth in Church Administration

It was considered important to find out from the young people what they felt concerning the church involving them in administration affairs. The youth's responses are presented in figure 4.7 below.

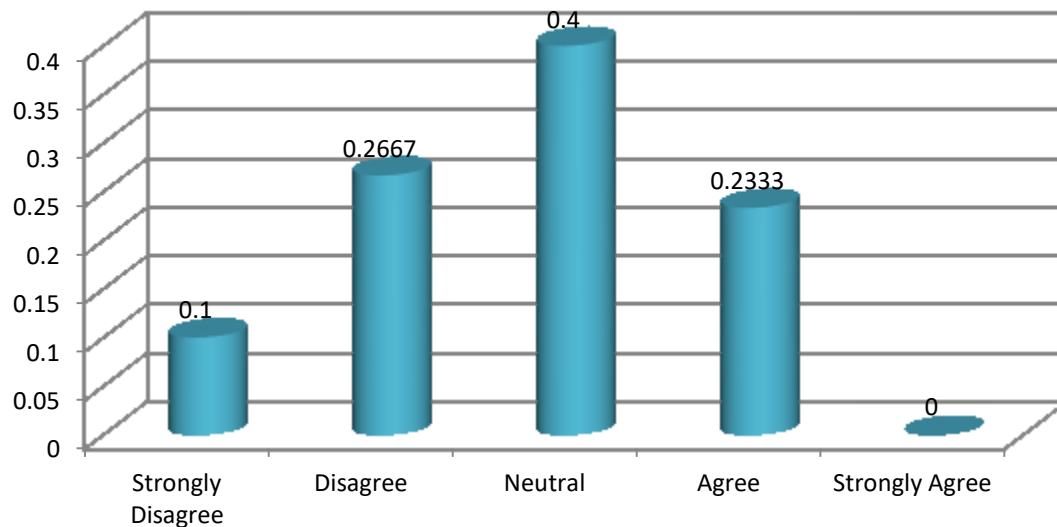


Figure 4.7: Involving Youth in Church Administration

Source: (Survey Data, 2019)

Figure 4.7 clearly indicates that a total of 36.67% of the youth strongly believe that church leadership does not involve them in administration matters. A total of 40% remained neutral to this question, while only 23.33% believed that they are adequately involved in church administration issues. These findings show a huge gap since only 23.33% are satisfied on the level to which they are involved in church matters.

#### 4.3.2.5 Taking the Youth Seriously

Another statement that the youth were presented with was that “the youth in the church are taken seriously.” In this statement, the Likert Scale responses obtained have been presented in figure 4.8 below.

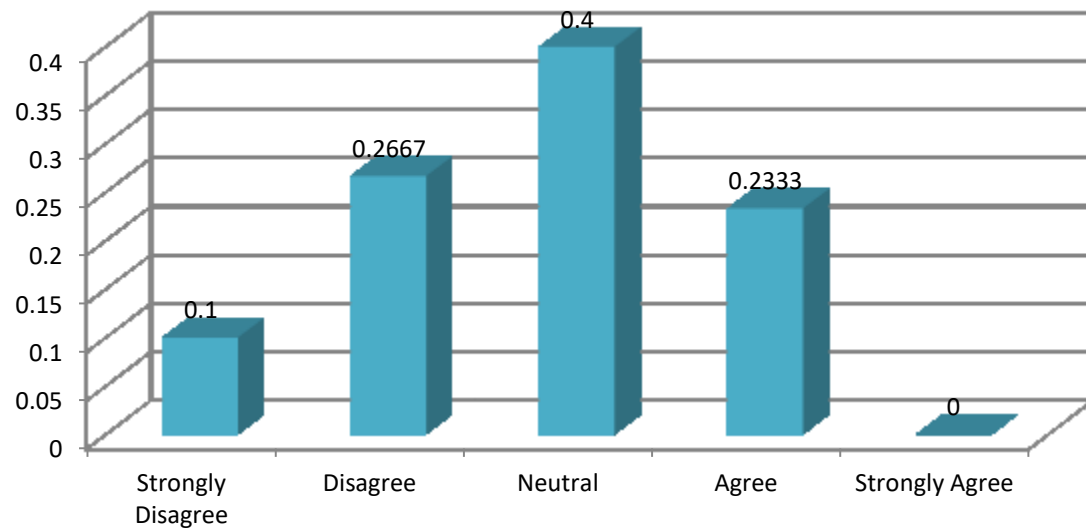


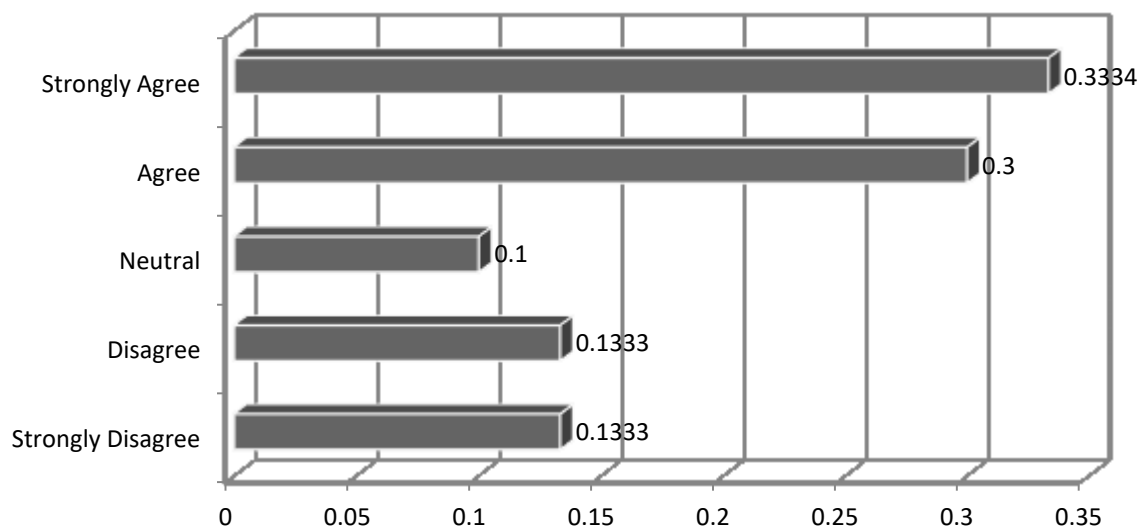
Figure 4.8: Taking Youth Seriously

Source: (Survey Data, 2019)

Results given in figure 4.8 have corresponded to those provided in figure 4.7, indicating that the youth groups should be taken seriously with leadership. Basically, a total of 36.67% disputed the claim, 40% remained neutral, and only 23.33% agreed that they are taken seriously.

#### 4.3.2.6 Legacy of the Church

It was also considered imperative to find out if the youth understood their responsibility to keep the legacy going. As such, the study presented a statement which read, “The youth have a responsibility to keep the legacy of the church going”, and the following figure gives the summary of the feedback obtained on this statement in a Likert Scale.



*Figure 4.9: Keeping Church Legacy Going*

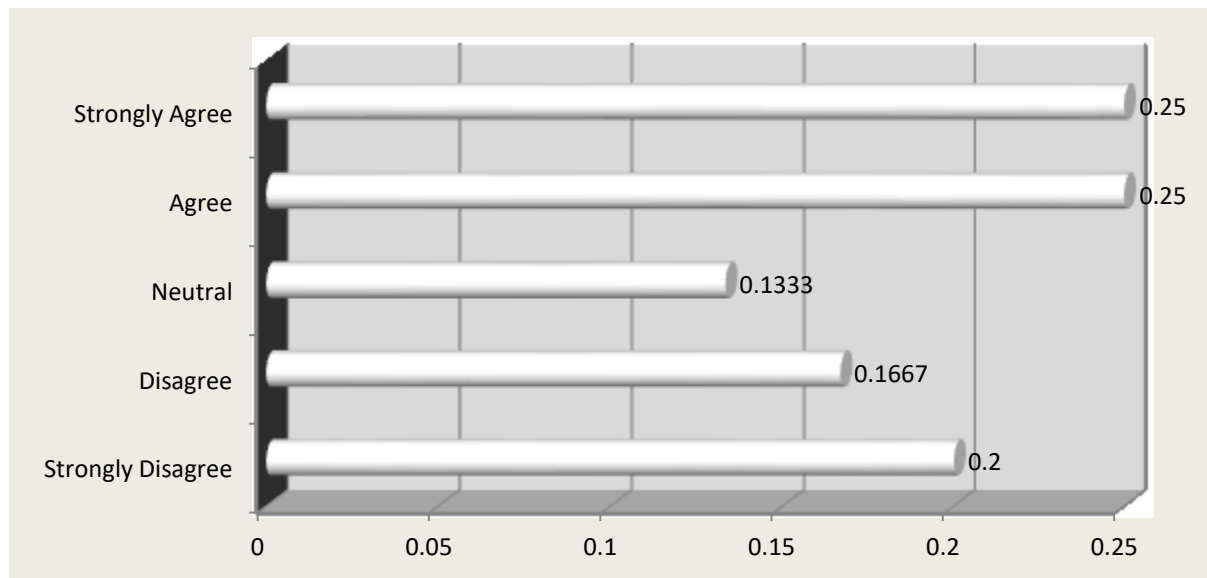
Source: (Survey Data, 2019)

Results obtained demonstrated that 33.34 % strongly agree, and another 30% agree that they have a duty to keep the church’s legacy going, making it a total of 63.34%. Nevertheless, a total of 26.66% refuted this claim as 10% remained neutral, respectively.



#### 4.3.2.7 Running of the Church

The researcher also asked the respondents to state their views on whether they agree with the manner in which their church is being run. They were also required to state their opinions in a 5-point Likert Scale whose responses are presented in the figure below.



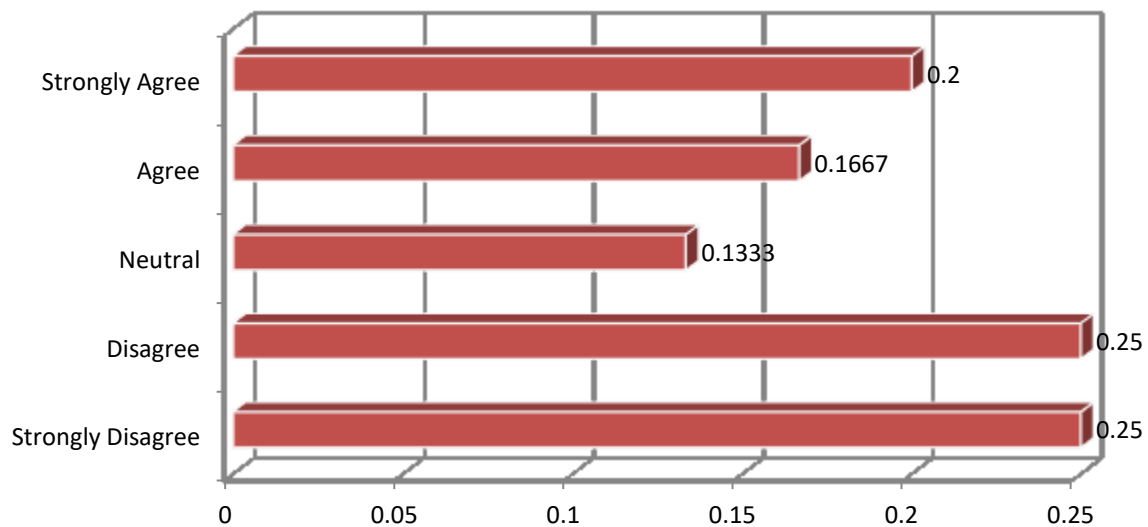
*Figure 4.10: Running the Church*

Source: (Survey Data, 2019)

Results obtained show that a total of 50% of the youth do not approve the manner in which the church is run. Although 13.33% remained neutral to this question, a total of 36.67% refuted the claim, which means that they are satisfied with the manner in which the church is run.

#### 4.3.2.8 Inter-generational Communication in the Church

The fundamental goal in this question was to establish if there was adequate inter-generational communication in the church. Consequently, the views obtained have been summarized and presented in figure 4.11 below.



*Figure 4.11: Inter-generational Communication*

Source: (Survey Data, 2019)

The outcomes indicate that indeed, it is only 36.67% of the youth who agree that there is adequate inter-generational communication in the church, while 50% did not agree to this statement as 13.33% remained neutral, as shown in figure 4.11 above.

#### 4.3.2.9 There should be a Specific Youth Service

The study further sought to find out if the youth believed that they should have services specifically tailored for the youth. The results are analyzed and presented below.

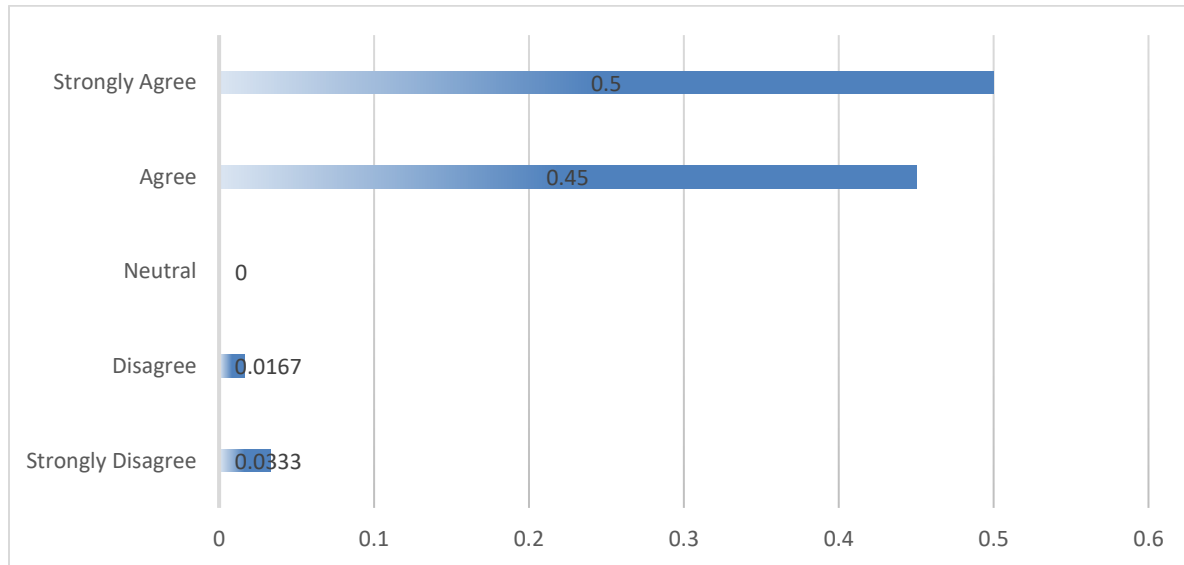


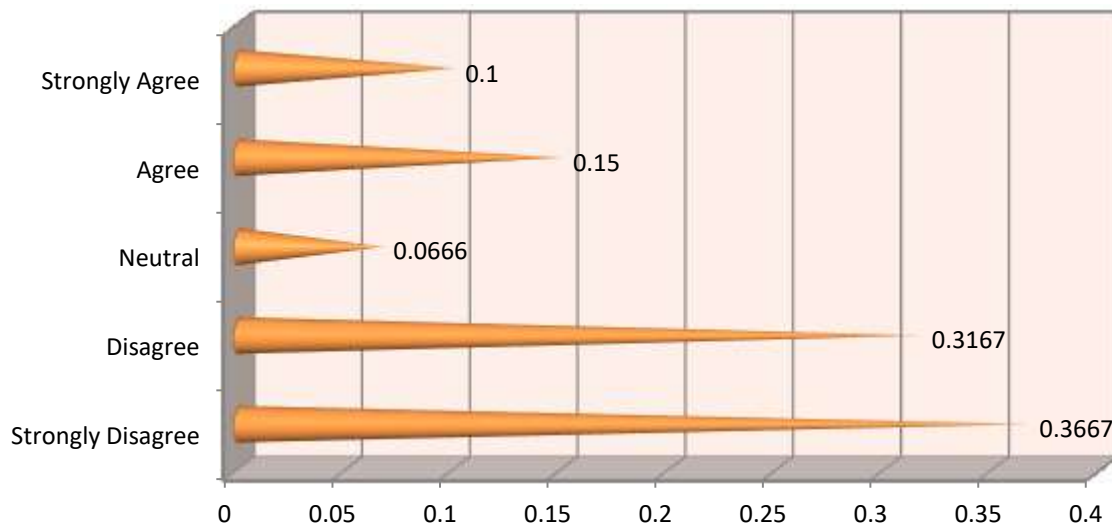
Figure 4.12: Specific Youth Service

Source: (Survey Data, 2019)

While seeking to find out if the youth would approve a specific youth service tailored for their needs, a total of 5% did not agree to this statement, while 95% of the population approved the report. The results, as shown in figure 4.12, are a massive support of having a service for the youth only.

#### 4.3.2.10 Seeking Opportunities for Involvement

With an effort to further examine failure to involve the youth in leadership on church administration, the youth were asked if they thought that they had a responsibility to look for opportunities of being involved in church. They were allowed to give their feedback on a five-point Likert Scale, and the answers have been analyzed and presented in figure 4.13 below.



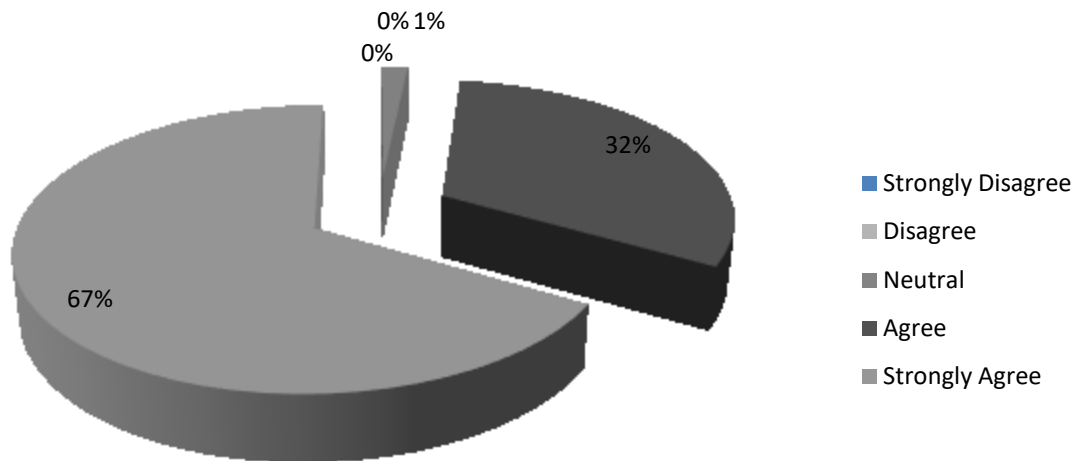
*Figure 4.13: Seeking Involvement Opportunities*

Source: (Survey Data, 2019)

Obtained results demonstrated that the majority of the youth do not support the fact they should personally seek to be involved in the church but rather be given such opportunities, as shown in figure 4.13 above. A total of 68.34% were for the opinion that they should be given opportunities, while only 25% said that they have the responsibility of seeking those opportunities, with 6.66% remained neutral to the statement.

#### *4.3.2.11 Future of Church Dependent on the Youth*

Shifting focus from church administration, leadership, and youth involvement, the researcher sought to find out the perception of the youth on the fact that the future of the church is dependent on the youth. Obtained feedback is provided in figure 4.14 below.



*Figure 4.14: Future of Church Dependent on the Youth*

Source: (Survey Data, 2019)

On the concept of the church's future being dependent on the youth, there are no respondents who disputed this claim. Instead, 1.66% remained neutral to this question as the remaining 98.34% supported it, indicating that they are incredibly aware that they determine the future of the church.

#### 4.3.2.12 Role of Pastor to Maintain Youth in Church

Seeking to establish if the pastor has any role in maintaining the youth in the church according to the respondents' views, the answers provided have been analyzed and presented below.

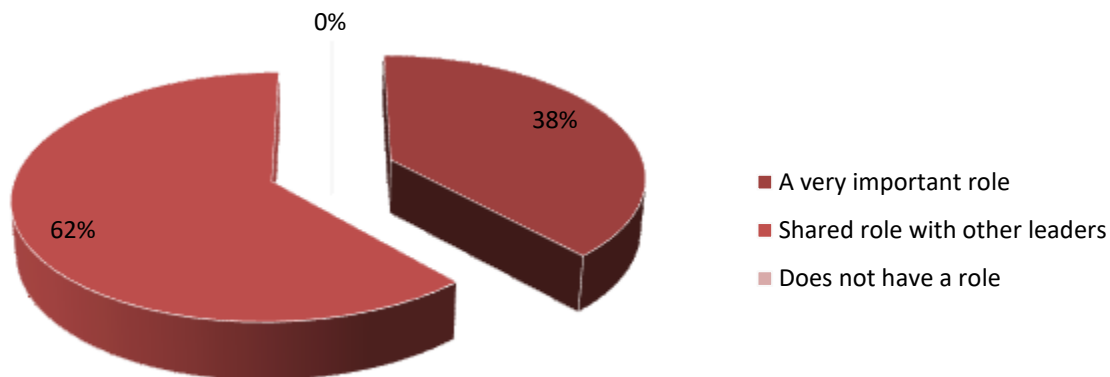


Figure 4.15: Role of Pastor to Maintain Youth in the Church

Source: (Survey Data, 2019)

The respondents indicated that the pastor has a very significant role supported by 38.33%, while 61.67% showed that although the pastor has a role, it is shared with other leaders and therefore, cannot be wholly responsible alone. There are no respondents who indicated that the pastor does not have a role, as shown in figure 4.15 above.

#### 4.3.2.13 Starting a Youth Program

The researcher also asked the youth if they would be willing to start a youth program that caters to the needs of the youth in the church, and their responses are summarized in table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4: Starting a Youth Program

Starting a Youth Program	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Yes	45	100.00	100%
No	0	0.00	
Total	45	100.00	

Source: (Survey Data, 2019)

The analyzed results on table 4.4 demonstrate that all the respondents agreed to the fact that if they are given an opportunity, they can start a program intended to meet the youth's needs in the church as 100% supported this. Results in this section demonstrate a gap in the church's leadership since the respondents portray a picture showing they are never involved in planning the youth activities. This is ideal because the findings have indicated that very few individuals are satisfied with the youth events. Yet, they indicate that if they are given opportunities, they can start youth cooperative programs.

### 4.3.3 Importance of Youth to the Church

Another objective pursued by the researcher was to establish the relevance of the youth to the church according to their perspectives. There were several questions that were asked, which were supposed to be rated in a five-point Likert Scale. In total, the questionnaire contained three questions that needed responses that have been analyzed and presented in table 4.5.

An overall, focus was put on Leadership aspects, continuity of the church, administration responsibilities, and the needs of the youth in general.

Table 4.5: Importance of Youth to the Church

Importance of the youth in the church	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
Ministering to the youth is an essential part of the administration of the church and ignoring it is bound to lead to the downfall of the church	68.33	31.67	0.00	0.00	0.00
The continuity of the church is very dependent on the extent to which the youth are involved in the church and given leadership opportunities	68.33	31.67	0.00	0.00	0.00
No church can prosper without paying due attention to the needs of the youth who are in the church and asking for their input	63.33	28.33	5.00	3.33	0.00

Source: (Survey Data, 2019)

The outcomes have revealed that all the youth members understand that ministering to the youth is an imperative element of church administration and that ignoring them is a severe issue that can ultimately lead to the downfall of the church. This assertion was massively supported by 100% of the respondents as shown in table 4.5 above. Based on church continuity, a total of 100% also supported the fact that it is very dependent on the youth and that it depends on the extent to which they are involved in church matters by being given leadership opportunities and generally recognized as essential members to the church. Further, 63.33% and



28.33% strongly agreed and agreed respectively, to the fact that no church can prosper without paying special attention to the youth. A section of the youth represented by 5% remained neutral on this statement, while only 3.33% did not agree to the statement. Generally, results from the section have revealed that the youth are important to the church's future and that they also understand and believe in this concept.

#### 4.3.4 Generational Differences in the Church

It was also important to ascertain from the youth themselves, issues to do with generational differences, especially between them and the adults in modern times. The researcher used a total of five questions that have been analyzed based on the Likert Scale points from the findings and presented in table 4.6 below.

Table 4.6: Generational Differences in the Church

Generational differences in the church	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
The presence of the youth in a church pushes adults past their comfort and cynicism	16.67	16.67	16.67	23.33	26.67
Different generations need different methods and methodologies of church ministry	51.67	36.67	5.00	6.67	0.00
There is need to have youth pastors in every church	100.00	0	0.00	0.00	0.00

In the organization of a church, the youth are more of agents of ministry than objects of ministry	18.33	16.67	45.00	0.00	15.00
The youth should be involved in the development of youth programs in the church	73.33	26.67	0.00	0.00	0.00

Source: (Survey Data, 2019)

Findings obtained as presented in table 4.6 above designates that young people in the church are not sure what their presence in the church implies to the comfort of the adults since 16.67% strongly indicated that it pushes the adults past their satisfaction, supported by another 16.67% who also agreed. Still, a proportion of 16.67% again remained neutral. For those who were, for the contrary opinion, statistics show that they were 23.33% and 26.67% who disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively. In the context of different methodologies being needed, the study indicated that 51.67% strongly agreed as another group of 36.67% agreed, making it a total of 88.34% who supported the idea. However, 6.67% did not support this idea, with 5% remaining neutral.

Additionally, 100% of the youth were for the opinion that there is a need to have youth pastors in every church. There was a proportion of 18.33% and 16.67% who supported the fact that the youths are more of agents in the organization of the church than being seen as objects of the ministry, with 45% being neutral on this statement. Only 15% did not support the claim. Seeking to establish whether the youth should be involved in the development of church programs, the study found out that 73.33% supported this strongly, while 26.67% also recommended making it a total of 100% support.

### 4.3.5 Factors Influencing Youth Growth and Attendance

Specifically, the questionnaire contained statements that needed to be rated in the interest of finding out what the youth thought were the factors impacting their attendance and church growth. The responses obtained have also been presented in a Likert Scale, as shown in table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7: Factors Influencing Youth Growth and Attendance

Factors influencing youth growth and attendance in church	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
Parents play a significant role in influencing the extent to which the youth attend church consistently	83.33	11.67	0.00	0.00	0.00
Evoking a sense of belonging by the church is a critical part engendering church attendance by the youth	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
The church should liaise with other churches in the attempts to improve youth attendance levels	78.33	21.67	0.00	0.00	0.00
The status of youth attendance in church has real implications on the overall Christian faith	51.67	38.33	0.00	1.67	8.33

In church, the youth should have separate services distinct from the main service and the children's service	45.00	40.00	10.00	0.00	5.00
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Source: (Survey Data, 2019)

As can be observed from table 4.7, most of the youth in the modern church is for the opinion that indeed parents play a vital role in influencing them to attend church consistently, as a total of 100% supported this claim. First, these findings indicate that the reduced church attendance by the youth can be associated with failure from the parents. Second, results indicate that evoking a sense of belonging by the church is a critical part that engenders attendance by the youth also supported this claim.

Third, the outcomes have demonstrated that the church should put strategies in place to liaise with other churches to improve youth attendance, as 78.33% strongly supported this with another 21.67% agreeing. Fourth, it was established that the status of youth attendance in the church has real implications on the overall Christian faith, especially in the future supported by 51.67% strongly agreeing and 38.33% agreeing, while 8.33% strongly disagreed and 1.67% only disagreed respectively. Finally, the study noted that the youth should have a separate service that is distinct from adults and children, supported by 95%, although a section of 5% of the youth did not find this necessary.

#### **4.3.6 The Inferential Statistics**

The purpose of including inferential statistics in this project was to demonstrate the level of significance to which the outcomes from the survey could be relied upon and be applied in explaining the phenomenon that was investigated. In this case, tests were done based on a 95% degree of confidence, which implies an alpha value of 0.05. In this case, the primary analytical

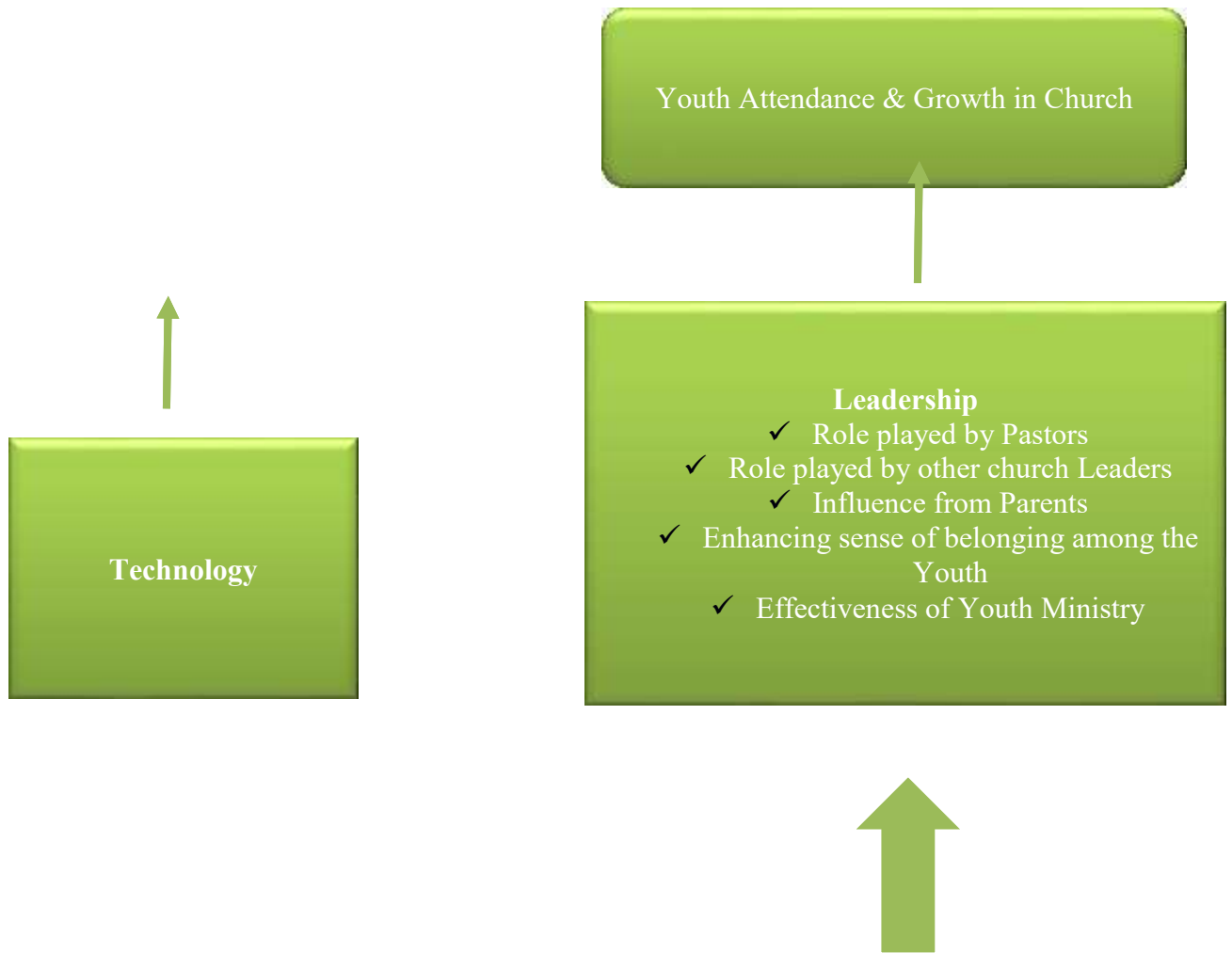
models that were done included determination of the model for R-value and the ANOVA tests, as shown below.

Table 4.8: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	.824 <sup>a</sup>	.679	.667	.3333
a. Predictors: (Constant), Technology, Leadership, Influence from Parents, Sense of Belonging, Effectiveness of Youth Ministry				
b. Independent Variable: Youth Attendance and Participation in Church				

Source: (Survey Data, 2019)

Results in table 4.8 provide a framework on which the overall results can be interpreted. Based on the correlation coefficient of R, which is 0.824 and R square, which is 0.679, it is implied that the factors above which are technology and leadership account for 67.90% impact on youth attendance in the church as they were directly measured from the study survey. Other facts, therefore, account for 32.10%, which are not included in the current study. It is important to note that influence from parents, sense of belonging, and effectiveness of youth ministry are subsets of leadership, as shown in the following diagram.



*Figure 4.16: Results Model Interpretation*

Source: (Survey Data, 2019)

From the association that has been deduced based on the model summary, the factors influencing youth participation, attendance and growth in the church can broadly be classified into leadership and technology as seen in figure 4.16 above. Moreover, these factors account for 67.90% implying that there are other factors accounting for 32.10% which were not within the scope of this study.

Table 4.9: The ANOVA

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	36.841	5	5.736	68.907	.002 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	21.953	15	0.362		
Total	58.794	20			
a. Independent Variable: Youth Attendance and Participation in Church					
b. Predictors: (Constant), Technology, Leadership, Influence from Parents, Sense of Belonging, Effectiveness of Youth Ministry					

Source: (Survey Data, 2019)

Results on table 4.9 above show that the obtained outcomes in survey data analysis for all the questions are 0.002 significant since the overall significance value is less than 0.05, which was the maximum alpha value expected for any results to be regarded as significance. Moreover, it shows that the relationship between technology, leadership, and youth church attendance is positive, meaning improving independent variables leads to an improvement of the dependent variable, respectively.

## 4.5 Chapter Summary

The chapter has provided a detailed presentation of outcomes obtained from both the interviews (qualitative data) and the survey (quantitative data), respectively. Precisely, the results have been organized according to the themes that emerged from the intervention design. A critical assessment of the intervention plan reveals that the fundamental questions that were sought to be answered included: establishing the factors that contribute to the decline of the youth church attendance and growth. Some of the common factors noted from the results include

poor leadership, technology influence, influence from parents, lack of sense of belonging, and having youth ministry in modern times that is not effective. Fundamentally, these were the main themes that emerged from the thematic analysis map, but there are other sub-themes that supported these claims, as seen in Appendix D. The second question according to the intervention plan was to establish the views of the youth concerning the modern leadership, in which case the outcomes have shown that leadership does not involve young people and does not take into consideration their views and preferences. Moreover, the intervention design aimed at establishing the influence of technology in shaping the perception of the youth concerning the church in their lives, and it has been established that the youth think that church is not relevant in modern society. Ideally, it can be said that the intervention plan has been successfully implemented as planned and has yielded the anticipated results. The chapter that follows will detail the comparison of the results to the reviewed literature (discussion) and conclusions, before offering recommendations.



## **Chapter Five**

### **Conclusions**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter will provide a summary of the findings compared to the literature that was reviewed, followed by conclusions and recommendations, respectively.

#### **5.2 Comparing Results with Literature**

The current study narrows down its themes into leadership in the church, technology influence, role modeling from parents, sense of belonging, and effectiveness of youth ministry. However, there are other themes that emerged, which collectively support the reason why the young people's attendance in the church has declined. Mainly, these findings have greatly supported the literature reviewed, especially from past scholars, on the topic. For example, the study established that attendance is greatly influenced by leadership, culture, perceptions, and conflict of interests, especially between the youth and older people. The same assertions were observed in a study by John Vaughan, as well.<sup>213</sup> According to the views of the youth from both the interviews and survey, it was revealed that the majority think that the old people consider them as evil when they are not, and that old ways of worship do not really reflect their current needs and preferences, which is also noted by S. Weber in her study.<sup>214</sup>

According to Merwe Michelle and other authors, the fact that church attendance, especially among the youth, is on the decline globally cannot be understated.<sup>215</sup> Similarly, the current study observes that indeed, there are general trends in which the young people are

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<sup>213</sup> Vaughan, "Church Growth Today, Resources."

<sup>214</sup> Weber, "Decolonizing Youth Ministry Models?" 1-10.

<sup>215</sup> Merwe Michelle et al., "Getting Young Adults Back to Church," 1-12.

deliberately avoiding church attendance because of several reasons that are either individual or common. While collecting views from the youth, they revealed that the reasons why they are not interested in the church and no longer feel motivated to attend services are due to lack of innovative ways of worshipping, as echoed by Harriet Sherwood in the reviewed literature.<sup>216</sup> Seeking to improve innovativeness in worship, the young people were suggesting the adoption of modern approaches and technology in general, as indicated by Harriet Sherwood.<sup>217</sup> However, the findings showed that modern approaches (technology) had a devastating impact on the lives of young people in terms of teaching them bad behaviors and practices.

Despite the observations above, Vitisia Virginia seems to disagree with the findings and indicates that technology can be a productive and enriching approach that can improve youth church attendance if well utilized.<sup>218</sup> Nonetheless, ensuring that technology is used responsibly by the young people is a matter of concern, given that they have access to the internet, even without the supervision of parents or church leaders. The worse for modern church attendance has nevertheless been made worse due to other forces that should be sought to be addressed before the mentioning of church youth attendance as established by Jan Jenssen.<sup>219</sup> Such factors include, although, they are not limited to, evangelism, pastoral leadership, organizing, planning, goals and visions, cultural relevance and openness, and scriptural authority.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Sherwood, "Literal Interpretation of the Bible."

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Virginia, "Influence of Modernization on Youth Church Attendance," 1-43.

<sup>219</sup> Jenssen, "Inspirational Sources for Church Development," 1-26.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

The modern decline trends in almost all churches and all regions are matters of great concern. According to the study findings, these trends should be worrying because they impact the future of the church negatively. Moreover, it has been established from the literature that decline in attendance can best be explained as lack of engagement in the church, in which the young generation is not involved in matters of decision making, planning, and youth leadership in addition to pastoring in the church.<sup>221</sup> In some situations, as revealed in the current study, aspects of societal trends and perceptions from the aged people to the young people can be contributive to the overall disengagement of the youth in church affairs.

As a matter of essence, the current study noted that when youth programs are prepared in the church, they certainly are not involved, or even asked about their views, to design a program that is tailored and meets the needs that are specific to the youth. When such perceptions and character are demonstrated to the young people, it perpetuates in them a character that will also in future, not appreciate the youth in the church. The young people consequently begin to withdraw from the older adults in numerous other issues, such as being outdated, rigid, and having old philosophies and theological assertions. Indeed, these outcomes are in agreement with the literature that was previously reviewed.<sup>222</sup> This is seen as a lack of youth involvement in church activities, especially those designed to meet their specific needs and preferences.<sup>223</sup>

Another important observation from the outcomes of the study is based on the general church leadership, which is founded on the differences between the aged and the young people, in terms of how they view how things should be done. While reprimanding the youth for certain

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<sup>221</sup> Conrad, "Church Leaders Speak Up."

<sup>222</sup> Barna Online, "The State of the Church in 2016."

<sup>223</sup> Bradley "25 Church Growth Strategies."

positions, the old people tend to make lack of participation look evil so that they can discourage the youth and keep them from such activities. Unfortunately, such approaches to some extent work in a retrogressive manner, since some youth members decide to flee the church altogether. This works against the premises of the youth ministry, which instead should focus on the facets of attracting more and more young people to Christ, as opposed to discouraging people from Him.

Mainly, while focusing on the youth programs, as revealed in the study findings, the main point of concern should be founded on the identification of the relevance such programs have in the church. Ideally, if the purpose is to draw people to Christ, then deliberate strategies to involve the stakeholders involved and make them understand the importance of how the church can be productive. Linking this observation to the outcomes from the interviews, help establish those programs that are designed by elderly people, particularly for the youth, are prone to fail due to the lack of youth involvement. Gladys Ragira cites this as an excising of poor leadership, which does not respect the youth or even appreciate their role and position in the church.

When the young people are left far from the church, and obviously from Christ, the most likely result is that they will eventually be lacking a spiritual connection to Jesus Christ, which is necessary for spiritual formation and nourishment, as maintained by Gladys Ragira.<sup>224</sup> In situations where the youth lacks such an attachment, their personal views, behaviors, and character start to be one not appreciated by the elderly in the church as they see them as evil, and the perceptions also have a considerable impact in church attendance by the youth in the church.<sup>225</sup> Charles Mwangi states in a study that single factors such as having differences in

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<sup>224</sup> Ragira, "Role of the Youth," 49-52.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

tastes and preferences, for example, on music, can lead to a wide gap between the youth and the elderly people in the church.<sup>226</sup> Ideally, all these factors revolve around leadership, which does not stop at the church but continues with family leadership and ministry. For example, the first leaders to young people are the parents, through creation of an enabling environment in which the young people get to share the mission of Jesus Christ based on the greatest commission of the disciples, which also serves as the basis of any missionary work, for kids, youth and old people respectively.

While focusing on technology, since it was mentioned on many occasions, the study established that misuse of technology leads the young people into sites that are evil, and un-Godly, as maintained by Johnson Kurt.<sup>227</sup> First, the responsibility of parents, because they spend most of the time with the youth, compared to other church leaders, should be an emphasis on the importance of not visiting specific sites, such as pornographic sites, at the expense of educative websites.<sup>228</sup> Technology makes the young people access information, distribute it, and eventually, they get addicted to undesirable sources of information, making their church attendance, not a priority, according to the current study's outcomes. Generally, technology takes the youth away from the church, as they get preoccupied with other things they consider fashionable, especially in modern society.<sup>229</sup>

Results also showed that young people argued for the use of technology as an alternative platform to learn the Word of God. Ideally, such assertions should not be ignored by the leaders

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<sup>226</sup> Charles Mwangi, "Challenges of Ministering to the Youth," 8.

<sup>227</sup> Kurt, "Parental Perception of the Influence of Digital Media and Technology," 1-195.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Pineda, "Technology in Culture," 191-250.

and the elderly in the church as that can lead to division. However, a common ground must be reached, in which the pros and cons of technology are explained to the young people to help them develop an understanding of the extent to which they can use technology. It is imperative for them to be made aware that the misuse of technology can quickly derail them from the Lord's worship and church attendance.<sup>230</sup> Most of the young people who have been addicted to the technological platforms that perpetuate bad behaviors in society have had their social values face eroded<sup>231</sup>, because of behavior change, and this might, in some cases, reach dangerous levels.<sup>232</sup> Although the general overview by young people that the sermons they can access through the internet and listen to are similar to the preaching they would receive in churches, it is imperative for them to understand that, to some extent, they reduce interactions with other people of faith, and this diminishes the efforts of youth ministry.<sup>233</sup>

### **5.2.1 Cross-Cultural Factors**

One of the ambitions of this study was to identify overarching, cross-cultural factors that may be affecting the ministry in general, as well as cross-cultural factors that might be influenced by the recent decline in youth growth and church attendance. Unfortunately, the data that was collected proved to be insufficient to draw any firm conclusions concerning such potential cross-cultural factors. Several limitations led to this outcome. The interviews and questionnaires were distributed to young members of a single church due to feasibility constraints, which resulted in somewhat limited cultural diversity among the participants. The

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<sup>230</sup> Bolu, "The Church in the Contemporary World," 80-94.

<sup>231</sup> Kagatle, "Social Media and Religion," 1-6.

<sup>232</sup> Njoroge, "Impacts of Social Media," 1-80.

<sup>233</sup> Schwadel, "Interactive Effects of Church and Religious Traditions," 1-15.

use of data from an only church also limits the generalizability of findings to different cultural contexts. Collecting better data, in this respect, would have required carrying out a more extensive project that included multiple churches whose members, as a group, showed a high degree of cultural diversity. Another limitation was that few of the interview subjects exhibited a high level of reflectivity and insight concerning the influence of specific cultural factors on their church experiences and decisions about attending church. Taken together, these factors effectively prevented the identification of any cross-cultural factors affecting the ministry based on the data that was collected.

Some level of insight concerning cross-cultural factors impacting the ministry can still be derived from the scholarly literature, and this is worth considering shortly the limitations of the data collected for the current study. One significant factor impacting the ministry is the reality of increasing diversity in many communities and churches, which increases the practical significance of the need to provide culturally appropriate forms of worship and engagement.<sup>234</sup> In churches with relatively little cultural diversity among their members, especially when the membership and leadership of the church come from the dominant cultural group within the local community, the influence of culture can become effectively invisible.<sup>235</sup> The impact of learning tends to become more visible when there are cultural differences between the church leadership and church membership, within the body of the church membership, or between the church membership and the outside community. Linguistic differences serve as the most obvious

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<sup>234</sup> Eugene Hillman, "Cross-cultural Ministry in Crisis," *New Blackfriars* 72, no. 846 (1991): 59-65.

<sup>235</sup> Martin Dowson and Dennis M. McInerney, "For What Should Theological Colleges Educate? A Systematic Investigation of Ministry Education Perceptions and Priorities," *Review of Religious Research* 46, no. 4 (2005): 403-421.

example, as these differences can give rise to communication barriers. Churches can overcome cultural differences and offer culturally appropriate forms of worship and engagement tend to have stronger memberships than those that cannot.<sup>236</sup> Churches that offer Spanish language worship services in areas with significant populations of native Spanish speakers, for example, may be able to welcome that segment of the local community more fully than churches that offer only English language services and activities. While the language is an essential component of culture, numerous other factors can influence the quality and strength of the connection between a church, its members, and the local community of potential members. These include how ministry activities reflect the interests, concerns, and lived realities of individuals from different cultural backgrounds, as well as the extent to which a ministry succeeds in meeting the spiritual needs of culturally diverse members.<sup>237</sup>

Cultural differences come in many forms, and generational differences can be regarded as one form of cultural difference that is especially pertinent in the context of the current study. The life experiences of young people today are quite different from the experiences of past generations; social changes, shifting cultural values, and the tremendous impact of technology all contribute to significant differences in lived experience between ages.<sup>238</sup> The generational gap between today's church leaders and the youth membership of churches essentially represents a cross-cultural divide that can have just as significant an impact as linguistic or other cultural differences. Drawing upon theories and scholarship aimed at helping ministers to bridge different

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<sup>236</sup> Austin Smith, "Ministry and the Inner City," *New Blackfriars* 68, no. 810 (1987): 516-28.

<sup>237</sup> Pui-Yan Lam, "Bound by Denominational Ties: Dilemmas of Asian Ministry in the Episcopal Church," *Review of Religious Research* 51, no. 2 (2009): 134-55.

<sup>238</sup> Maureen Miner, Sam Sterland, and Martin Dowson, "Coping with Ministry: Development of a Multidimensional Measure of Internal Orientation to the Demands of Ministry," *Review of Religious Research* 48, no. 2 (2006): 212-230.



types of cultural divides may thus be a useful, practical approach for bridging the generational gap within today's churches.

## **5.3 Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **5.3.1 Conclusions of the Study**

The conduct of this study was successful, in that it focused on all the research questions to systematically develop a body of knowledge that can be used in understanding why there is a general decline in church attendance, especially among the youth. Precisely, the theological and theoretical models used have been instrumental in providing the researcher with a general overview from which findings were evaluated. For instance, spiritual formation theology has been used as the basis of instilling among the youth the need to love Jesus Christ. Second, family ministry sets the family (parents and children) as the first place where youth ministry should start. Moreover, leading through relationship theology formulated a basis on which society at large can be said to be responsible for the overall decline of youth in the church. Typically, this is founded on bad leadership from church leaders and parents, as well as other societal leadership that acts as bad role models to young people. Missiology ministry also played a significant role in shaping the need to spread the gospel to the youth by using the youth, such that young pastors are allowed to minister to other youth members.

While evaluating the research outcomes based on the thesis statement, it is established that the researcher's assertions right from the background statement is accepted to be true. Precisely, the thesis statement indicated that "the overall decrease in the youth in today's church is due to lack of authoritative role of church's growth'. Mainly, although statistics have shown that some places could be affected more than others, the common observation is that a number of factors such as leadership, technology, parents' role modeling, lack of sense of belonging, and an

ineffective youth ministry in general, are the fundamental contributors towards the decline of young people in church.

The study's questions can be concluded to have been answered objectively. The first question, which sought to determine the factors contributing to the decline in church attendance by young people, was responded to noting down factors such as technology, leadership, influence from parents, sense of belonging, and lack of effective youth ministry in the modern churches. The second question, which sought to find out the views of the youth concerning modern church leadership, revealed that leadership is isolative in nature, and the youth are never consulted and never given opportunities to express their views. Moreover, technology has been found to have shaped the perceptions of the youth concerning the church in a negative way by presenting it as being less important in the modern society and also based on outdated philosophies, respectively. The question on theological models was also answered by supporting the fact that the envisaged models are relevant in explaining the attendance of youth in church, and they include spiritual formation, family ministry, leading through relationships, and missiology, respectively. On the fifth question, which was founded on theoretical context, it was found that technological determination, cooperation and collaboration, as well as experiential preference can better be used to explain the massive decline in church attendance. Finally, improvements to the situation are answered in the recommendations section below.

### **5.3.2 Recommendations of the Study**

The study makes recommendations that can be adopted to improve the situation for the church's future, as well as for future studies. First, the study recommends that leaders in the church, as well as parents, should be open-minded, to accommodate technology, but within the teachings of the Bible. Second, it is recommended that there should be a drastic change in the

manner in which modern churches are run based on the evangelism methods, scriptural authority, cultural relevance and openness, visions and goals, organizing, planning, and pastoral leadership, to accommodate youth views and preferences. Third, it is recommended that parents should seek to enhance a sense of belonging of their children to the church, right from the time they are young, so that they can grow while appreciating the role of Jesus and the importance of accepting him as required of us by the Bible. Finally, the study recommends future scholars to focus on evaluating the proposed theoretical models as to their relevance in the youth ministry to ensure better theories used in a future context. One specific way in which the researcher's experience and the results of the study might inform future research concerns the sampling methodology of prospective studies. One of the unfortunate limitations of the current research has to do with its insufficient cross-cultural evidence. The population used in the study was sampled from the membership of a single church, which makes it unclear to what extent the results might be generalized. The applicability of the findings to young church members from diverse cultural backgrounds, in particular, remains unclear.<sup>239</sup> There is certainly good reason to suppose that the results might generalize to other churches, even across cultures, given that the study's findings are generally consistent with the existing research literature as well as the nearly universal decline in youth church membership across denominations and cultures. Still, this is something that ideally would be confirmed by future empirical research.<sup>240</sup> For this reason, it is recommended that future research investigating the reasons for the decline in youth church membership include both a more substantial and more diverse sample size. Practical

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<sup>239</sup> Wing Yin Tsang, "Integration of Immigrants: The Role of Ethnic Churches," *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 16, no. 4 (11, 2015): 1177-1193.

<sup>240</sup> Jeremy E. Uecker, Mark D. Regnerus, and Margaret L. Vaaler, "Losing My Religion: The Social Sources of Religious Decline in Early Adulthood," *Social Forces* 85, no. 4 (06, 2007): 1667-1692.

considerations typically restrict what is feasible for a given study, but future research might at least include multiple churches of different denominations whose youth memberships come from modified or mixed cultural backgrounds. The findings from such a study, mainly when evaluated in light of the current research, would help to clarify whether and to what extent the results are consistent across different churches and cultural contexts. The total number of participants would need to be somewhat more significant to ensure that the subjects from each church were appropriately representative of that church's youth membership, with a minimum of 25 subjects per church being recommended. Ideally, this future research would include churches of significantly different denominations, such as a Roman Catholic Church, a liturgical Protestant denomination such as an Anglican/Episcopal church, and a non-liturgical denomination such as a Baptist church. Although youth church membership is on the decline for all major denominations, young church members from different denominations (as well as various cultural backgrounds) might offer somewhat different insights into the causes of this phenomenon.<sup>241</sup>

The focus group questions that were initially planned for this study, but which were ultimately not used, might also be a useful addition to future research. If the focus group questions had been incorporated into the current study, it is reasonable to speculate that the data collected would have generally been consistent with the findings from the individual in-person interviews as well as the conclusions of the written questionnaires. Still, the focus group format might have encouraged participants to engage in more in-depth discussions of the issues as participants considered and responded to the ideas expressed by their peers. Focus group discussions might also have brought out some exciting and potentially important areas of

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<sup>241</sup> Christian Smith, Robert Faris, Lundquist Denton Melinda, and Mark Regnerus, "Mapping American Adolescent Subjective Religiosity and Attitudes of Alienation toward Religion: A Research Report," *Sociology of Religion* 64, no. 1 (2003): 111-133.

disagreement among young members of the church, which could possibly point to some individual differences concerning spiritual needs and reasons for attending or not attending church. The focus group format might also foster a greater sense of comfort in disclosing specific ideas and thoughts, especially any which might be perceived as being critical of the church, that participants might have been more hesitant to reveal during one-on-one interviews. At the same time, factors such as the limited confidentiality of the group discussion format might make participants more hesitant to reveal certain kinds of personal feelings or perceptions. This is the reason why, for the current study, it was judged to be more important to conduct one-on-one interviews. Still, if feasible, incorporating the focus group questions might yield some useful data in future studies.

A final recommendation for the methodology of future research on this topic relates to the issue of survey completion rates. Maintaining high completion rates is important for a number of reasons. In practical terms, it helps to ensure that the researcher is able to collect sufficient data for analysis. It is also important to ensure the validity of a study's findings, considering the possibility that subjects who fail to complete a survey might have provided responses that differ significantly from the responses of those who do complete their surveys.<sup>242</sup> There is always some level of unavoidable bias in the research of this sort because of the self-selection effect: there may be significant differences between individuals who consent to participate in a study and individuals who are not willing to participate, and these differences

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<sup>242</sup> Floyd J. Fowler, *Survey Research Methods*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2009), 49-53.

may bias the results.<sup>243</sup> There are various approaches to improving participation rates, ranging from emphasizing the importance of a study to providing tangible incentives for participation. For the current study, the importance of the research seemed to be sufficient motivation to inspire the initial agreement to participate, but there were still some issues with participant follow-through in terms of completing the survey. Based on the researcher's experience, the best way to maximize completion rates would be to ask participants to fill out and return their surveys immediately rather than waiting until the following weeks.

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<sup>243</sup> Tina M. Sutton and John E. Edlund, "Assessing Self-Selection Bias as a Function of Experiment Title and Description: The Effect of Emotion and Personality," *North American Journal of Psychology* 21, no. 2 (2019): 407-422.

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## Appendix A: IRB Approval Document

### IRB Approval 3757.060619: Youth Decline in Church Growth and Attendance

Dear Marion Jones,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases are attached to this approval email.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your study involves surveying or interviewing minors, or it involves observing the public behavior of minors, and you will participate in the activities being observed.

Please retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the requirements for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, this approval letter should be included as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

Your IRB-approved, stamped consent form is also attached. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP  
*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*  
Research Ethics Office

*Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971*

## Appendix B: Survey Questions

As part of my Research Thesis, the purpose of this Survey is to receive feedback as well as gather information regarding the issue of Youth Decline in Church Growth and Attendance in the church. Kindly answer the questions as honestly and as accurately as possible. Additionally, please ensure not to leave any information that would identify you. Such information includes your name, physical descriptions, or any other related information that would function to reveal your identity. Kindly make a cross (X) against the answer that most accurately captures your attitude and/or opinion. Where, a written explanation is required, kindly ensure to answer within the lines provided under the question.

### Section A: Background Information

1. Which of the following describes your age?
  - ☐ Younger than 18 years
  - ☐ 18 to 24 years
  - ☐ 25 to 30 years
  - ☐ 31 to 35 years
  - ☐ 35 to 40 years
  - ☐ 40 to 50 years
  - ☐ 50 to 65 years
  - ☐ 65 years or older
2. For how long have you been attending this church?
  - ☐ I have been attending this church for less than 1 year
  - ☐ I have been attending this church for a period between 1 and 2 years

- I have been attending this church for a period between 2 and 5 years
- I have been attending this church for a period between n 5 and 10 years
- I have been attending this church for over 10 years

3. How did you start attending this church?

- I am a founding member of this church
- I am not a founding member but I was here during its early beginnings
- This is my parents' local church
- Someone referred me to this church
- I saw it while walking past and walked in

4. Have you ever attended a Youth Service or any other church event that you thought was specifically geared to the youth and catered to the needs of the youth?

- Yes
- No

5. Since you started attending this church, have you ever skipped a church session before?

- Yes
- No

6. If your answer to question 4 above was YES, please specify why you skipped the church session.

If your answer to question 5 above was NO, please specify why you have never skipped a church session.

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Section B: Research on the factors influencing youth church attendance

7. Please choose one response for each item below. On a scale of STRONGLY DISAGREE to STRONGLY AGREE, kindly specify your attitude and opinions regarding the statements below. Kindly make a cross (X) against the answer that most accurately captures your attitude and/or opinion.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I always feel like I belong whenever I attend church.					
The church always has events that I find interesting.					
I only attend church to please my parents.					
The church involves the youth in its administration.					

The youth in the church are taken seriously.					
The youth have a responsibility to keep the legacy of the church going.					
I do not agree with how the church is run.					
There is adequate inter-generational communication within the church.					
There should be a youth service specifically targeted at the youth.					

It is the responsibility of the youth to seek out opportunities for involvement in the church.					
The future of the church is dependent on the youth.					

8. What role, if any, does the pastor play in maintaining the youth attendance in church?

- ☐ A very important role
- ☐ The pastor has a role but other leaders in the church also play a role
- ☐ The pastor has no role whatsoever

9. Given a chance, would you be willing to start a youth program that caters to the needs of the youth?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

10. If your answer to question 9 above is YES, kindly specify the type of youth program that would cater to the needs of the youth in the church. If your answer to question 9 above is NO, kindly specify why you would not be willing to start such a program.

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## Appendix C: Questionnaire Questions

As part of my Research Thesis, the purpose of this Questionnaire is to receive feedback as well as gather information regarding the issue of Youth Decline in Church Growth and Attendance. Kindly answer the questions as honestly and as accurately as possible.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
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	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Importance of Youth to the Church					
Ministering to the Youth is an essential part of the administration of the church and ignoring it is bound to lead to the downfall of the church.					
The continuity of the Church is very dependent on the extent to which the youth are involved in the church and given leadership opportunities.					

No church that can prosper without paying due attention to the needs of the youth who are in the church and asking for their input.					
Generational Differences in the Church					
The presence of the youth in a church pushes adults past their comfort and cynicism.					
Different generations need different methods and methodologies of church ministry.					
There is a need to have youth pastors in every church.					
In the organization of a church, the youth are more of agents of ministry than objects of ministry.					
The youth should be involved in the developing of youth programs in church.					
Factors Influencing Youth Grow and Attendance in Church					

Parents play a significant role in influencing the extent to which the youth attend church consistently					
Evoking a sense of belonging by the church is a critical part of engendering church attendance by the youth					
The Church should liaise with other churches in the attempts to improve youth attendance levels.					
The status of youth attendance in church has real implications on the overall Christian Faith					
In Church, the youth should have separate services distinct from the main service and the children's service					

## **Appendix D: Interview Questions**

1. Kindly give me your general understanding of how the various departments in this Church are organized. Would you say that all of these church departments are meeting their goals?
2. What is the importance of having youth programs in the church?
3. Explain the extent to which the Youth Program in your church has been successful. Do you know what the initial aims of developing the Youth Programs were?
4. Why do you think there is a notable decline in the growth and attendance of the youth in your church?
5. In your opinion, which are the specific ways in which the growth and attendance of the youth in church can be improved?
6. Please tell me your idea of the needs that a person who identifies as a youth would have, in the context of a Church.
7. In what way do you think the Youth can be involved in the Church?
8. In your opinion, which are the most important issues that should be addressed when it comes to developing a program that is specifically geared to the youth?
9. What do you think are the factors affecting the level of youth attendance in the church?
10. Are there some recommendations you can give to the church?



## Appendix E: Thematic Analysis Map

Questions	Semantic Coding	Latent Coding	Possible Themes
<i>Kindly give me your general understanding of how the various departments in this Church are organized. Would you say that all of these church departments are meeting their goals?</i>	R1-R15: The departments to some extent are meeting their goals, although they have limitations. They lack proper representation of all groups in the church, since the youth leaders are not in all departments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Leadership in the church</li> <li>✓ Youth involvement in church leadership and activities</li> </ul>	Church Leadership, Youth involvement
<i>What is the importance of having youth programs in the church?</i>	R1: Youth programs are important and they determine the future of a church. R2: Without youth programs there is no church. R3: they help young people to come together. R4-R13: it is an opportunity to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Church's future</li> <li>✓ Enhance leadership skills</li> <li>✓ Improve youth ministry</li> </ul>	The future of the church, leadership skills, youth ministry

	<p>develop leadership among the youth and prepare them to take over the church leadership in future.</p> <p>R14-15: it is the basis for preparing future pastors in church.</p>		
<p><i>Explain the extent to which the Youth Program in your church has been successful. Do you know what the initial aims of developing the Youth Programs were?</i></p>	<p>R7: The youth in the Church is interested in the events and programmes that are typically organized for the benefit of the Youth program. However, the approach of organizing such events does not involve the youth.</p> <p>R1-15: I do not really know the initial aims of the program as the youth was not involved.</p>	<p>✓ Youth involvement in church leadership</p> <p>✓ Youth participation in developing youth programs</p> <p>✓ Interest in youth programs</p>	<p>Youth involvement, youth participation, leadership approaches, youth programs</p>

<p><i>Why do you think there is a notable decline in the growth and attendance of the youth in your church?</i></p>	<p>R1: I think young people have lost interest in the church.</p> <p>R2: in the modern days, technology has provided alternative platforms of learning the word of God. R3: leadership in the church is not favorable. R4: Lack of interest. R5: the church in these days is generally boring. R6: Youth have no relationship with Jesus since they have not been taught about Jesus by parents. R7: They do not consider church to be important in society. R8-15: there are no consequences from parents if I do not</p>	<p>✓ Lost interest in the church</p> <p>✓ Boring church services</p> <p>✓ Technology has an alternative</p> <p>✓ Bad leadership in the church</p> <p>✓ Lack of relationship with Jesus</p> <p>✓ Poor parenting</p> <p>✓ Church has lost importance in society</p> <p>✓ Not mandatory hence no consequences from parents</p> <p>✓ It is not an obligation but a way of pleasing parents</p>	<p>Lost interest, boring church services, technology, leadership, relationship with Jesus, poor parenting</p>
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	attend church. R9:  Church attendance is to  please parents.		
<i>In your opinion, which are the specific ways in which the growth and attendance of the youth in church can be improved?</i>	R1. Ensuring that services are made interesting. R3. Promoting youth leadership. R5. Improving sermons and worship where youth interests are taken care of. R6. Using technology in church services. R7. Not reprimanding the youth for everything they do. R14. Teaching the youth the reasons why they should attend church. R15: Parents being role models.	✓ Attractive church services ✓ Youth leadership ✓ Youth ministry ✓ Using technology ✓ Spiritual formation ✓ Improving the relationship with Jesus ✓ Role modeling by parents	Attractive church services, youth leadership, youth pastoring, spiritual formation, parents role modeling
<i>Please tell me your idea of the needs that a</i>	R7. Attention from adult leaders. R2.	✓ Attention and Recognition	Attention and recognition,

<i>person who identifies as a youth would have, in the context of a Church.</i>	<p>Respect and recognition. R5.</p> <p>Opportunity to lead and express views. R.4</p> <p>better services. R9.</p> <p>Modern approaches of preaching and ministering. R.10</p> <p>church service that is real and not hypocritical.</p>	<p>✓ Respect and dignity</p> <p>✓ Leadership opportunities</p> <p>✓ Youth pastoring</p> <p>✓ Truthfulness</p>	<p>respect and dignity,</p> <p>leadership opportunities,</p> <p>youth pastoring</p>
<i>In what way do you think the Youth can be involved in the Church?</i>	<p>R.15 Being part of the committees. R.11 Given opportunities to preach.</p> <p>R. 5 Provided with effective updates on church developments.</p> <p>R.4 Seeking their opinion when designing programs for their welfare.</p>	<p>✓ Leadership in church</p> <p>✓ Youth involvement</p> <p>✓ Youth programs</p> <p>✓ Youth ministry</p>	<p>Leadership in church, youth involvement, youth programs, youth ministry</p>
<i>In your opinion, which are the most important</i>	<p>R1. Advancements in technology</p>	<p>✓ Technological advancements</p>	<p>Technology, modernity,</p>

<i>issues that should be addressed when it comes to developing a program that is specifically geared to the youth?</i>	R5. Modernity and traditions. R.3 Youth preferences. R8. Challenges in the society. R10. Views of the youth concerning life and Jesus. R15. Biblical teachings about the gospel.	✓ Modernity and traditions ✓ Youth challenges in society	traditions, youth challenges, leadership
<i>What do you think are the factors affecting the level of youth attendance in the church?</i>	R1-R7: Bad influence from leaders. R-8: Lack of interest. R-9: Lack of motivation. R-10: Does not really convince the youth why they should attend. R-11: Lack of proper spiritual formation and nourishment. R-12: Lack of sessions at family level to enhance youth ministry. R-13: Parents not being	✓ Leadership an role model ✓ Lack of interest ✓ Lack of motivation ✓ Youth are not convinced ✓ Lack of spiritual formation ✓ Lack of family ministry ✓ Lack of parents involvement	Leadership, interest, motivation, ministering, spiritual formation, family ministry, parents involvement, technology, modernity

	involved in teaching the youth about Jesus. R-14: Not bringing children to the church when they are at teen age. R-15: Resorting to bad technology. R-6: Desires for the worldly things that are not accepted in the church. R-5: Modern technology exposing the youth to other sites that are not Godly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Technological developments</li> <li>✓ Modernity in technology</li> </ul>	
<i>Are there some recommendations you can give to the church?</i>	R1-R10: The church leadership should be open to new ideas. R-15: Consideration of technology as a platform to improve youth ministry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Church leadership</li> <li>✓ Technology in church</li> </ul>	Leadership, Technology

## Defining and Naming of themes

Initial generated themes	Defined themes
Church Leadership, Youth involvement, The future of the church, leadership skills, youth ministry, Youth involvement, youth participation, leadership approaches, youth programs, Lost interest, boring church services, technology, leadership, relationship with Jesus, poor parenting, Attractive church services, youth leadership, youth pastoring, spiritual formation, parents role modeling, Attention and recognition, respect and dignity, leadership opportunities, youth pastoring, Leadership in church, youth involvement, youth programs, youth ministry, Technology, modernity, traditions, youth challenges, leadership, Leadership, interest, motivation, ministering, spiritual formation, family ministry, parents involvement, technology, modernity, Leadership, Technology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Impact of technology</li> <li>➤ Leadership influence</li> <li>➤ Influence from parents</li> <li>➤ Sense of belonging</li> <li>➤ Effectiveness of youth ministry</li> </ul>





